

Esther, A Woman of Courage and Dignity

I. Introduction:

A. What does the phrase "A Woman of God" mean to you? List a few characteristics.

The Bible depicts many pictures of godly women. The book of Esther describes just such a woman. Esther is, in truth, a woman of God. Curiously, the name of God is never mentioned in this brief history, the angels do not appear at Esther's side, and there are no miracles done in her presence. But, if you look closely you will see intertwined in the daily activities of this story, through Esther's faithful character, God's redeeming plan and His powerful, merciful, and faithful hand. Esther is God's instrument for His people; Esther is a Biblical heroine.

How often have you wished you could have heard God's audible voice?

When was the last time you wanted to see just a little bit of His power?

How many times have you desired the security of His presence in your life?

Many times we want these things but we feel that God is far from us at a particular moment or during a particular time or maybe even absent. But, perhaps later we realize that all along He was always with us. Even though God may "seem" to be far at times or even absent, He is always present and invincible.

This is the first lesson we must learn from the book of Esther: Even though the name of God happens to be absent from the pages of the book of Esther, God is present in every scene, in the activities of every event, in the lives of every character, until He finally brings about a wonderful climax where He is able to prove that He is indeed Lord of His People, The Jews. This is also true about our lives. Even though God may seem distant, we can always trust and believe that He is present in every moment of our lives working out the perfect plan He has for us.

In the following space, write about the last time you felt that God was far away, but later on you realized that all along He was right there beside you all the time.

What is a Bible verse you can claim in truth the next time you feel this way? Write it down here.

(Deut 31:6, Isa 43, John 14:16-18, 16:5-12, I Cor 6:19-20, Heb 13:5)

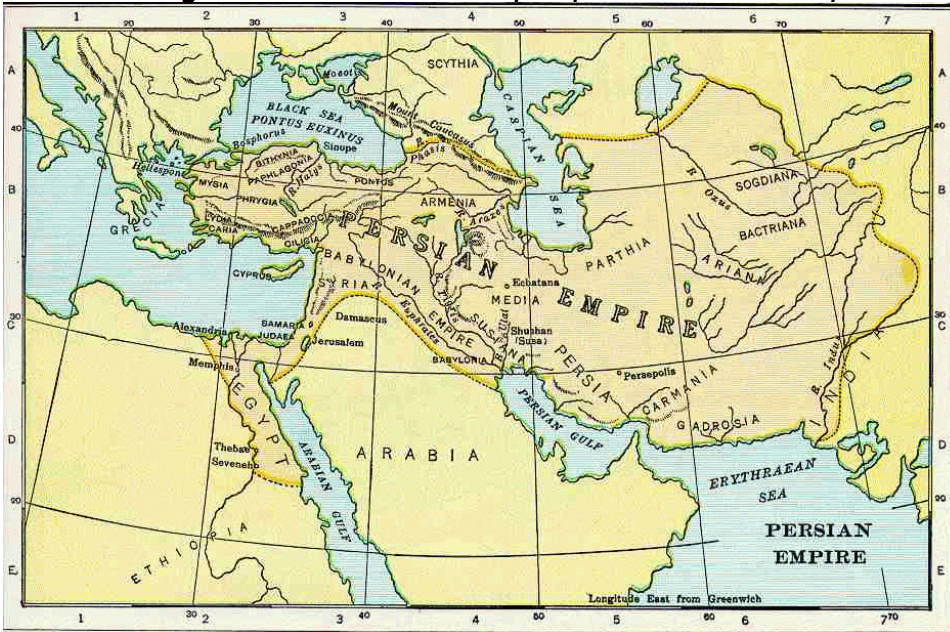
B. Let's take some time to examine the Main Characters:

In the book of Esther we will see the power and presence of God working through the lives of 5 different people; these are the main characters of the story. We are going to look at each of these characters through the eyes of history as written in God's word, this way we will get the chance to know them a bit better and as a result, glean treasures for our own lives.

1. What are your general impressions of King Ahasuerus?

King Ahasuerus:

He is introduced in the first verses of the book, Ester 1:1-2. At the moment the story begins King Ahasuerus is in his 3 year of being king which we find out lasts a total of 21 years. (485 to 464 BC) King Ahasuerus was a very rich and powerful man. From Shushan, the capital, he reigned over the great Persian Empire, 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. There was no man on earth that was more powerful than King Ahasuerus at that time in history. We also find out that King Ahasuerus was a very impulsive and fleshly natured man.



2. What are your general impressions of Queen Vashti?

Queen Vashti:

Vashti was the queen and King Ahasuerus' wife; she is introduced to the story in Ester 1:9. Although we do not gather much information about her from the Bible, we can deduce that she had a strong character, thought independently, and did not fear when she acted contrary to the desires of her husband, the king. Her character is strong and she is the source of the first conflict registered in the story. She was deposed from her royal position when she refused to obey the king's order for her to appear at the banquet hall in Shushan during the king's party.

3. What are your general impressions of Haman?

Wicked Haman:

Haman was the rich and influential Prime Minister of Persia. He occupied the second position of command in the kingdom thanks to a promotion he received in Ester 3:1. Haman was a deceptive, beguiling, lying, prideful, conceited, boastful hater of the Jews and the villain of the story. He is clearly a picture of the devil. He is called an "Agagite," which seems to denote that he was descended from the royal family of the Amalekites, the bitterest enemies of the Jews, as Agag was one of the titles of the Amalekite kings. He or his parents were brought to Persia as captives taken in war. He was hung on the gallows which he had erected for Mordecai.

4. What are your general impressions of Mordecai the Jew?

The godly Jew Mordecai:

Mordecai, the name meaning "little man" was a Jew living in Persia. He was the son of Jair (Mordecai's father), the son of Shimei (Mordecai's grandfather), the son of Kish (Mordecai's great grandfather), a Benjamite ("a son of the right hand"). He is introduced in Esther 2:5-6.

(1 Kings) Many years (over 490 years) before the story of Esther began; the Jewish nation had a civil war. As a result of that war, the Jewish nation was divided into 2 kingdoms (975 BC), the North (10 tribes) and the South (2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin). The north was named Israel, its capital Samaria, the south, Judah, Judah's capital was Jerusalem. The majority of the Jewish kings did not walk consistently in God's ways, many even did evil in God's sight. Eventually God judged the Northern Kingdom for its lack of faithfulness and stubbornness and sent Assyrian armies to fight against them. As a result the northerners, those from Israel, were taken captive everywhere, and mixed with Gentiles nations and finally became the Samaritans, they basically lost their heritage, culture and identity.

Approximately 100 years later God also brought judgment and captivity upon the Southern Kingdom for its disobedience. Mordecai's descendants were living in the south because that is where the Benjaminites were living. Let's pick up the story while God was judging Judah during the second Babylonian raid on the southern kingdom of Judah and see what happens with Mordecai's descendants.

(2 Kings 24:8-27, 2 Chronicles 36:9-10) Jehoiachin, the young king of Southern Judah, reigned in 597 BC. Jehoiachin had been in power for 3 months when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem and took captive all of the people of Jerusalem and all of the temple treasures to Babylon. As Esther 2:6 states "Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jehoiachin king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away." Kish, Mordecai's descendant was taken to Babylon along with all the other Jews in 597 BC.

(2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36:11-21) Eleven years later in 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar again returned to Jerusalem for his third and final raid when Zedekiah was in power and again took captive the remainder of the Jews to Babylon and burned God's Temple and the entire city. This is the famous "Fall of Jerusalem".

Then 47 years later, the Persians took Babylon in 539 BC. For ~70 years the Jews were in exile in Babylon and Persia. The majority of these Jews in exile retained their identity and culture. Mordecai's descendants were among these Jews who ended up in Persia.

(Ezra 1-2) Later on after Nebuchadnezzar died, God raised up Cyrus, a king of Persia, who overthrew Babylon and allowed the Jewish nation the opportunity to return to its homeland and rebuild the temple. The Jewish nation returned to its land in 2 phases. First of all, some returned under the command of Zerubbabel ("Mordecai" is listed in this group Ez 2:2, Ne 7:7) in 536 BC, and then again 78 years later in 458 BC under the command of Ezra. Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6) became king of the great Persian empire around 485 BC, approximately 100 years after the fall of Jerusalem.

According to some estimates, of the 2 to 3 million Jews living in Persia and Babylon prior to 536 BC, only a small remnant of ~ 50,000 Jews actually returned to Jerusalem when King Cyrus provided this opportunity. It was a 4 month long trip and extended over 1500 kilometers (932 miles). **At this point it is hard to understand exactly what happened because it appears that Mordecai returned to his Jewish homeland with Zerubbabel in 536, yet when we pick up the story of Ester, 3 years into the reign of Ahasuerus (~482 BC) Mordecai is well established in Persia. Did he return for some reason?? Or is the Mordecai that returned to his Jewish homeland with Zerubbabel a different Mordecai?? Try and solve this mystery!

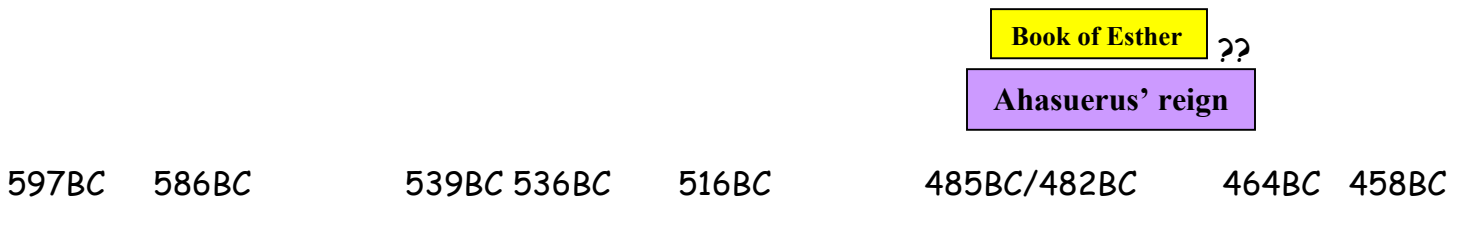
Why do you think that so many Jews stayed behind in Persia and Babylon when they were given the chance to be free and return to their native land? (Read Jeremiah 29:1-7 for a clue).

The reason they stayed behind is because they were living comfortably, they had established themselves and adapted to their new land, they didn't want to bother themselves with a long hard trip only to return to a desolate homeland, they had jobs, families, they were earning

money, they had blended in with the world, they did not see the need to return. They are a picture of a carnal Christian that does not want to come out from being part of the world.

Have you ever felt God's voice calling you home to His plan and His purposes but you were too comfortable in your life to respond? What was the result?

The book of Esther opens during the third year of the Ahasuerus' reign (~482 BC) and closes before his reign is completed. In Ester 10:3, we see that Ahasuerus is well and is still on the throne. Please fill in the time line to see how every event we have mentioned is related in history.



The book of Esther is a magnificent piece of history in the life of the Jewish nation living in exile in Persia. This extraordinary history proves that God never forgot about them, in fact He had a wonderful plan for their redemption and a wonderful application of that message for us. The book of Ester is also the only recorded Biblical account of the Jewish festival Purim. We will talk a lot more about that later.....

The majority of the Jews living in captivity in Persia and Babylon preferred to remain in their comfortable and lucrative lifestyles under the authority of the Persians and to a certain degree be disassociated from God. There is possible evidence that Mordecai desired to be a part of the remnant that returned to Jerusalem, a devastated city, but that is not conclusive**. Remember, the story of Esther took place in the capital of Persia, Shushan. There were more than 2 million Jews in that city at that time. Are you beginning to see the magnitude, importance and role of Esther?

The author of the book of Esther is unknown, but was probably a Jew living in Persia during the time that the events of this book took place, guesses even allow for the possibility that it could have been at least in part written by Mordecai. But that is only a guess.

In summary, Mordecai was a descendant of the Southern Kingdom Jews that were taken in exile first to Babylon and then to Persia and in some way found himself in Persia when the book of Esther opens. He was a godly man and the adoptive father of Ester. He is introduced into the story in Ester 2:7.

5. What are your general impressions of Esther?

The externally and internally beautiful Esther:

The name Esther means "star". She is certainly the star of this show, the heroine of this story. Esther was a Jewish girl, orphaned (lost both mother and father), adopted, raised and educated by her Jewish cousin/uncle, Mordecai. Esther's father was Mordecai's uncle. By rights they were cousins of some sort but due to age the relationship may have seemed more like an uncle. The circumstances of Esther's young orphan life could have set the stage for her to be a failure. I can only imagine that Esther cried and cried when her parents died and she was orphaned, but years later she became the key to the survival of her people, the Jews. God worked quietly and invisibly behind the scenes in Esther's life from the very beginning. Mordecai's faith was instilled in Esther from a very young age and he taught her to be courageous. All of a sudden when the king of Persia, Ahasuerus, impulsively divorces himself from his wife, the queen Vashti, Ester quickly found herself coming to the forefront of Persian society.

