

Slide # 1

Theme: God’s providential Care For His People

Outline:

Chapter 1 – Queen Vashti Deposed

Chapter 2 – Esther Becomes Queen

Chapter 3 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews

Chapters 4-7 Esther’s Courage – Haman’s Plot Backfires

Chapter 8 The Jews Avenged

Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

Esther is an amazing story about God’s Providential care for His people in spite of themselves. This is above all is a story about God’s covenantal faithfulness. Because of God’s Word and His promises, the Jews cannot be exterminated to a full end. It cannot happen! The very reputation of God is at stake. And this is a story about reversal! The Jews are often greatly persecuted but in the end, God brings about a great reversal where His chosen people are blessed and the enemies of the Jews are destroyed.

In the context of Esther, we find that Haman’s plan to have Mordecai the Jew killed backfired and he ended up being hung on the very gallows he had constructed to hang Mordecai on. The tables had been turned. But still a major problem remained. The king’s edict to have all the Jews annihilated on a certain day was still in place. The Jewish population at large was still threatened. Esther 8 deals with this problem.

Esther 8:1–17 (NKJV)

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.

On the day that Haman was hanged King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther control over Haman’s property and Mordecai was brought before the King because Esther now clearly revealed her close relationship with him as he was her cousin and guardian.

2 So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

The king's signet ring which had been worn by Haman was now given to Mordecai. This ring signified authority as the king's special representative. In effect, it recognized him as second in command and the prime minister of the kingdom. And irony of ironies Esther now appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

This was a great reversal indeed! Haman who had intended to plunder all the property of the Jews now had all his property given to the control of a Jewish man who was now 2nd in command in all the land. The tables had indeed completely been turned.

3 Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews.

Verse 3 is probably best seen as a continuation of the scene introduced in verse 1. It was great that Haman was taken out of the way and that Mordecai had been promoted and honored, but there was still a problem that was heavy on Esther's heart. And that was the destructive plot against the Jewish people put in place by Haman and approved by the king (which is not brought up) which was still in place as the official law of the land.

It is debated where Mordecai and Esther were at spiritually, but they certainly were patriots – that is for sure. Here Esther on behalf of her people (the Jews) implored the king with tears to counteract the scheme put in place by Haman.

4 And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king,

It is clear that Esther is once again here to beseech the king for his special favor and once again he extends it as symbolized in him holding out his golden scepter towards her (cf. 5:1-2).

And in verses 5 and 6 we have her formal request on behalf of her people the Jews.

5 and said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces.

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”

Verse 5 involves a lot of flattering type hype building up to her request. Note the language – “If it pleases...found favor...the thing seems right...I am pleasing”. It’s hard to imagine her saying “pretty please” any stronger.

And then she comes to her petition and that is that the letters written by Haman be REVOKED which called for the annihilation of the Jews in all the kings provinces.

And this was then followed by an emotional plea that she is not able to bear the idea of her people being destroyed. Esther was very openly, clearly, and unashamedly identifying with her people the Jews at this point (cf. Est. 7:3).

7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews.

The king here reminds Esther and Mordecai of all that he has already done in having Haman hanged and turning over all his assets to the control of Esther.

But in addition he also gives one further directive.

8 You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring; for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”

Perhaps Esther did not understand the finer points of the law but the king points out that whatever has been written and signed with his signet ring could not be revoked. Even he as the king could not change it. It was irrevocable!

Slide # 2**Esther 1:19 (NKJV)**

19 If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be **recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered.** that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

Once something was written into law and sealed with the king's signet ring it could not be changed. It was a sealed deal that could not be changed by anyone. Such was the law of the Persians and the Medes recognized by all throughout this entire vast empire.

By the way this shows the incredible power that went along with controlling the king's signet ring. It serves to show the HIGH position that Mordecai was now in – in having possession of this ring.

So as spelled out by the king – here was the deal. Haman's decree could not be revoked but in a sense it could be countered. Another decree that is irrevocable could be drawn up and sealed which would in effect counter the first decree.