Esther is characterized by a delightful charm, a firm faith, an unyielding courage, a brilliant elegance, a steadfast restraint and a tenacious self control. She had a teachable spirit; she was prudent, authentic, humble, strong, and acted with dignity and grace. Above all, the presence of queen Ester in the court of King Ahasuerus brought them as well as her entire people to a critical juncture in Jewish history. Mordecai understood well when he said, (Ester 4:14) "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

For what purpose do you think God has created you as you are and has orchestrated the events of your life such as they are to bring you right here right now? This is the exact question Esther was required to contemplate and take action upon. What would be your answer?

What characteristic trait listed for Ester would you like to more fully develop in your life? Please make a plan for getting that accomplished.

The Fall of a Queen

Read Esther Chapter 1 very carefully.

The story begins on what appears to be an ordinary day like any other day in the kingdom of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes). It is just another day of feasting. But be careful! Many times days that begin routine and ordinary just might end up being extraordinary days. Do you believe that could be true? Do you believe that the span of a day can make a difference?

Let's look at some biblical examples of ordinary days that turned out to be extraordinary.

- The day Adam and Eve walked peacefully with God in the garden ended with the fall of all mankind. What a difference a day can make! (Genesis 3)
- The day the rains began ended with the loss of the majority of human and animal life. What a difference a day can make! (Genesis 7)
- The day that Moses was tending his father in law's flock on Mt. Horeb ended with him being called by God to deliver the nation of Israel from slavery out of Egypt. What a difference a day can make! (Exodus 3)
- The day that young Shepherd David answered his father Jesse's call to come to pass before Samuel ended with David being anointed the next king of Israel. What a difference a day can make! (1 Samuel 16)
- The day that Jesus was born ended with salvation being made available to the whole world. What a difference a day can make! (Luke 2)
- The day that Jesus rose from the dead ended with an eternal spiritual victory over sin and the devil and hope for all mankind. What a difference a day can make! (Luke 24)
- The day that Jesus returns for His church will begin like any other, children going to school, adults to work, traffic jams, business as normal, life as usual, but in a blink of an eye the world and the future will never be the same again. What a difference a day can make! (1 Corinthians. 15:50-58)

Do you believe that God wants to take any ordinary day of your life and do something extraordinary? What do you think He wants to do today?

What changes do you need to make in your life so that God could take an ordinary day and make it into something extraordinary?

Let's Begin our study of Esther chapter 1:

Verses 1-8 Let's first gather all the facts:

In what year of King Ahasuerus' reign does the book of Esther begin? _____

Where did the King live? _____

What did the King do this particular day? _____

Who were the King's invited guests? _____

What did the King show his guests?

What do you think was the king's purpose of giving this great banquet and showing all his riches and splendor and majesty?

How long did the banquet last? _____

What did King Ahasuerus do after this first banquet ended? _____

How long did this second banquet last? _____

Who were the invited guests for the second banquet? _____

Why do you think the second banquet was so short? _____

What was the King's palace like? _____

What assumptions can you draw regarding the size of Ahasuerus' kingdom, the magnitude of the riches and the military power he possessed?

What assumptions can you draw from verses 1-8 about King Ahasuerus' character?

The books of history tell us that King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) had been planning an invasion of Greece during the previous 3 years. Greece was an area that had not yet been subdued by the Persians and an area he greatly desired to seek revenge upon due to the way they humiliated his father, King Darius I during the "Battle of the Marathon in 490 BC. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Marathon)

King Ahasuerus had an army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and actually led this invasion which occurred between chapters 1 and 2 of Esther. King Ahasuerus desired that all the powers

of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of every province join him in this effort both in moral support and in physical support. He wanted a guaranteed victory. The banquet was designed to completely win them over and convince them that the greatness of Ahasuerus and thereby their greatness would only be greater after the invasion and conquest of Greece. The entire banquet was all about pomp and circumstance, looks and appearance to impress those he wanted fully on his side for his own personal agenda. Ahasuerus needed their support, he needed their investment. He was giving this great banquet with the best art, best music, best entertainment and best food of the time, and he clearly wanted something in return, their full support to insure his victory.

Have you ever been influenced by the pomp and circumstance, and/or the looks and appearance of this world to become a partaker of something that clearly was not within God's will? What was the result?

Verses 9-12

Who had been absent from King Xerxes banquet? _____

What had she been doing? _____

Why do you think she also had thrown a banquet for the women?

What do you think motivated the king to request that Queen Vashti come to the all male banquet to show her beauty? _____

Why do you think Queen Vashti denied his request? _____

Do you believe she was justified in refusing to obey the king's command? Why or why not?

King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), in a completely drunken state (when the wine goes in, the ability to reason goes out), wanted to show off yet another splendor of his majesty, his beautiful wife. The sky was the limit for him; he was willing to do just about anything to win over all the powers, nobles and princes of Persia and Media to join him in his invasion of Greece, remember the great significance this invasion has for him. Maybe the presentation of his wife would do the trick. The king thought he had a good idea, but in reality he ended up dishonoring himself as a husband who should have sought to protect the modesty of his wife and also diminished himself as King because it was against the custom of the Persians for the women of that time to appear in public gatherings. Sometimes it is possible to go too far!

Notice that he ordered that the queen be brought before the king wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials. This order as far as it can be

understood possibly implies that the queen was asked to present herself naked with only her royal crown placed upon her head. How else would the guests be able to fully see and appreciate her beauty? What a scandal this would be! The queen denied the king's request. If the assumptions in this case are true, then Queen Vashti deserves our respect and admiration. Her beauty was designed for her husband's pleasure, not to be used as a public show for hundreds of drunken men. In the midst of this insipid scene she has the courage to say no to something that was clearly inappropriate. Submission is one thing, humiliation is another. Even if this is not the case, it was improper for Persian women to appear and present themselves in public gatherings. Queen Vashti certainly knew the customs of her time.

What virtues do you see in Queen Vashti? _____

Do you have the self respect and courage to take a firm stand when you are asked to do something that you know to be totally inappropriate or wrong? (Proverbs 1:10) _____

What is the primary factor that impedes you to take a firm stand when you are asked to do something that you know to be totally inappropriate or wrong and you do it anyway?

What is one Bible verse you can claim in truth when you are tempted to give in to a person, a circumstance or an influence and do something that is inappropriate or wrong? Write it here:

It is necessary to learn to take a strong and firm stand when you are asked to do something that you know is completely wrong and out of God's will. It is necessary to follow through and say no.

Verses 13-22

What was the king's reaction when the queen refused to obey his command? _____

Who exactly are the wise men listed in verse 14? _____

What can we conclude about King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) spiritual practices from this? _____

What solution did the wise men offer the king? _____

What is your perception of this reaction? Too soft? Just right? A bit exaggerated?

The wise men concluded that Vashti's actions would have a chain reaction throughout the kingdom and that all women would become disobedient of their husbands. The queen's bad example would have bad influence all over the kingdom. They were experts in the law and in justice, so they did what came naturally to them; they wrote a new law, a law that could never be changed, and a law that would directly affect every married woman in the kingdom.

Read verse 19 very carefully. ".....and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she." What is happening here? Could this be the hand of God intervening in history to set the stage to work out His plans and purposes? What effect this new law had upon the obedience and submission of the women of Persia at this time is not known, but God certainly used this entire event to make a way for Esther to be crowned as the next queen.

At this moment Esther does not have the least idea of what is happening in the palace, she does not know about the new law, she does not know that her life is about to change completely and forever. She is living every day as an ordinary day, living with Mordecai, going about her responsibilities. What a surprise awaits her!

Here we see the sovereignty of God at work. He is working behind the scenes, moving, pushing, reorganizing events, changing minds, even the most worldly of minds, until a decision is made that can be used to accomplish His plans, until a direction is taken that facilitates His divine plan. Finally His most excellent, supreme and excellent plan is under way. His nation, the Jews will be saved. God is always working.

Read Isaiah 55:8-11. What conclusion can you draw from this passage? _____

Read Proverbs 21:1.

What a powerful verse! "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." King Ahasuerus' (Xerxes') heart was in the Lord's hands. The greatest king of the ancient world's heart was in the Lord's hands. He was like a channel of water that could be directed where ever the Lord desired. God can move the hearts of world leaders when and how He desires.

Read Psalm 2 and Colossians 1:16-17. What consolation do we have regarding God's control over the nations and kings? _____

What impact does this truth have upon your life? _____

How might this truth affect the way you pray for the leaders of your country? _____

How does God want you to respond to what you have learned today?

In just one chapter of Esther we have seen the rich and powerful King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) go from enjoying life to the fullest at one of the ancient world's greatest parties surrounded by the most powerful people of that time to becoming a drunken fool, dishonored by his wife and fighting to keep command and control of his kingdom, at least where the women are concerned. Do you think he was able to gain the allies he desired for his planned invasion of Greece? Next week in Chapter 2 the outcome will be revealed.....

Before meeting for our study of Chapter 2 please read the story of the invasion of Greece:
<http://www.oldnewspublishing.com/xerxes.htm>

The New Star from the East

Please read Esther Chapter 2 very carefully.

Verses 1-4:

V 1 "After these things....." After what things? We must always find out what has happened to have a full understanding of what happened next.

First of all, how much time has passed? Verse 16 will give us a clue. _____

Now subtract a year for the preparation listed in verse 12. _____

So what is it that has happened in the approximate 3 year span between Chapters 1 and 2 of Esther???

IN summary:

After Darius I was defeated by the Greeks at the Battle of Marathon and he had returned to Persia, he began making plans for a second invasion. During this time he unexpectedly died and the Persian kingdom was placed into the hands of his son, King Xerxes.

King Xerxes was an ambitious and ruthless young man who desired to avenge the name and honor of his father. It took Xerxes 4 years to prepare for this massive invasion of Greece. Xerxes had the largest army ever assembled in the ancient world. Additionally he had an elite core of 10,000 warriors he called the "Immortals".

In the spring of 480 BC (immediately following Chapter 1) he and his army began their march toward Greece. Also a fleet of 1000 warships set sail along the Aegean Sea to accompany the army and carry provisions. Xerxes suffered his first setback at the waters of Dardanelles where the storms destroyed a bridge he had built before they were able to cross. A second bridge was built and the army crossed successfully into the kingdom of Thrace. This kingdom and every other kingdom in Xerxes path to Macedonia surrendered without resistance and were spared destruction. An elaborate feast was given for the Persian army in each of the surrendered cities by the king of that city, each day the Persians occupied a new city.

The first opposition Xerxes encountered was on the rocky Greek shores of Thermopylae, about 90 miles from Athens. There he met a fortified wall and 8000 Greek soldiers and was massively and repeatedly defeated at this Greek stronghold. He was never able to penetrate this Greek line. After several days a Greek traitor turned Persian spy told Xerxes of a hidden mountain pass that the Persians could use to bypass the Greek defenses at Thermopylae and continue their route to Athens, it was a 3 day march.

Instead of attacking Athens immediately, Xerxes sent his army to destroy and pillage the entire Greek countryside for 3 weeks. By the time Xerxes finally decided that it was time to attack Athens, the civilian population had escaped to an offshore island called Salamis. Xerxes ravaged the abandoned city of Athens anyway and claimed victory. Xerxes had avenged his father's defeat by the Athenians at Marathon, or so he thought. All that remained was to round up the Athenian refugees on the island of Salamis. Sounds simple enough, huh? The island was

separated from the mainland by a long narrow channel and was being guarded by 200 Greek warships. The Greeks had made a plan!

Xerxes impulsively ordered his warships into the channel. The Greek warships cleverly encircled all the Persians and launched a full scale attack. The Greek navy systematically destroyed Xerxes fleet.

Xerxes immediately planned his retreat back to Persia. He left part of his army behind to occupy Greece. He marched back through Dardanelles where he found the bridges he had built severely damaged. Finally he returned to his old empire with only about 5000 of the original hundreds of thousands of soldiers and very few tattered ships.

A year later Xerxes received word that the army he had left behind in Greece had been fully destroyed. His defeat was total and complete.

Yes, after these things.....and also when the anger and the resentment associated with the disobedience, humiliation and rash treatment of his wife Vashti had finally passed, he remembered his former wife, the queen Vashti, and what she had done and what the decree had been against her, this probably only added to his sad state.

Try to imagine the emotional state of the king. He is back within the magnificent walls of his palace; he is tired, defeated, discouraged, weary and just plain worn out because of the humiliation and defeat with the Greeks. He wishes to be received with open arms by a loving individual who might offer him some kind words of encouragement, comfort, love and understanding. He wasn't interested in seeing a servant, nor an official of his palace, but someone who would love him and sincerely care about him. In the past these needs would hopefully have been met by his wife, but now she is gone too. Perhaps for the first time in his life, King Ahasuerus felt total defeat and a deep, profound sadness and loneliness. It is possible that King Ahasuerus even entered some sort of a state of depression.

Those who were closest to him, his servants, quickly noted his grieving emotional state and quickly proposed a possible solution to him in verses 2-4.

Summarize the king's servant's plan to find a new wife for King Ahasuerus:

What were the 3 main characteristics they were looking for? _____

Do you consider these to be noble characteristics? Noble enough to satisfy a king?

The king LOVED the idea! He not only would have a new wife, but surely she would be the most beautiful woman in all of Persia. Surely this would satisfy the king, or would it? Could the king find a way to fill the void he had in his life with a new woman? Could the most beautiful women

in Persia bring rest to his soul, anesthetize his pain, fill the deep need of his heart and cure his loneliness? **Could this be the picture of all mankind without God? YES!**

☺ **This is just the beginning of all the spiritual pictures we will see in this story** ☺
King Ahasuerus is a picture of all mankind without God.

What are the main characteristics of man without God? _____

What are some of the things man tries to use to fill voids in his or her life?

What are some of the things you have tried to use to fill voids in your life? _____

Which of them brought satisfaction to your soul? _____

What is the only way you can satisfy your restless soul and fill the voids in your life?

What advice would you give a person in King Ahasuerus' state?

Verses 5-7

While Persia was in the midst of creating the world's largest beauty pageant, Mordecai and Esther, the two most important characters of our story, are introduced in verses 5-7.

During our introduction to the book of Esther, we studied Mordecai and his lineage thoroughly. Remember that Mordecai's name means "Little Man" that is, humbled man, and immediately suggests the One who humbled himself and became a man, who laid aside his glory and entered human life, becoming one of us. As we follow Mordecai through the story it is easy to recognize him as the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, whose task it is to exalt the One who came to redeem man, whose specific work it is to restore man to fellowship with God which had been lost. We will see that Mordecai will fulfill this role throughout the story.

Mordecai is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God

Mordecai was living in exile in Persia and was raising his uncle's daughter, "Hadassah" who had been orphaned.

Hadassah is the Jewish name for Esther. The name comes from the word "myrtle", which is a small, very fragrant bush. The leaves and berries have been used over history to remedy and sooth many a malady. Her name is clearly appropriate in relation to her role in this part of the story. Interestingly when the Feast of Tabernacles (a feast of celebration, peace and gratitude) was celebrated by the Jews, myrtle branches were among the significant branches used to make the booths. The modern Jews still adorn the booths and sheds at the Feast of

Tabernacles with myrtle. Myrtle is directly associated with celebration, peace and gratitude of the continued existence of the Jews nation; Esther surely will bring celebration, peace, and longevity to the Jewish nation.

Esther is a picture of man that has been regenerated by the Spirit of God whose purpose is to influence lost man

V 8

Esther was taken to the king's palace to be set among all the young ladies that would be given the chance to fill the void in the king's life; this was most likely done by Mordecai. This is exactly what the Spirit of God does with lost man, He places the solution right in his midst of options and pursues him and intervenes to be chosen.

Intertwined in this story we can find 3 very important lessons:

- **God's plans move forward even when the surrounding events are carnal, sinful and worldly.** Do you believe this? If the presence of God can penetrate ungodly banquet rooms in ancient Persia and subsequent beauty pageants, it can penetrate anything. God does not limit His work only to the lives of Christians, the study room of the pastor and the life of the church. He also works in the government offices, in bars and discotheques, in houses of prostitution, in drug factories; He works in China, Iraq, in all of America. His sovereignty has NO LIMITS. God is always working, He is always moving, He is always touching lives and hearts.

How does this truth encourage you? _____

- **God's purposes are not frustrated by moral failures.** Remember the banquet scene? Gross, vulgar, obscene, dirty, filthy and repulsive. Remember how the king wanted to expose his wife to satisfy the carnal desires of his guests and himself? Remember his divorce from Queen Vashti? In spite of all these failures, God's purposes were not frustrated. Why? Because God has a much wider and deeper view of life than we do. He sees the future and acts on behalf of mankind in his best interest according to His will, grace and mercy. His purposes are never frustrated.

How does this truth encourage you? _____

- **Any member of God's family who may consider him or herself to be unworthy, an obstacle, of possessing personal difficulties or restrictions or have impediments is not exempt from holding a prominent position for God.** Esther was a Jew living in exile in Persia, she was an orphan, and she had no royal blood, but God, in His purposes, exalted her to the position He had prepared for her according to His Plan. Who would have ever imagined?

How does this truth encourage you? _____

Do you believe that God has a special plan and purpose for you?

Do you believe that God can use you in spite of any dark shadows from the past, in spite of any failures, and in spite of any personal difficulties?

What did Esther do so that she could be found useful to God?

What must you do so that you can be found useful to God?

Jewish History tell us that approximately 400 young ladies participated in this beauty pageant competition.

V 9-20

How long did the preparation last? _____

What was the preparation like? _____

Is there any mention of any type of internal preparation? _____

Can you identify 6 Characteristics of strength and dignity displayed by Ester?

V 9 Esther demonstrated g_____ and e_____. Esther was obviously a model of goodness in the presence of the king's servants. The servant noted this, her internal quality, and rewarded her with special favors.

V 10 and 20 Esther demonstrated r_____ and s_____ c_____. Esther did not tell anyone that she was a Jew, why? Because Mordecai instructed her not to. She was able to keep a secret. Verbal restraint is a forgotten virtue in this day and age. Being prudent with one's mouth and tongue is a characteristic of strength and dignity.

V 10 and 20 Esther demonstrated a c_____ t_____ s_____. Even as Esther became a finalist she was still willing to listen and learn. We can learn so much from those around us if we just stop to listen and be committed to learning. A teachable spirit it a very important characteristic and should be a priority in our lives.

V 15 Esther demonstrated m_____ and h_____. "She requested nothing." At this moment in time Esther was approximately 20 years old, she was in the midst of the opportunity of a life time, she could have any desire she wanted, the best clothes, jewels, perfumes, cosmetics, manicure, pedicure, anything she wanted. But rather than taking advantage of her situation, she remained faithful to what she was taught. She did not succumb to the temptation, the superficiality, the selfishness, nor the seduction of the situation. The Bible says "She requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised."

V 17 Esther demonstrated e_____. Clearly Esther possessed a quality that caused the people around her to find favor with her. She was able to attract people in a clean, pleasant, sweet and attractive kind of way.

V 20 Esther demonstrated r_____ for authority. She not only remembered Mordecai's words to her but she also obeyed them fully. Even when she was exalted to the position of Queen of Persia, she still remembered and obeyed Mordecai's words.

Which of the characteristics or qualities demonstrated by Esther would you like to better develop in your life? _____

How might you go about this process? _____

Verses 16-18 have additional spiritual application. We may call this the "conversion of King Ahasuerus". He recognized Esther as the answer to his empty restless life, the burden of his pain was apparently lifted when he chose her. He set a sign of royalty upon her head, granted her authority in his kingdom and thus found the beginning of a new life. Throughout the kingdom there were immediate effects seen in the feasting, the holiday, and in the distribution of royal gifts.

How does this picture represent what God's Word says in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

V 21-23

Is there an Assassin in the Palace????

The beautiful story of Esther is interrupted once again by the sickness of sin, just as it interrupts our lives almost always when things are going really good. "In those days"..... The king had just found a new wife, a beautiful young lady inside and out. The beautiful orphan Jewish girl is crowned queen. The king is happy!! Mordecai is happy! Esther is happy! The nation is happy! But.....some bad news shows up.

We are not told of the motivations that caused Bigthan and Teresh, eunuch door keepers, to become furious with the king. Their fury led them to devise a plan to assassinate the king. Perhaps they were jealous, perhaps they had been offended in some way.....In those days they did not take the time to consult lawyers, do criminal investigations, and have long trials. The life of the king was in jeopardy, those responsible were punished. Good bye Bigthan and Teresh.

This event is the first indication in this story that there is an evil force at work to destroy man, to pervert the use of his life and to oppose the glory of God. We know of this evil force all too well. It is alive and well and at work in our kingdom too. The soul of man is the prize in this great warfare. The enemy tries to strike but Mordecai discovers the plot and the adversaries are taken out and nailed to a tree (this is the original meaning of being hung on the gallows). God

has done just this for you! There is a threat of evil which tries to overcome us, but the enemy is known and his doom is certain.

What spiritual picture can you see as Bigthan and Teresh are nailed to the tree? _____

How does Colossians 2:13-15 relate to this picture?

13 ¶ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Who discovered the plot to lay hands on the king? _____

Where was this case written? _____

What significance might this have? _____

Could this be God's invisible hand once again intervening in history? _____

What significance might this whole event in history have for your life?

God has recorded all that He has done for us in His Word, as we begin to understand what His Word says about deliverance that has already been wrought for us, and we realize what has been nailed to the tree and made a public testimony for us, then we will begin to experience the deliverance that God intends for our lives.

Can you identify yourself with King Ahasuerus? Have you known the restlessness of life living without God? Have you engaged yourself in a great search for something to satisfy your soul? Have you tired a variety of things before finally realizing that only in Jesus Christ is there satisfaction for the deep needs of your heart? Have you received Him and discovered new life? This is just the beginning of the story, our story and Esther's story. God wants to work in our lives, He wants to deliver us from our enemies, He wants to expose those hidden plots in our lives that keep us in bondage. He wants to bring us into glorious liberty and freedom.

The Evil Conspiracy

Please read Chapter 3 very carefully.

Verse 1: "After these things.." This refers to the events at the end of Chapter 2 when Mordecai discovered the plot by Bigthan and Teresh to kill the king. Mordecai told Esther, and Esther told King Ahasuerus who ordered the judgment carried out against them. One might have thought that the judgment carried out upon Bigthan and Teresh would be sufficient to deter future evil plans. But as human nature would have it, it only gets worse.

Something very strange is happening here at the beginning of Chapter 3. Wasn't it Mordecai who discovered the murder plot against the king, and revealed the plot to Esther who revealed it to the king? Wasn't it Mordecai who saved the king's life? So why then is Haman promoted to position number 2 in the kingdom? Haman is made to be the king's favorite, his personal confidant, the prime minister of state.

What do you think the king saw in Haman that was commendable or worthy of this merit?

Does this appointment seem fair to you? _____

Well, when evil is at work, injustice will r_____. This is a promise, a pledge and a guarantee.

So just who is Haman? The Bible says that he is the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, this was his father. So who then is Hammedatha the Agagite? He was a descendant of the Agagites, of King Agag's family, king of Amalekites of the city of Amalek. Let's discover who they all are. Since they are mentioned in God's word we can be sure they are significant and important regarding their relationship with Haman.

First Read 1 Samuel 15:1-9. King Saul had received an order from the prophet Samuel to go and completely destroy the Amalek city. This was to include the utter destruction of ALL the people and ALL the animals. The reason that this order was given was because the Amalek people were Israel's worst enemies. They had attacked the God's people when they were coming up out of Egypt as described in verse 2, you can read about this event in Deuteronomy 25:17-19. God had made a promise to the Amalekites that they would have continual war against God because of their wickedness against His people. Exodus 17:16 says : "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation." So, King Saul received an order from Samuel to go and completely destroy the Amalek city by war, just one of the many wars God promised the Amalek people.

God's plan was for the Amalekites to be utterly destroyed by Saul and his army. The Amalekites represented sin and the only way to deal with sin is to utterly destroy it or exterminate it.

But Saul did not understand the big picture, he did not fully obey the order, he made a "better" plan. He did attack the Amalekites and utterly destroyed all the people, but he spared Agag's life and brought him back with him as a prisoner and also spared the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs and all that he saw to be good supposedly for sacrifices to the Lord. Does this sound like a "better" plan? Well, this was a huge mistake as "better" plans tend to be! He even lied to Samuel to try and cover it up. As a result of this disobedience Samuel returned to Saul (1 Samuel 15:10-23) to expose his disobedience, rebuke him and remove him as king. Ouch!