And note the wide birth the king gave to Queen Esther and Mordecai. He essentially gave them a "blank check" to write out whatever counter-decree "as you please" in the king's name and then seal it with the king's signet ring – in effect turning it into an irrevocable law.

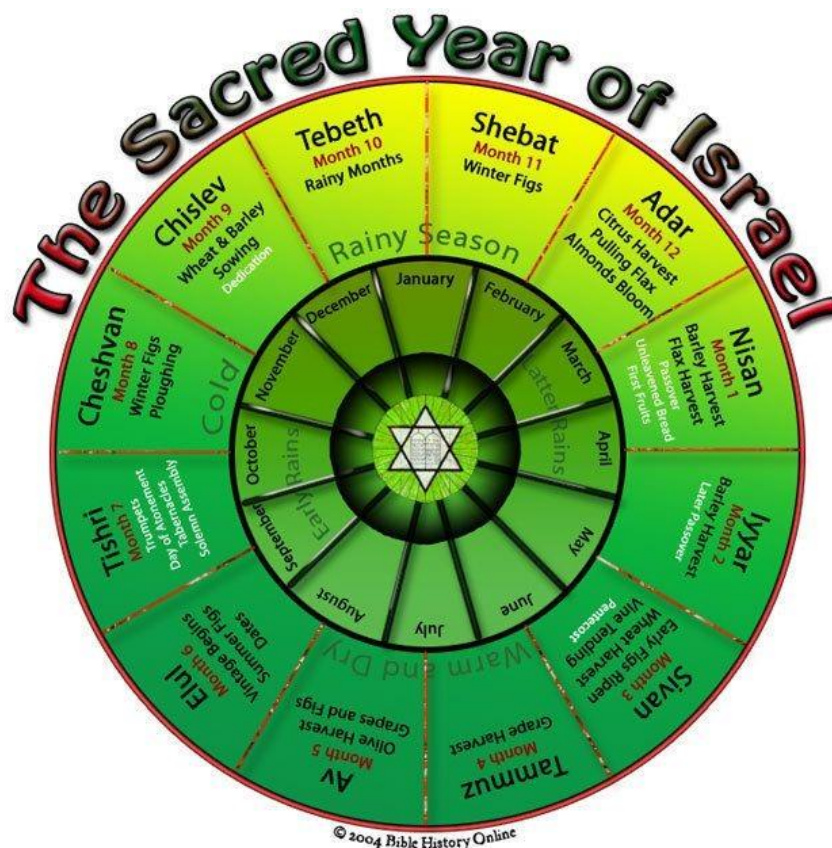
They couldn't change the first law that Haman insidiously got by the king, but they could pass another law that would in effect largely supersede it which is exactly what the king was suggesting they do.

9 So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the **third month**, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and it was written, according to all that **Mordecai commanded**, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, **one hundred and twenty-seven provinces** in all, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

According to the king's direction Mordecai had a decree written up in the third month of the year which was a little over two months after the decree of Haman which was written in the first month of the year (3:12).

Remember that while the decree to kill all the Jews was written up in the first month they then superstitiously cast the lot to determine when it should happen and it fell on the 12th month (cf. 3:7, 13, 9:1). The counter-decree was now given in the 3rd month. So, allowing for time for this new decree to be dispatched throughout the empire that left the Jews with about 8 months to ready themselves for the appointed day.

Slide # 3 First month – Haman’s decree; 3rd month Mordecai’s decree – 12th month appointed day.