Has God ever asked you to do something and instead of obeying Him fully you came up with a "better" plan? _____

Describe the last time you came up with a "better" plan. _____

What was the outcome of the "better" plan? _____

So what happened to King Agag? Saul brought Agag to Samuel who hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. 1 Samuel 15:32-33.

Now, who was Amalek? Look at Exodus 17:8-16 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 (Parallel texts). Amalek was one of Israel's greatest enemies. Amalek had led the battle against Israel in Rephidim as they were coming up out of the land of Egypt with Moses and Aaron. God had promised that the memory of Amalek would be utterly blotted out on earth.

If we dig further back we will discover the origin of Amalek. We will find that he was Esau's rebellious grandson. (Genesis 36:12, 15, 16) Esau's firstborn was Eliphaz, Eliphaz's son was Amalek. The relationship between Esau and God was not a good one. Esau had rejected God's grace, the spiritual blessing and the firstborn rights God had given him. Because of this, God despised Esau (Malachi 1:2-3). So the hatred and evil intentions that Esau had for God and His people were passed to Amalek, and from Amalek to the Amalekites, and from the Amalekites to King Agag, and from King Agag to Hammedatha the Agagite and finally to Haman.

From the written history in the Bible we can see that Esau, Esau's descendents, Amalek, Agag and his descendents (Haman and his father) all represent the enemy that was always present to oppose God's work. Haman is the very present evil enemy in the story of Esther. He is always ready to oppose God's work. There is an evil force in the life of every individual that is always trying to oppose God's work. It is called "the sinful flesh" and its purpose is exactly the same as Haman's: to exalt itself, to advance itself, to honor itself. King Ahasuerus believed that Haman was a reliable friend, he exalted him, he advanced him and he honored him by putting him in the highest possible available position in his kingdom.

Haman is a picture of the evil enemy that is always present and active to negatively influence and oppose God's work, that is, the sinful flesh, in our lives.

Has the flesh ever appeared to you as a trusted friend just as Haman appeared to King Ahasuerus? _____

Did you exalt it to a high position in your life? _____
What was the result? _____

What one true purpose does the flesh always have in you life? _____

How can you more easily detect "the flesh" in your life? _____

What is the best way to deal with the flesh when it rears its nasty head in your life?

Verses 2-6 Remember that Mordecai was a Jew, a member of God's chosen people of Israel. He probably knew the history of Esau, of Amalek, of Agag. He also probably knew that Haman was their descendent and probably also knew that Haman hated the Jews. On the other hand, Haman knew that Mordecai was a Jew and he took occasion of his new position to seek revenge against the Jews. As we can observe, his hatred was quite consuming. Haman wanted to achieve that which his relatives had been unable to accomplish. He wanted to destroy God's chosen people. The perfect opportunity presented itself when Mordecai would not bow down to him.

Why do you think that Mordecai was not willing to bow before Haman or pay him homage?

Mordecai believed and faithfully practiced God's commandments. Exodus 20:3-5 says: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Mordecai's conscience did not permit him to bow down to anyone other than God. His faith was firm, even though the king's servants spoke to him daily to bow down and pay homage, he never did it. As a result, Haman became more and more filled with wrath. It was not enough for Haman to just destroy Mordecai; rather he sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom.

Remember that Mordecai represents the Holy Spirit of God working in the life of a believer. The Bible says in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It was impossible for there to be any peaceful resolution between

Mordecai and Haman just as it is impossible for there to be any peaceful resolution between the Spirit of God and sinful flesh. The Spirit of God can never bow down to sinful flesh.

Exalting the flesh to a high position in your life as King Ahasuerus did with Haman and bowing down to it as the king's servants did to Haman are 2 different things. How would you describe each one?

(Promoting it to a position of importance is the first step of it having a more significant role in your life, bowing down to it shows that you have become enslaved to it.)

The presence of the Spirit of God in the heart of man rouses the flesh to take a more active role. Have you discovered that in your life?

Have you found that when you became a Christian that you had more trouble than before with your flesh? _____

Why might this be true? _____

One of the most important things that a Christian must learn to do is to recognize the flesh as it influences his or her kingdom (his or her life), recognize the strategy it uses, and formulate a plan of victory over it (this 3 part recipe can be different for each individual).

Verses 7-15

King Ahasuerus is now in the 12th year of his reign in Persia. 5 years have passed since Esther was chosen queen. Why are they casing lots? It was very common at that time to cast lots to determine the timing for a particular event. It was the first month; the lot fell on the 12th month. Certainly this would give Haman added insurance that King Ahasuerus would accept his proposal, everything was being done by the books. The lot determined that the Jews would be eliminated on the 3rd day of the 12th month. Since the extermination date was determined by casting lots, they believed that good luck would come to King Ahasuerus' kingdom after it was carried out. Haman was committed to getting the king's approval, but he had to do it subtly. He had to do things in such a way that the King would not suspect any wrong doing. This is how the spirit of evil works, huh?

Which spirit do you allow to work most predominately in your life?

What are the evidences of it?

If the Spirit of God is predominately working in your life what will be the evidence? Use Galatians 5:22-23 to answer this question. (Note that the Fruit of the Spirit is singular)

Note how Haman explains the problem of the Jews to King Ahasuerus in verse 8. He uses the phrase "a certain people" to depersonalize them, he uses the terms "scattered and dispersed" to make them sound much less significant, he tells the King that "their laws are different from all other peoples and that they do not keep the king's laws." He begins by filling the king's head with doubt then he equated different with bad and outright lied when he said that they do not keep the king's laws. He was taking the instance of Mordecai and extrapolating it to the entire race. Haman made the Jews sound like vagabonds and criminals, scandalous for society and a bad influence on all the "good people". Then he decisively states the only possible solution and strategy of making it happen. Do you see how Haman subtly distorts everything? There is no way that the King would ever think it to be a bad decision to eliminate them, on the contrary, it would be a blessing, his kingdom would be better for it. Since Haman is the trusted and exalted friend of the King, the King does not need to question his presentation of the "facts". This is exactly how the flesh works in our lives.

Just to top it all off in verse 9 Haman further appeals to the fleshly desires of the king by offering 10,000 talents of silver to be placed in the king's treasury upon completion of the blessed task. 10,000 talents of silver represent approximately \$3.84 billion dollars. Wow!!!

The king didn't even have to think about the proposal. He immediately and formally approves by giving his signet ring to Haman. The deal is sealed and to top it off the king places the money and the people in Haman's hands to do with as seems good to him. What an easy out for the king, he has no formal responsibility in the matter. **Doesn't that just remind you of Pilate who washed his hands of the crucifixion of Christ? (Matthew 27:24)** Haman had no idea that his evil plan was going to directly affect the king. Queen Esther was a Jew and the king's beloved wife now of 5 years. When an evil plan is in full movement, there are always areas of consequence that can not yet be perceived. How is the king going to react when he finds out that this evil plan is going to include his beloved wife?

Describe the last time you were tempted into falling into the hands of a Haman?

Describe the last time you actually fell into the hands of a Haman. _____

Has Haman ever spoken softly into your heart? "Lie, its ok, its necessary". "Just be a little tricky, it is the only way out." "Argue, you are right, they are wrong." "Don't be respectful; they do not deserve your respect." "Just do a mediocre job; no one is noticing you anyway."

What has Haman spoken softly into your heart lately? _____

Be extremely careful to what you listen to in your heart!! It might just be your flesh talking!!

The decree was written, signed, sealed and published in the 127 provinces. The Israelites had 11 months to figure out what to do. If they didn't come up with a successful counter plan, they would be exterminated on the 3rd day of the 12th month and all their possessions would be plundered by the Persians.

Look at how the chapter finishes "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." What a contrasting scene!

The city of Shushan was in confusion. No one knew what to think. The Jews certainly would have felt this way, but what about their Persian neighbors who knew them to be fair and merciful people. They too were worried for their friends. "Why had this decree been made?", they must have thought. The Jews were peaceful people, why were they going to be treated so radically? And what would be the consequences to the Persians? Would they be the next victims of another injustice? This decree threw the city into a state of total confusion.

Note the contrast: King Ahasuerus and Haman are not concerned with the people's reaction, they are enjoying peace and in good company with each other. The king was surely deceived, even deluded by the underhandedness of Haman. He believed that his kingdom was going to be much better off without the Jews, he was appreciative of Haman and his brilliant proposal, he invited him to celebrate and drink some wine with him. He was having his own little personal party. King Ahasuerus underestimated 4 critical facts that afflict all human beings. Let's identify them:

- He underestimated the power of the evil.
- He underestimated the jurisdiction of temptation.
- He underestimated the influence of the flesh in his life.
- He underestimated the potential of hate and vengeance in his kingdom.

Which of these errors have you committed?

Never commit these errors again!!!!

Allow the Spirit of God to control your life. Allow Him to provide you with the powerful defenses against the flesh.

What are our defenses?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 _____

Ephesians 6:10-18 _____

James 4:7 _____

Revelation 12:11 _____

Satan is already our defeated enemy. The Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our victory when He died, was buried and rose again. Allow the Lord Jesus Christ to give you God's promises today.

What are our promises?

1 Corinthians 10:13 _____

1 Corinthians 15:57 _____

1 John 4:4 _____

Jude 24-25 _____

The key to victory in the spiritual battle is to have the spiritual strength BEFORE the spiritual attack comes. Spiritual strength to resist the spiritual attack is not something that comes automatically; it is something we must work at daily.

- Spend quality time in God's Word and in prayer to be strong spiritually
- Memorize the Word of God and guard it in your heart to be strong spiritually
- Give yourself fully to God and allow the fullness of the Holy Spirit to be active in your life to be strong spiritually
- Seek refuge under the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to be strong spiritually
- Ask for forgiveness of sin and keep your relationship with God clean to be strong spiritually
- Maintain strong and solid Christian relationships and friendships to be strong spiritually
- Share your faith with others that don't know Christ to be strong spiritually
- Serve God with your whole heart when ever and where ever He places you to be strong spiritually

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the weakest and 10 being the strongest, where do you honestly rank your current spiritual strength?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What changes do you need to make in your life so that your spiritual strength can be boosted and expanded?

The Value of Just One

Can just one individual person make a dramatic difference in the overwhelming needs of today's world?

Before answering this question, consider the following:

There is only one special unique you. You are the only person with your heritage, your genetic make up, your past experiences, your talents and abilities, and your trials, in this day, in this age, in this place. You are the only one with your convictions, your character, your special touch, your voice, your style, your circle of influence. You are the only one special unique you.

History books are filled with men and women who have made a difference. The Bible is also full of men and women who have made a great difference, many changed the history of the world for the better. Can you name any such people?

Without a single doubt, the One and Only single Person throughout all history who has made the greatest difference is the Lord Jesus Christ. Your answer to the above question should be YES!!!. Yes, one individual person can made a dramatic difference in the overwhelming needs of today's world. But how you ask?? We will formulate "the how" from today's dramatic lesson.

Please read Esther Chapter 4 very carefully.

The date had been set for the extermination of the Jews in Persia. In a flash, evil Haman used his wicked influence upon the unaware King Ahasuerus to advance his personal plan. While the king and Haman celebrated the "brilliant" decree inside the palace that would rid the kingdom of those unwanted people, the capital city of Shushan was in total turmoil. This contrast is always the result when the enemy attacks and the flesh takes control. But, this story can not end here. The Jewish nation is God's chosen people. God had made them many promises, and among those promises, He promised that He would always take care of them, protect them and hold them special to Him.

Look up Genesis 12:1-3. What does God promise Abram about the forth coming nation of Israel?

There had to be a solution to this decreed mandate. But it was already law in Persia. Well maybe they can draw up an amendment or something? Nope! When a decree was drawn up and approved by the king, it was final, unchangeable, immutable, non transferable, it was final! The consequences of the king's decision were inevitable; the suffering of the Jews was inescapable. No one could change this particular law in any way. It had to be carried out. Does it appear that there is no hope for the Jewish nation living in Persia?

Verses 1-4

"When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes." In the Middle East it was very common for a person to literally rip off their clothes and

put on a long baggy shirt made of sackcloth and cover themselves with the soot of ashes for the purpose of publicly expressing sorrow or mourning. The sackcloth was generally a dark, coarse, rough, uncomfortable cloth made of black goat's hair. It was commonly used in times of destruction, sickness, death, suffering, or disaster as a symbol of mourning. There was no misunderstanding when a person was seen dressed this way; they were definitely afflicted with deep sorrow. At times the person might even sit in the midst of the ashes and repeatedly throw them up upon his or her head expressing extreme and intense sorrow and affliction. Mordecai certainly had good reason to express sorrow, visible and audible sorrow. He and his people were to suffer nothing less than total extermination. No one would have mistaken his actions for anything but deep sorrow.

Dressed in sackcloth and ashes, Mordecai first went out into the midst of the city where he "cried out with a loud and bitter cry". What do you think that cry might have sounded like? Try and simulate something that might have been heard by those around him.

Why do you think he went into the midst of the city? _____

What might have been the different reactions of the people who saw and heard Mordecai?

Shortly after gathering maximum attention in the busiest and most crowded part of the city, Mordecai continued and went as far as the front of the king's gate, he knew he would not be allowed to enter, but perhaps he would be visible and somehow attract the attention of the queen. Esther knew nothing of the decree or the turmoil in the city, but that had to change, she needed to know what was happening.

Verse 3 tells us that the expression of mourning extended to every province that had received the bad news, the mourning was great among the Jews, they fasted, they wept, they wailed, and many dressed in sackcloth and ashes. Can you mentally imagine this scene? This is a picture of very extensive and profound sorrow. The majority of the Jews were united in their affliction, this should not surprise us. Affliction that affects so many is bound to unite. This is a natural human response. Here we see that the Jews also fasted. Fasting allowed them to concentrate more intensely upon spiritual matters. This certainly was a spiritual war.

Esther's maids and eunuchs quickly became aware of Mordecai's behavior and appearance and ran to tell Esther. Esther was deeply distressed, not because she knew of the decree and death sentence upon the Jews but because she realized that something was greatly distressing her father Mordecai. She did not want Mordecai to be distressed so she did the fastest thing that came to her mind. "Here, quickly, take Mordecai some new clothes so he can change and thus feel much better.....I don't want him feeling sad and I don't want him outside the king's gate making a spectacle of himself, we need to get him covered up in something decent." She may have been genuinely concerned about his wellbeing and wanted to console him with some new

clothes, or it is possible that additionally she was embarrassed by his actions and wanted them to stop. What better than a brand new outfit from Abercrombie and Fitch? What a shock, Mordecai would not accept the new clothes!

Why do you think Mordecai would not accept the new clothes? _____

What had Esther failed to find out? _____

Have you ever heard someone near you cry out with a loud and bitter cry? _____

What are some of the different forms that loud and bitter cries take on in today's world?

How do you respond when you hear someone near you cry out with a loud and bitter cry? Is your first response to try and make the person feel better by trying to make him or her look better or do you tend to get to the root of the problem no matter how ugly it might get?

Do you tend to respond by offering external solutions or do you respond by offering internal and spiritual solutions? _____

Verses 5-9

Esther needed clarity. She had NO IDEA what was happening or what the source of Mordecai's deep grief was. One thing was for certain, she needed to find out the whole truth of the matter. So she sent Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs. It is very interesting to note that the name Hathach means "verily" or in other words: in fact, certainly, most assuredly, or in truth.

Esther sent in truth to find out the truth.

What an excellent choice when we want to know the real truth of a matter especially if a person is deeply distressed. Mordecai was very careful to communicate all the vital details to Hathach. Mordecai gave details of the sum of money and the planned destruction of the Jews. He was even careful to send a copy of the decree just so Esther could see it with her own eyes and confirm all the facts. Mordecai did not lose control of himself as he communicated this information, he did not exaggerate this information, he did not misrepresent any detail of the information, he simply communicated the truth to the one who was in truth with reasonable urgency. Additionally we see that he entrusted lifesaving instructions to be communicated to Esther. "Tell Esther to go in to the king and to make supplication for him and for her people."

Do you seek truthful information when personally involved in a particular circumstance?

Do you consider yourself to be a truthful and factual communicator?

Are you committed to telling the truth, just the truth and nothing but the truth all the time?

We live in a day and age where the truth is not very popular. Very few people seek or tell the whole truth. It is more exciting to exaggerate the facts, make it seem worse than it was or better than it was. It is more exciting to misrepresent the facts, take them out of context and sugar them up some or twist them around. Anything but the whole truth is a lie.

In Psalm 15:1-2, David inquired of the Lord regarding a vital situation that should be of our utmost interest. David asked the Lord: "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" Let's discover the Lord's answer: "He who walks _____, and works _____ and speaks the _____ in his heart."

What might have happened if Mordecai had not told the whole truth to Hathach? What might have happened if Hathach hadn't heard and communicated the whole truth to Esther? What might have happened if Esther hadn't heard and understood the whole truth as it was communicated to her? Be very careful with the truth, speak it fully, send it correctly, hear it attentively, and guard it diligently. The future of your kingdom depends upon it.

Verses 10-12

The long distance communication between Esther and Mordecai continued. Once again Hathach was faithful to communicate the whole truth as Esther spoke it and relayed it 100% accurately back to Mordecai. Esther had understood Mordecai's order to go into the king and make supplication for the Jewish people. This was a huge risk. Esther's hesitation is understandable. She could lose her life. Her doubt laced reaction and indecision was a normal response. In those days a queen could not enter into the presence of the king without a personal invitation. It had already been 30 days since she had seen the king, and he still had not called for her. Additionally, Esther was a Jew; she did not know how a Gentile king was going to react when he found out this very significant detail. Esther had a huge dilemma to consider and was wise in communicating this back to Mordecai; she needed his full direction and his full assurance. Remember who Mordecai represents? Like Esther, we would always be wise in expressing our concerns to God and in allowing the Holy Spirit of God to intervene on our behalf and lead us into receiving God's direction and assurance.

Verses 13-14

Mordecai knew Esther, he had raised her, he had educated her, and he had trained her. He knew what she would think and how she would respond. He knew her character and he knew her convictions. Mordecai appealed to her character and to her convictions. With great passion, effect and persuasion Mordecai sent a 3 fold message back to Esther.

- Firstly, if she was not willing to do anything, then she must not think that she would escape the coming extermination just because she was the queen.
- Secondly, even if they all died, God would raise up relief and deliverance for the Jews from another place, and
- Thirdly (and the best option), it would be extremely wonderful if she would allow God to use her. He explained this truth to her by reasoning that perhaps she had come to the kingdom for just exactly a time as this.

Remember Esther is a picture of a man that has been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Her purpose (as is ours) is to make a difference for God right when and where she is. She is to use her influence for God to make a monumental difference right then and there in Persia. Mordecai was appealing to her to be compliant with God's purpose for her life. What would have happened if she would have failed to be compliant with God's purpose for her life? Oh my, do we even want to consider that possibility??

This is God's message to us too. God has place us at this exact place, at this exact time with our own unique special set of internal and external circumstances and qualities so that we can fulfill His purposes for our lives for His glory.

Are you compliant with God's purposes in your life as He reveals them to you? _____
What internal characteristics compliment compliance toward God? _____

Is your tendency to yield to Him? Are you submissive and obedient to Him?

What internal characteristic oppose compliance to God? _____

Is your tendency to be stubborn? To be obstinate?

Just as Esther faced the need to make a personal decision on this point regarding compliance with God's purposes, you must also do. Are you willing to be compliant with God's purposes? Or, will you be stubborn with God's purposes? Many will be affected by your decision.

Mordecai's message to Esther is clear: "This is your hour! Put your best foot forward! God is with you! Fulfill your purpose! You are the person and you are able!"

God's message to us is clear: "This is your hour! Put your best foot forward! God is with you! Fulfill your purpose! You are the person and you are able!" Amen?

Verses 15-17

Finally we arrive at the last leg of the communication between Mordecai and Esther. It was Esther's turn to respond to Mordecai words which had revealed God's message. With great courage and faith she chose to make a difference. She set aside all personal interests and consequences. She was willing to die, die doing what was correct, die fulfilling her God given purpose in that place at that time. It was all worth it. Her fears were transformed into faith, her doubts into trust, her indecision into determination, her worries about her own life into concern for her people. Esther was ready to take that step and fulfill her purpose for God. Note her instructions to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan and fast for me, neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

What was the source of her ability to make the decision to fulfill God's purpose for her life?
What was the source of her faith? Her trust? Her determination? Her concern for her people?
What was the source of her ability to say, "If I perish, I perish!" (the single source answer is found in her instructions)_____

Did you note that Esther was convinced of God's resurrection power?? That was the turning point for her to be able to be compliant with God's purposes. She was going to have God's resurrection power on her side. Even if she died, it would still be right. She had settled the issue of her own death; it was no longer an obstacle because she believed in God's resurrection power. God's resurrection power was able to overcome her greatest fears, her deepest doubts, her fluctuating indecision, and even the issue of the fate of her own life.

What is the key for you to be able to fulfill God's purposes in your life and make a dramatic difference in the world in which you live? _____

Esther is a wonderful example of a godly woman who took the time to be conscious of her world's problems, be compliant with God's purposes for her life and be convinced of God's resurrection power to make a dramatic difference in the world in which she lived. We would be very wise to follow her example.

Are you willing to be conscious of the problems of those who are around you?
Identify your greatest obstacle and give it to God.

Are you willing to be compliant with God's purposes in your life?
Identify your greatest obstacle and give it to God.

Are you willing to be convinced of God's resurrection power to use you to make a dramatic difference in the world in which you live?
Identify your greatest obstacle and give it to God.

Now go, and make a difference!

Humility or Pride? The Choice is Yours When Problems Arise!

At the end of Chapter 4 we saw how Esther was guided into facing probably the biggest difficulty of her entire life, the annihilation of her people, The Jews. Esther told Mordecai to gather together all the Jews in Shushan and fast and pray for her for 3 days. Esther was going to do likewise with all her maids. After 3 days of prayer and fasting Esther was going to go to the king and do something so that Haman's wicked plan could be unveiled and so that her people could be saved. What were some of the obstacles that Esther was going to have to overcome in order to attempt to save her people?

1. She was going to have to break the law (Esther 4:11).
2. She was going to have to confess her true heritage to the king, her husband.
3. She was going to try and reverse an irreversible law.
4. She was going to oppose the second most powerful man in the kingdom.
5. She was going to strike a serious blow to the king's pride for going along with Haman's plan.
6. Can you think of another obstacle she was going to have to overcome?

How would you rate these obstacles? (Circle one)

Low Level

Moderate Level

High Level

Impossible Level

How was Esther going to be able to overcome these obstacles as she sought resolution to this major problem? What was the source of Esther's ability to make the decision to go before the king and do something so that Haman's wicked plan could be unveiled and so that her people could be saved? (She is going to need it, isn't she??) _____

During those 3 days in which Esther was humbly believing and patiently and fully waiting upon God and trusting in His Resurrection power, God was working in the lives and hearts of those immediately involved and was also working in Esther, filling her with His strength, His perspective, His energy and His courage so that she could fulfill His purpose for her life. It was Esther's humble character that allowed her to believe God, wait upon Him, and trust His Resurrection Power to do a miracle.

What character trait is necessary so that you can be enabled to believe God, wait upon Him and trust in His Resurrection Power to do a miracle? _____

Look up Isaiah 40:31, and fill in the blanks. "But those who _____ on the Lord shall _____ their strength; they shall mount up with wings like _____, They shall _____ and not be _____, they shall _____ and not faint."

This precious verse teaches us 4 spiritual principles when we wait upon the Lord and His Resurrection Power.

1. We obtain new strength. We may feel weak, even intimidated initially when faced with a problem, but as we wait upon the Lord our weakness is converted into His strength.
2. We obtain a better perspective. The verse says that we will mount up with wings like eagles. Did you know that an eagle can see a fish in a lake from many miles away? When we wait upon God we gain a better perspective of our situation. We are more likely to react with good sense rather than imprudently with our emotions.
3. We obtain extra immediate short term energy. We shall run and not be weary. Note that the verb tenses are in the future. When we wait upon God we shall have extra energy from God to do what we need to do. The waiting comes first; the extra energy is the result.
4. We obtain supernatural determination to persevere. We will walk and not faint. This is for the long haul to make it through the problem. When we wait upon God we will make it through. This is God's promise.

Esther and her people waited upon God and His Resurrection Power! Perhaps you have never faced a problem as great as Esther did but nevertheless you undoubtedly have faced struggles, opposition, difficulties, problems, trials, and hardships to some degree in your life. What is your first response? Do you wait upon God and His Resurrection Power or do you cross your fingers and jump head first?