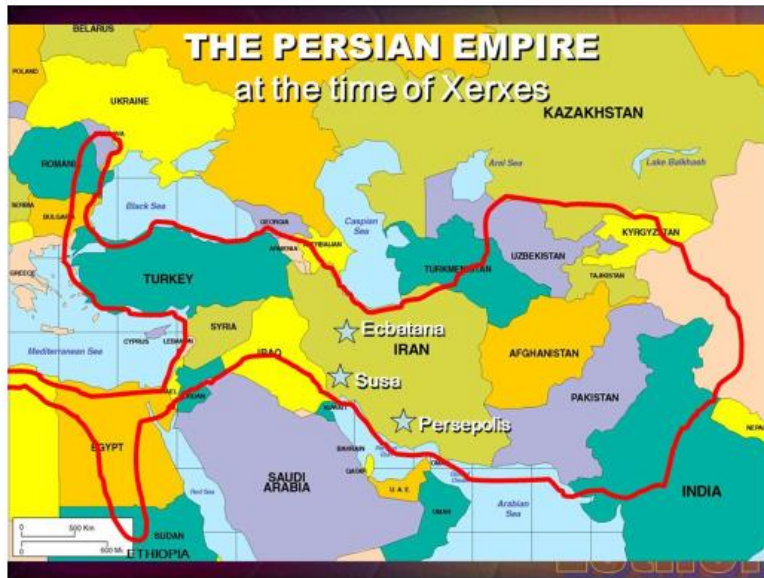
The new decree was to go throughout the entire empire from India to Ethiopia extending to all 127 provinces of this vast empire which is estimated to have been about 100 million people.

It was to be translated into every language including “to the Jews in their own script and language” which presumably means Hebrew. Everyone was to be made aware of this new decree.

10 And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.

Once again the national carriers/postmen were called upon to deliver a message posthaste.

Slide # 4



Even though both decrees were sealed with the king's signet the later would undoubtedly be regarded as carrying the most weight.

Written in the king's name and sealed with his signet ring certainly indicated the king's favor in this endeavor. And in this context that carried a lot of weight. It was clear whose side the king was on. And you know word would have spread far and wide about what happened to Haman and the reason for this latter decree.

11 By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions,

The decree permitted the Jews to come together in self-defense and protect themselves by whatever means necessary and to whatever degree necessary – and to kill anyone who tried to kill them.

Some have struggled with the language here which includes “children and women” but it is probably that this decree is just following the language of Haman’s decree in a countering sense.

Slide # 5

Esther 3:13 (NKJV)

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to **annihilate** all the Jews, both young and old, **little children and women**, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to **plunder** their possessions.

Esther 8:11 (NKJV)

11 By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and **annihilate** all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both **little children and women**, and to **plunder** their possessions,

Haman’s decree was crafted to take the lives of the Jews while Mordecai’s decree countered every point in the protection of Jewish lives.

12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

And just as Haman’s edit called for the destruction of the Jews on the 13th day of Adar (the last month of the year), in like manner Mordecai’s edict put in place the legal right of the Jews to defend themselves and their property on that very day (cf. 3:13).

13 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

A key purpose in getting out this decree was so that the Jews might have ample time to ready themselves “on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.” And as we will see in the next chapter they were indeed ready and proceeded to KILL thousands of their enemies on that day (9:16).

14 The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

Thus, the royal postmen went out with haste because it had the king's command behind it. And special mention is made of the decree being issued in the capital fortress of Shushan.

15 So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

At Haman's earlier decree Mordecai clothed himself in sackcloth, but again what a MAJOR turn of events. Now upon this new decree going out he went out from the presence of the king dressed in the royal colors of the Persian Empire – which at this point was probably his work clothes since he is now the prime minister (cf. 1:6).

Mordecai looked like a king in royal blue and white, a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple. He was indeed dressed like royalty.

And the response of the capital city was one celebration as they rejoiced and were glad. Recall how different was the response at Haman's decree going forth.

Slide # 6

Esther 3:15 (NKJV)

15 The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

16 The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.

What a verse. This expresses overwhelming exuberance over what has happened. Light is a symbol of happiness and well-being. Gladness and joy are very close as if the writer is finding it hard to express the greatness of their delight. And now the Jews were in the HONORED position which is a rarity during the times of the Gentiles – but here they were.

17 And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Wherever the news went there was a celebration for the Jews. It was "happy days are here again" as they feasted and had "holiday".

The result of having the Jews in a sense become the favored people of the king; with the Queen being Jewish, and the prime minister (Mordecai) being Jewish – the result was many of the people of the land were converting to Judaism.

The Septuagint translates "became Jews" as they "were circumcised" which is the outward sign of being a part of the covenant family of the Jews.

And the reason for this is "***because the fear of the Jews fell upon them.***"

Even though the Name of God is not mentioned in the book, the sense is that the people generally took note of the providential hand of God upon His people the Jews and now wanted to be a part of it.

Look – a Jew is now the queen. Look – a Jew is now the prime minister. Look – what has happened to the arch enemy of the Jews in the person of Haman. It seemed to be dawning on the people that indeed they were the favored people of God and that is a good thing.

[This] is the only time that Scripture refers to a historical event in which many among the peoples of the land became Jews.

– ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

God sometimes allows His chosen people to get into impossible situations so that He might come to their rescue either through direct intervention or through providential workings – to the end that He might show Himself faithful and powerful – the one true God – the God of Israel – and thereby bring glory to Himself before the entire world.

God did this in relationship to Pharaoh in the Exodus.

Slide # 7

Exodus 9:16 (NKJV)

16 But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

God did it in relationship to Haman when this vast world power and those at the very top (that is Haman) were aligned against the Jews.

God did it in relation to the powerful Herod who tried to kill baby Jesus but did not succeed.

God did it in relationship to Hitler who proposed as the final solution to wipe out the Jews – but didn't succeed. And on the heels of this the nation of Israel was reborn as a nation. You just can't beat the Jews because of their God who is behind them – often in spite of themselves.

God keeps doing it in relationship to the Gentile Arabs who HATE the Jews and desire above all to drive them into the sea and annihilate them once and for all – but just can't get the job done.

God will do it in relationship to Gog and Magog which will form a coalition so great that it will ascend on the land of Israel like a mighty storm “covering the land like a cloud” (Ezek 38:9) – only to have God intervene in such a mighty way that it will take 7 months just to bury the enemy (Ezek. 39:12).

Finally will come the climax of Gentile world history when the Antichrist and all the forces of the world will all converge on Jerusalem in one final attempt to wipe out the Jews – only to have Jesus their DELIVERER come as King of kings and Lord of Lord to rescue them.

Slide # 8**Zechariah 14:2–4 (NKJV)**

2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.

4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.

Never ever count the Jews as down and out because God is providentially preserving them and in the end always bring GLORY to Himself because of His relationship with them. Only fools like Haman are defined as “the enemy of the Jews” (Est. 3:10; 8:1; 9:10, 24). ***Don’t be among them!***

Slide # 9

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will **bless** those who bless you, And I will **curse** him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

It’s still true – God blesses those who bless the Jews and He curses those who curse them.

I am always amazed when I read Joel 3 which is set in the context of the coming day of the Lord. And what always amazes me is that when we come to God’s final judgment on the world (pre-kingdom) that God hasn’t not forgotten about His people Israel and He doesn’t appreciate what the world all along has been doing to His chosen people and to their promised land. And it always amazes me that the world pays absolutely no attention to this reality -even though it is written in the Holy Scriptures plain as day.

Slide # 10

Joel 3:2 (NKJV)

2 I will also **gather all nations**, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will **enter into judgment** with them there **On account of My people**, My heritage **Israel**, Whom they have **scattered** among the nations; They have also **divided up My land**.

Joel 3:16 (NKJV)

16 The **LORD also will roar from Zion**, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the **LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel**.

Haman is a lesson to the world! Don’t mess with Israel! Don’t mess with Israel – not essentially because of Israel – but really because of Israel’s God. For better or worse (so to speak) God has forever allied Himself with Israel His chosen people. And in the end He will turn both Israel and her fortunes around to the glory of Himself! The greatest reversal in history is yet to be seen – but it is coming – stay tuned!