What is usually the outcome when you wait upon the Lord? _____

What is usually the outcome when you cross your fingers and jump head first? _____

Look up Isaiah 41: 10 and 13 and fill in the blanks. " _____ for I am with you; Be _____ for I am your God. I will _____ you, Yes, I will _____ you, I will _____ you will My righteous right hand." "For I, the Lord your God will _____ you right hand, saying to you, _____, I will help you." This is our promise!

Remember, while humble Esther waited upon God and His Resurrection Power for 3 days she was strengthened, she gained God's perspective; she obtained new energy, and a new determination to follow through with God's purpose for her life. God was able to completely take control of the key people and the situation and begin to work a miracle. During these three days Esther was prepared for her moment of truth so that she would be able to enter into the king's presence with calmness, composure, wisdom and courage. What was the key that enabled her to wait upon God? _____

Please read Esther Chapter 5 very carefully.

Observe carefully how Esther deals with her problem. Verses 1-2 Esther put on her royal robes at the end of the third day of fasting and prayer and went into the inner court, which was across from the throne room where the king was sitting on his throne. As the king saw Esther standing there, he held out the golden scepter to her. At this time she had been married to the king for more than five years. He asked her request and even promised that he would grant it up

to half of the kingdom. His acceptance of her and his promise to her showed her that she was still special to him. Remember Proverbs 21:1? "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water He turns it wherever He wishes." Esther found favor in the king's sight; this was the work of God because Esther had waited upon Him. Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter connecting her with the king.

Verse 3-5: It is clear that the king's heart was touched, he knew that Esther would not have appeared before him had she not had a good reason. He assured her that anything she requested would be given to her, even up to half of his kingdom. But Esther did not make her true request known at this time. Instead, she invited the king, along with Haman, to a banquet she had already prepared for them. This seems to indicate the plan that God had revealed to her as she prayed and fasted for 3 days (imagine preparing a banquet while praying and fasting for 3 days!!). The king understood that she was not yet ready to make her request. He loved her idea of the banquet, we remember from the beginning of the book of Esther how much he loved banquets. That leads us to some interesting questions: Why the delay with the true request? Why not simply say what she wanted? Might she have been waiting for the "right time" to ask? For "God's time" to ask? One thing we can say for certain: what she was preparing to ask of the king would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for him to grant. It would take a miracle to deliver the Jews. Only God would be able to deliver His people from death. Could it be that she humbly continued to wait upon God?

When in the past you were faced with a difficult situation, did you jump ahead of God and do something imprudent and later regretted not waiting upon Him and His plan? _____

What do you think was the key factor that led you to jump ahead of God and react? _____

Describe the last time you did just that: _____

What might you do the next time you are faced with a difficult situation so that you allow God to take complete control of your body and spirit and allow Him to act through you so that the situation is resolved according to His purposes? _____

Verse 6-8: The king and Haman attended Esther's banquet. She probably prepared the king's favorite food and timed her appearance so that the king would be eager to attend and enjoy. Esther also understood the strategic role of banquets; these meals were good occasions for drinking. As they were drinking their wine, the king again asked Esther what her request was, and again offered her every assurance that he would grant whatever she asked up to half the kingdom. Again, Esther declined to make her petition known. Again she made another delay humbly waiting upon God for His perfect timing. Rather than revealing her request imprudently, Esther, with humility and respect, simply invited the king to attend another banquet, which she

would prepare for both he and Haman the next day. She also made it clear that she would present her petition at the next banquet.

What do you think Haman was thinking during this entire time? He must have been on cloud nine! He was invited to the banquet with the king and Esther. He must have been patting himself on the back pretty good and congratulating himself for his new found power and position. His pride and arrogance can almost be felt, his ego was swelling. He must have seen himself more worthy every day, more and more satisfied with his accomplishments, his self esteem was probably sky high, not only had he won over the king, but apparently he had won over the queen too.....What might we expect to see shortly in Haman's life? Look to Proverbs 16:18 for a clue.

Observe carefully how Haman deals with his problem. Verses 9-14: Haman exited at the king's gate joyfully and filled with gladness from the first banquet only to see Mordecai sitting at the gate. Do you think that Haman's joy and gladness is for real? Read Job 20:4-29 for the answer.

What is God's plan for the wicked?

Mordecai did not stand, nor even acknowledge Haman as he exited. Haman too had a difficulty in his life, a hardship he had to bear, a struggle, a trial, and that problem's name was Mordecai. Haman's problem with Mordecai and the Jews was as equally problematic for him as Esther's problem with the annihilation of the Jews was for her. Their approaches to dealing with their problems were as polar opposites as were the nature of their problems.

Haman was furious but was able to control and hold his anger. He held his anger because he knew that Mordecai's D-day was coming soon. Once home, Haman couldn't wait to bask in his glory. Brag..... Brag..... Brag..... There, his wife and family stroke his ego. He recounted stories of his great riches and multitudes of children. He boasted of the honors he had received by the king above all his peers and boasted about his exclusive invitation accompanying only the king to not one but two royal banquets hosted by the queen. As he continued in verse 13, he realized that the day was not a total success: As long as Mordecai sat at the king's gate and refused to bow down and worship him all his gains were of no true meaning or use to him. Haman was truly consumed with anger. Can you imagine the thoughts of those who had to listen to all that Haman said?

As Christians, in what must we glory only? Galatians 6:14 _____

The solution seemed simple to Haman's friends and family: do away with Mordecai! Don't wait until the appointed day. His wife suggested that Haman build a gallows that night, and speak to the king in the morning to do away with this rebel. Then Haman could truly savor his moment in

glory. Haman took the advice and immediately (no waiting!) set about to have the gallows built so it will be ready in the morning. The gallows were 75 feet high and actually a tree or post. A person would be impaled upon the post and then lifted high so that everyone would see. It was a very painful, humiliating death. Can you imagine seeing a man impaled upon a post set over 7 stories high in the center of Shushan for all the population to see?

Spiritually speaking Haman's gallows are a picture of what God is allowing. He is letting Satan hang himself on his own gallows but we will see that more in chapter 7.....The conflict will soon be ending ☺

With all of his riches, glory and power one might imagine that Haman would be satisfied. Even his wife was a source of riches to him, her name, Zeresh, means Gold! She was another one of his trophies. But he was not satisfied, one man, Mordecai, did not respect him, did not bow down to him. He wants EVERYONE to bow down to him. Do you remember who Haman is a picture of?

What one word sums up Haman's character in Chapter 5? Here are some clues: it is the polar opposite of humility, it begins with the letter p and has 8 letters, and it was also Satan's downfall sin. P _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Pride is a very terrible sin and it is the very reason we chose not to wait upon God and His Resurrection Power. A proud person sees himself as the center of the universe, he is the most important, he depends upon himself and is assured that he is able, he believes in himself, he has the power, and he will be victorious. He wants all focus on him, he wants all to notice what he has accomplished; he wants others to notice his greatness and his wonderfulness. He wants others to join him in praising himself. He will not wait upon God or others, for they are not able, only he is able.

(Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:13-19, 1 Tim 3:6, 1 John 3:8,)

What was the very first sin?	Who committed it?	When did it occur?
------------------------------	-------------------	--------------------

What causes us to fall into the sin of pride? (Romans 12:3) _____

Be very careful of what you think of yourself for it can lead to pride, be very careful of your opinion of yourself, be very careful of your estimate of yourself, and be very careful of how you rate yourself. Everyone wants to be somebody and do something but our rating must be accurate. Galatians 6:3 gives us very good advice. Write that verse here: _____

From God's point of view we might not be as important as we thought we were.

IN Conclusion we will all face difficulties in our lives, how are you going to deal with them?

1. How can humility affect your way of dealing with the difficulties you face in life? _____

Humility causes a person to be unpretentious and leads to the recognition of one's own inabilities to prevail in light of difficulties. Humility also leads a person to realize their total need to look to God, to wait fully upon Him, to rest completely in Him, to totally depend upon Him for resolution of the problem and to be used by Him for His glory. A humble person can believe God, wait upon Him and trust in His Resurrection Power to resolve a problem, regardless of the size. Humility allows God to act while we wait, He can work in your life and even protect you from unforeseen consequences. He will act in your circumstances and in the lives of others while you wait. You will have the patience to wait for "God's timing." God will give you the strength and courage, the perspective, the energy and the determination to be a part of the solution for His glory.

How can pride affect your way of dealing with the difficulties you face in life? _____

Pride causes a person to exalt himself and be self assured in all his wonderful abilities to in actuality imprudently make a problem worse. Pride causes a person to look to himself, wait upon himself, rest in himself, depend upon himself and fail him self in the resolution of the problem for his own glory. Pride eliminates the ability to believe God, to wait upon Him and to trust in His Resurrection Power to resolve a problem, regardless of the size. Pride leads only to disaster and will hang one's self as we will see.....

What does Proverbs 29:23 say? Write it on the back on this page.

The next time you are faced with a problem of any size which approach will you take?

How Do You Honor Him Who Saved Your Life?

Please read Esther Chapter 6 very carefully.

This chapter needs little introduction as it takes place during the very same night Haman built the gallows and extends into that very next day.

Verses 1-3 "That night..." It was the night of Esther's mysterious appearance before the king, the night the king realized Esther had a very important request, the night of Esther's first mysterious banquet, the night Haman was consumed with anger and pride, and it was the night Haman built the gallows for Mordecai. King Ahasuerus could not sleep this night. He was having a miserable night! What might have caused his insomnia? Surely he had many worries brought upon him by the previous day. Maybe he was worried about Esther; she still had not made her request known. Maybe he noted some worrisome changes in Haman. Maybe he ate too much at Esther's banquet and had a bad case of indigestion or heartburn. Wouldn't it be amusing if the king was kept awake all night by the sounds of construction of Haman's gallows?? We do not know the exact source of the king's insomnia, but we do know that in his frustration he called out to his servants to read to him from his books of chronicles. Books of chronicles were kept recording chronologically all history, memorable acts, and events of adventure and heroism in the Persian Kingdom. Perhaps he would be able to sleep if someone read something to him. Out of all the years of accounts the servants could have picked to randomly read, they chose to read about Bigthan and Teresh (from Esther Ch 2:19-23), the king's eunuchs who plotted to kill the king, and how Mordecai discovered this plot and saved the king's life. What were the chances that the king's servants would have read of this particular event which had occurred some 4 years prior? Can you see God's hand here? God was there! God was there when Vasthi was dethroned and Esther was chosen queen, God was there when the assassination plot was planned and hatched, God was there when Esther took a step of faith to see the king and invited him to a banquet, and God was there when the gallows were built and the king lay awake listening to the account of one special chronicle of the kingdom's history. God was there!

The king quickly stopped the reading and asked "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king quickly discovered that no honor or dignity had ever been bestowed upon Mordecai for saving his life. This oversight needed correction quickly.

Do you own a book of chronicles in which is recorded memorable acts and significant events of history and heroism? What is the name of this book? _____

Have you read of the One who took your place and died in your stead and fought off all the powers of darkness and hell for your sake, laying down His life on your behalf? What is His name? _____

What honor or dignity have you bestowed upon Him for this? _____

How have you thanked Him? _____

It is very important to recognize that you owe your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything you are and everything you have is because of Him. Honestly, do you deeply desire to honor Him, He who has saved your life?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you did something good for another person but that other person never showed you any appreciation for what you did? _____ How did you feel? _____ Do you think your feelings were justified? _____

Read Matthew 6:1-4. How does this passage change your perspective? _____

Learn a lesson from humble Mordecai. Mordecai saved the king's life, yet up to this point he has never received any token of appreciation that we can detect from God's Word. We have never heard Mordecai complain about the fact that he has not been recognized, honored or rewarded for his good deed. Additionally there is no record of Mordecai ever getting mad, seeking vengeance, or even speaking bad of Haman even though Haman received great reward from the King. What do you think might have been the source of Mordecai's ability to have a good attitude _____ through _____ all _____ these _____ events?
(he had done it all unto God)

Two verses can provide direction in cases similar to Mordecai's so that we may have the same attitude. 1 Corinthians 10:31 "Therefore, whether you eat or drink or _____ you do, do _____ to the glory of God."

Hebrews 6:10 "For God is not unjust to forget your _____ which you have shown toward His name in that you have _____ to the saints and do minister."

What truths do these verses teach you so you may have an attitude like Mordecai's when doing good for others? _____

Just as soon as the king realized that nothing had ever been done for Mordecai, he began to think of a way to reward Mordecai and a person who might carry it out....

Verses 4-9: At that very moment, the king heard someone arrive in the outer court. It was Haman arriving early. Haman was immediately summoned in. Haman probably could not wait to repeat to the king that which he had been rehearsing all night....the exact perfect words to tell the king to convict and condemn Mordecai. Haman could not even get the words out of his mouth

before the king questioned him: "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Haman was so blinded by pride that it never occurred to him that the king might be thinking of anyone else but him. For this moment Haman forgot about Mordecai and thought about himself. This was another opportunity of a life time, a dream come true! The reward that Haman proposed greatly served his own flesh; it would be a public and measurable demonstration of glory. Haman could have suggested a governorship of one of the 127 provinces or even lots of money, but in keeping with his character he choose a parade! He suggested that "the person" wear one of the king's royal robes, that he ride on one of the king's royal crowned horses, that he be placed into the hands of one of the king's most noble princes and that he be paraded and proclaimed throughout the city square. The sum total of the reward suggested by Haman would permit the receiver of the reward to experience the full honor of the king himself, all the people would be required to bow down to him as they would the king, it would be almost like being the king himself. Haman's imagination is fixated upon the glory he will receive from the citizens of Shushan.

Haman's (although an evil character) proposed reward can be the pattern we follow in our life to honor God if the object of our reward is God and not ourselves. We must give up the lordship of our life and turn it over to God. Let God wear the royal clothes, let God ride the royal horse, let God wear the royal crown, do this publicly and openly, give God the Lordship of your life. Our clothes, our horse, and our crown are symbols of things in our life that we can give over to Christ to honor Him. Grant Him all authority, power, prestige and stature in your life. Grant Him the right to be Lord of every area, every detail, every aspect of your life. Place your full trust and confidence in Christ, surrender willingly and fully and be obedient, submitting your will to God's will in every area of you life. This is true honor. This is the honor you can bestow upon Christ for saving your life. Let everyone know that He is King and Lord of your life.

Read Romans 6:13. How can you honor God according to this verse?

Read Romans 12:1. How can you honor God according to this verse?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. How can you honor God according to these verses?

Verses 10-11: The king loved Haman's idea! Yet this seems perplexing...why would the king extend such an honor to a Jew even if he did save his life, when he had enacted an edict to annihilate all the Jews in the kingdom?? Could it be that when Haman plotted the destruction of "a certain people" he failed to mention their identity to the king??

Well, never in a million years could the king have thought of a better way to honor the man who saved his life. What a shock it must have been when Haman realized that it was not him who was going to be honored but Mordecai, his most hated enemy. Can you imagine how Haman felt when he heard the words: "Hurry, take the robe and the horse as you have suggested, and do so for MORDECAI the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave NOTHING undone of all that you

have spoken." Not only could he no longer get the permission to hang him on the gallows he had built but now he was required to do the direct opposite: honor him. He was trapped, there was no way out, this was his worse nightmare. Haman's visions of grandeur for himself had turned into the most despicable personal humiliation! The whole picture went from bad to worse for Haman, not only was Mordecai to receive the honor that had been suggested by Haman for himself, but Haman himself had to carry it out. He had to lead Mordecai around the city proclaiming to all that Mordecai was being honored by the king. This must have been the shock and humiliation of Haman's lifetime! It is safe to say that at this moment Haman was probably the most miserable citizen of the entire kingdom. Every step Haman took must have felt like lead, his mouth dry and parched, his voice weakened as he heralded the glory of Mordecai. Mordecai must have been in shock over this unexpected honor by the king because he knows full

well that the king has ordered his death.



What outward appearance do you think Haman displayed as he led Mordecai around the city?

Was this outward appearance a reflection of his inward desires?

Was Haman really honoring Mordecai?

Why did he have to maintain this false image before the king and the citizens?

The righteousness of the flesh is always counterfeit righteousness, it is always self centered and therefore self righteous. Haman can seemingly honor Mordecai but he really never does. The flesh can seemingly please God, but it really never does.

Read Romans 8:5-17

Remember Haman is a picture of the flesh, his mind is set on the things of the flesh, his heart's desires are set on the things of the flesh, he is an enemy of God, and he cannot please God. Can Haman somehow really change in the flesh? _____

According to Romans 8:5-17, what is the only solution for the flesh? _____

Verses 12-14: We have a split scene, 2 contrasting characters, 2 contrasting traits:

How did this great honor affect Mordecai? Mordecai returned to the king's gate, right where he had always been, he didn't believe himself to be any more or any less than before he was paraded around the city. He returned there to continue to wait and see what would happen, remember Esther was in the midst of the plan to unveil Haman's wicked plan and somehow save the Jews. This great honor did not affect Mordecai at all; this is a sign of true humility. We can learn much from this scene, like Mordecai, we should always be humble, if we are fortunate enough to receive honor for something we have done it must not affect us, we must remain true to our humble character and immediately return to be near and waiting upon our King at His gate.

How did Haman handle this insult to his ego? Haman returned to his house, mourning and with his head covered to tell his wife and friends probably hoping to find some relief. It was plain for his family and friends to see that Haman was headed for the fall from which he would never recover. His family had no words of encouragement for him; the day's events were nothing more than a prophecy of things to come. Their reference to Mordecai's Jewish origin in verse 13 indicates their awareness of the survival of the Jews against all odds. His doom became imminent, his family and friends saw it coming. When a person lifts himself up in pride, there is only one place to go and that is _____. The words of doom were barely spoken when the king's servants arrived to escort Haman to Esther's second banquet. This is the picture of a humiliated man walking to what will be his last supper, he is about to be the victim of his own evil scheming. Do you think they may have passed by Haman's gallows as they walked back to the palace? Do you think Haman was worried about his future? Do you think he began to have regrets? Do you think that he thought that it might be too late? Do you think that the flesh must die so that God can be honored? At the end of this chapter we again see a sharp contrast between pride and humility. Haman and Mordecai are our examples this time. What more can we learn about these two opposing character traits?

The one filled with pride is:

- Lacking of character
- Dependant upon external circumstances to establish his identity such as position, wealth, honor and status.
- Lost and empty if the externals are removed
- Easily consumed with hatred and jealousy
- Unable to delight in the success of others
- Motivated by the world's standards
- Quick to seek recognition and profess self achievement

The one filled with humility is:

- Not changed by recognition and honor
- Satisfied in doing what is right and good for God
- Not subject to being compared with others

- Motivated by God's standards
- Able to acknowledge his total dependence on God
- Able to confess that all things in life are because of God's grace and generosity

Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. Thus says the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I *am* the LORD exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: For in these I delight, says the LORD."

How does this passage relate to Haman?

To Mordecai?

To you?

Based upon this passage what portion of your day is spent on the pursuit of that which delights the Lord?

Esther chapter 6 gives us the perfect recipe for honoring God in our life.

- Relinquish total control to Christ
- Be public and visible with His Lordship in your life
- Surrender fully and quickly
- Remain humble before Christ and man at all times

How can you better honor Him who saved you life today?

Confronting God's Enemy

Please read Esther Chapter 7 very carefully.

The scene is Esther's second banquet prepared for the king and Haman. The chapter opens with an intimate dinner in a private palace room where only Queen Esther, King Ahasuerus and the evil Prime Minister Haman of Persia are present. This chapter is a foreshadow glimpse and spiritual picture from the Old Testament of 2 events that later took place in the New Testament (The Last Supper as well as the Death of Christ on the cross):

Haman's Last Supper:

- There was a king who did not know the truth of what was going on in his kingdom. He was confused, perplexed, worried and most of all deceived and ignorant regarding the true nature of what was really happening in his kingdom. **Remember that the king is a spiritual picture of the soul of the natural man with free will and choice but also a blindness and ignorance regarding the true nature of the events surrounding him.**
- There was a queen who had been informed and illuminated by her father who had adopted her (Just like God does with us) regarding the truth of the events that were occurring around her. Her new found knowledge set her on a course to wisely work in the direction that would avoid disaster. **Remember that the queen is a spiritual picture of a person who has been regenerated by God's Spirit who lives in her. She has the ability to recognize the true nature of evil and the wisdom to deal with it correctly and effectively.**
- There was an evil man and enemy of God who had conspired to destroy God's chosen people and exalt himself to the maximum. His evil plan was revealed and he was put to death. **Remember that he is a spiritual picture of the flesh that dwells inside each one of us; its purpose is always to rebel against God and exalt itself.**
- When the dinner was over the evil man and enemy of God had been hung on the gallows putting to death everything that represented evil in King Ahasuerus' Kingdom. This is a spiritual picture of what each of us needs to do to effectively deal with the evil flesh in our kingdom, it must be put to death.

Centuries after Haman's Last Supper there was another Last Supper, an intimate dinner in the privacy of an upper room in Jerusalem. Likewise the 3 main players were all present:

- Just like the king, there were 11 disciples who represent the human soul, they did not understand what was happening, their hearts were troubled, and they were concerned and perplexed. They were full of questions and were ignorant and of the truth that surrounded them.
- Just like the queen, the Lord Jesus Christ was present, The Master, The Son of God and the Son of Man, perfect in every way, indwelt by the Father and Holy Spirit. He was completely aware and informed of what was happening, also very aware of the evil and

danger that surrounded them and always working toward the solution to avoid world wide disaster.

- Just like the evil man and enemy of God, Judas, the traitor was present. Selfish, interested only in exalting himself, ready and willing to destroy at any cost, hypocritical, and prideful and willing to do what ever was necessary to fulfill his desires. His evil was also revealed and died at the work of his own hands (he hung himself).
- When that dinner was over, the evil man and enemy of God, Judas, went out and hung himself, thus effectively dealing with the evil represented in that situation. Additionally, another man also gave His life so that victory could be wrought once and for all for evil. Jesus, taking upon Himself all evil and wickedness, was hung on the cross until He died. He took the punishment for our evil and wickedness, and put to death everything that represented evil in this world.

When ever you see a cross, a tree used for hanging or gallows in scriptures it is always with one purpose, to put evil to death.

Look up 2 Corinthians 5:21 and fill in the spaces: "For _____ made _____ who knew no sin to be _____ for us, that we might become the _____ of God in Him."

Jesus was made to be sin for us on the cross; He became every selfish, cruel, perverse, prideful, evil, deceptive offense we have ever committed and so much more. The only solution for sin is death, nailed to the cross. Haman had to be put to death for evil to be stopped. Jesus became Haman for us. Jesus Christ became sin and God allowed Him to die so that evil could be stopped.

The events of Esther chapter 7 represent the perfect formula for the only way a Christian can find real victory over the sinful evil flesh that lies within our lives. Watch closely as God's Word reveals to us the 3 steps we must take to be delivered from our evil flesh.

1. **Evil must first be fully revealed** v1-6. The king asks Esther for the 3rd time what her petition is as he still did not know. Esther had not told him previously because she knew the timing was not right, but on this occasion Esther communicated her petition. In a few very well chosen words Esther got to the heart of the issue with grace. "Then Queen Esther answered and said, If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."

Do you have the ability to communicate with this type of diplomacy and sensitivity when a very delicate situation arises? How do you most commonly communicate under stress?

The king's reaction in verse 5 is very interesting and verifies that he had NO CLUE of what was going on around him, just like the natural human soul. We need to remember this, a natural human soul has no way of really knowing the true nature of what is going on around him because he lacks the illumination of the Spirit of God, it is impossible for him to understand anything spiritual in his natural state. The king responded: "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?" He had no idea what had happened and when it happened and who might have been at the cause of it, yet he was right there when Haman proposed the evil plan, and he was right there when he gave Haman his signet ring to make the edict possible. How can a person be totally present yet completely absent? _____

Verse 6 is the full revelation of evil, this is the full step Esther took and the full step we must take as we seek real victory over our evil flesh.

"THE ADVERSARY AND ENEMY IS THIS WICKED HAMAN!!!"

For the very first time the king saw Haman for who he really was, the kingdom's wicked evil adversary. It was a horrible sight. God opened his eyes through Esther's influence and he became fully aware, evil was fully revealed. We need to do likewise in our lives.

"THE ADVERSARY AND ENEMY IS MY WICKED FLESH!!!!!"

It will be a horrible shattering site, your flesh is the source of all selfish, cruel, perverse, prideful, evil, deceptive offenses, everything that is bad in your life comes from your flesh, EVERYTHING!

Are you willing to fully Reveal the Evil that is within you? _____ Mark any of the following that you can detect in your flesh and are willing to fully reveal in your life:

Disobedience Hatred Lies Pride Deception Legalism Bitterness Coldness Selfishness
Malice Lack of Love Self Pity Jealousy Envy Contentions Laziness A Critical Spirit
An Unforgiving Spirit A Judgmental Spirit Fleshly desires Worldly desires Prejudice
Thoughtlessness Rudeness Vengeance Resentment Indifference Strife

What other characteristics of the flesh can you add to YOUR list? _____

Once you have fully revealed the evil in your life, you may pass to the next step.

2. **The Internal conflict must then be resolved** v. 7 "Then the king rose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden;" Why do you think the king left the banquet right as Esther revealed to him the real enemy? _____

Doesn't It seems as if he should have just shouted "Off with his head!" that very moment?

How would you have probably reacted to Esther's news flash? _____

The king rose and went into the garden. Can you imagine him pacing up and down the garden paths wrestling internally. He is furious with Haman but yet is uncertain just how to handle the whole situation. Haman is the Prime minister of Persia, very influential and very involved in the kingdom. What repercussions will this have upon the kingdom? What changes will need to be made? It would be a very radical step to so quickly execute the Prime Minister; a wise decision must be made that will be in the best interest of everyone.

Right this minute, how do you feel since you have just honestly revealed your own greatest enemy and adversary, your flesh? _____

Are you trying to justify it? _____ Are you trying to excuse it? _____

Are you tempted to compromise? _____ Do you want to smooth it over? _____ Do

you think that you can make more of an effort and improve yourself? _____ You

know that if you admit it and renounce it, it will require deep and radical changes in your life.

Are you ready to do that? _____ Can you feel the inner struggle? _____ This

is the same inner struggle the king probably felt as he was trying to assimilate the revelation of

evil in his kingdom and try and make a decision to deal with it. This inner struggle is normal and

must be RESOLVED before you can pass to the third step in finding find real victory over the

sinful evil flesh that lies within. Resolve means making a firm decision, finding a solution to deal

with it successfully, settling the issue. No justifications, no excuses, no compromises, no

smoothing it over, no self effort or self improvement tactics, simply admit it and renounce it!

Ok, we are ready to pass to the final step number 3:

3. Finally the Death Sentence must be read and realized. v 8-10. There is only one way out, only one possible escape from Haman's tyranny, only one real way of permanent deliverance and victory and peace. The Death Sentence must be pronounced and carried out.

"When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house? As the words left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, Look! The gallows, fifty cubits (23 meters) high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman. Then the king said, **HANG HIM ON IT!** So they

hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided." Not until the king resolved the issue, pronounced the death sentence and saw it carried out was the evil ended. Likewise, not until we resolve the issue agreeing with God that our evil flesh no longer has the right to live in our life, and we pronounce the death sentence upon it and see it carried out will the evil come to an end.

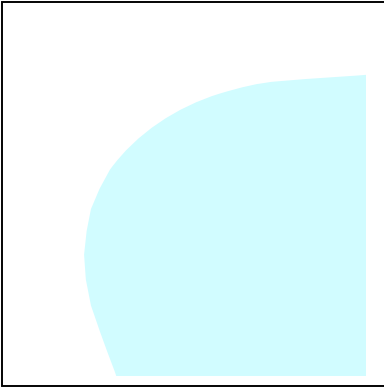
What does Romans 6:11-13 say? Fill in the blanks: "Likewise you also, _____ yourselves to be _____ indeed to sin, but _____ to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not _____ sin reign in your mortal _____ that you should _____ it in its lusts. And _____ present your members as instruments of _____ to _____, but present yourselves to God as being _____, and your members as instruments of _____ to God."

Look up Galatians 5:24 and write it here: _____

Hang it on that tree! That is the statement that brings victory. No other way will work. Every time a Haman arises in your life, HANG HIM! While we are alive and in our bodies we will always be tempted by the flesh, reveal it fast, resolve it fast and hang it fast. Yes Lord, **HANG IT.**

Use the next page to do just that ☺ Find your evil and nail it to the cross.

Disobedience	Hatred	Lies	Pride	Deception	Legalism	Bitterness
Coldness	Selfishness	Malice	Self Pity	Lack of Love	Jealousy	Contentions
Laziness	Critical Spirit	Envy	Fleshy desires	Worldly desires	Prejudice	Unforgiveness
Thoughtlessness	Rudeness	Unkindness	Vengeance	Resentment	Strife	Indifference



.....The Continuation of the Victory Process.....

In Chapter 7 we discovered God's formula for real victory over the sinful evil flesh that lies within our lives. We must fully reveal it, internally resolve it, and finally pronounce and carry out the death sentence upon it. In short, every time Haman arises in your life, you must HANG HIM! Nail him to the cross and be done with him. This is actually the beginning of the victory process in our lives. So if this is the beginning of real victory, what comes next in the process?

Please read Esther Chapter 8 very carefully to discover the continuation of the Victory process.

Verses 1-2

Chapter 8 opens with the transfer of ownership of Haman's house, which includes all of his property, his wife, his sons and all of his family to Esther who in turn gives all authority of it over to Mordecai, and the transfer of the Prime Minister's kingdom authority that belonged to Haman was also given to Mordecai. How soon after Haman's death do the transfers of ownership and authority occur? _____

What qualifications did Mordecai possess that made him the right candidate to fill these positions? _____

He was the only person with the power, wisdom and understanding to be able to know how to deal with these areas properly.

Basically, everything that belonged to Haman ended up in _____ hands.

When we reveal our evil flesh, resolve the internal conflict and pass the death sentence upon it a position of ownership and authority becomes available in our life (previously filled by our flesh) to be filled by another. Following the king's example, who should we fill that position with? _____

How quickly should we fill that position? _____

Why would He be the only right choice? _____

This is a spiritual picture of us yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit, giving Him ownership and

authority over every area of our lives, this is the step that comes next in the victory process.....

- **Relinquish ALL ownership and authority in your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.**

Do you believe that God only intends for you to yield ownership and authority in your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the major, large areas? _____

How about the smaller, more private areas? _____

Do you have areas in your life that you are reluctant to yield ownership and authority in? What are some of your "private areas" that you have difficulty yielding? _____

These are probably areas where God would most like to be welcomed into and talk to you about. We must give the Holy Spirit of God His rightful and full position in our lives if we are to experience the real victory over sinful flesh.

From these first two verses, we easily notice that although Haman was dead, his house still existed; it did not cease to exist just because Haman ceased to exist. In fact, it is extremely likely that many other evidences of his prior existence were also still in existence and having their effect.....can you think of one very pesky piece of evidence that still existed? What would that be? _____

Similarly, our flesh ceases to exist when we pass the death sentence upon it, but the evidences of its prior existence can still linger. Can you think of a piece of evidence in your life of the flesh's prior existence? What is it? _____

Verses 3-6

Yes indeed, there is a pesky piece of evidence still in existence of Haman's prior existence. The edict Haman had created and sealed with the king's ring 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, WAS STILL IN EXISTENCE. This had become law by the hand of Haman. Laws of the Medes and Persians could not be altered nor could they be revoked. Read Daniel 6:8. "Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." What a problem, the law Haman had made could not be modified in any way and it could not be annulled. The king was powerless to do anything about Haman's law. So what does the king do? _____ Once again he yields to Mordecai and gives him the authority to deal with the problem, the only one that had the power, the wisdom and the understanding to deal with the problem correctly. This leads us to our next step in the victory process:

- **Recognize evidences of the flesh's prior existence and yield all authority regarding them to the Lordship of Jesus Christ too**

Verses 7-14: The king wisely suggested a general solution to deal with this terrible problem left behind by Haman's prior existence, he instructed Esther and Mordecai to write a NEW decree regarding the Jew's plight and seal it with the king's ring. So this is exactly what they did. Immediately, they called for the king's scribes. A wonderful new law was written giving all Jews in every city and province the right 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 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month which is the month of Adar. A copy of the decree was quickly issued and quickly sent by royal courier to every province and published for all people so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves from their enemies.

On what date was the new decree written? _____

What was the designated date for the action of the first decree written by Haman? _____

About how much time was there for the Jewish people to prepare themselves for the eminent attack? _____

This leads us to the next step in our victory process: Once we recognize an evidence of the flesh's prior existence and we yield all authority regarding this evidence to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we need to:

- **Raise up a counter plan immediately**

Have you ever waited too long to generate a counter plan to correct a previous error? _____

What was the result? _____

We can learn so much for this example: The best time to correct an error is now.

Here we have another spiritual picture. Did you know that a counter plan was written for your benefit to counteract the consequences of an original decree?

Look up Romans 8:2 in your Bible. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

What did the original law say? _____

Who wrote the counter plan? _____

With what was the counter plan written? _____

What was the result of the counter plan? _____

God wrote a new law for us. The law of Life in Him was the only way to counteract the power, the effect and the consequences of sin, the flesh, and death and give us victory. You can count on God and the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life to work step by step to change your defeats into victories. This is the work God desires to do in your life. The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus can change adversity and disgrace into hope, it can change affliction into praise. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus sets you free from the law of sin and death. Aren't you glad that God generated a counter plan?

Verses 15-17: The panorama has changed dramatically! Before the actual victory had even been won the celebration had already commenced. There was joy and gladness and feasting because the people realized that victory was possible, they had hope. Mordecai was honored and the city shouted with jubilee. Everything had been put under the authority of Mordecai (The Holy Spirit) and the result was joy and happiness throughout the kingdom. Can you imagine the joy the Jews felt as they read the new decree? Do you think they could imagine the victory? How did you feel the day you read about the law of Life in Christ?

Look up Romans 6:14 "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Does this give you joy? Does this bring you hope? Can you imagine the victory?

"The wages of sin are death", that is what our first law said, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus", that is what the second law said. The second law was designed to counteract the effects and consequences of the first law and bring you victory. Do you live defeated under the first law? Or, Do you live joyfully under the second law? "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy", that is what the Lord Jesus told His disciples before he went to the cross. Notice that He did not say "Your sorrow shall be replaced by joy." He was clear in saying that the very thing that causes you sorrow shall itself be translated into joy. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus brings joy because it overcomes the law of sin and death which brought despair and defeat just like the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity to make a plane fly. This brings us to the final step in the victory process:

- **Rejoice in the anticipated victory**

Please note the little phrase at the end of verse 17, "Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them." Many gentiles converted to being Jews. This means that they abandoned their former beliefs and pagan traditions and adopted the Jewish principles. They came to the One True God. The Jews were a powerful testimony of the work of God in their lives and as a result, many gentiles were converted (even by fear). This brings us to the final step in the victory process for this chapter:

- **Remember to be a powerful witness for Christ in the victory process**

When your life becomes notably different, when your reactions to problems that afflict mankind are different than the worlds, people are going to notice. When your life can no longer be explained in terms of personality or psychology, when your reactions to situations are contrary to natural human behaviour questions will be raised. When the out flowing of the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ is exhibited in our lives people's hearts will be touched, this makes for a powerful Christian witness.

Are you ready to begin the process?

In summary, God's formula for real victory over the sinful evil flesh that lies within our lives as taught through Esther Chapters 7-8:

1. Evil must first be fully _____
2. The internal conflict must then be _____
3. Finally the Death Sentence must be _____ and _____
4. _____ ALL ownership and authority in your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
5. _____ evidences of the flesh's prior existence and yield all authority regarding them to the Lordship of Jesus Christ too
6. _____ a counter plan immediately
7. _____ in the anticipated victory
8. _____ to be a powerful witness for Christ in the victory process

(revealed, resolved, read, realized, relinquish, recognize, raise up, rejoice, remember)

Write your personal commitment to the Lord in this space regarding the implementation of this victory process in your life:

The Victory Has Already Been Won

Eleven months had passed since the first decree was written by Haman in Esther 3 calling for the total destruction of the Jews on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month which was the month of Adar, during the twelfth year of the reign of King Ahasuerus in Persia as determined by casting lots (Pur). This first decree brought great fear, deep anxiety and certain condemnation to the Jewish people. But, in the midst of such uncertainty there was one bright shining ray of hope. God had intervened. A second decree had been written! Nine months had passed since the second decree (the counter plan) was written by Mordecai allowing full provision for the Jews to unite and defend themselves against all their enemies on that very same day. This second decree gave them hope.

There were 2 decrees: one to bring death, the other to give life
There were 2 possible outcomes: Defeat by the enemy or Victory over the enemy.

Please read Esther Chapter 9:1-17 very carefully

Verse 1: Chapter 9 opens very appropriately announcing the exact date in time (D-day). "In the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day **the time came** for the king's command and his decree to be executed." In this first verse we also receive a one sentence summary of the outcome...."On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them **the opposite occurred**, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them." This outcome was so wonderful, so marvelous that a Jewish holiday was proclaimed and commemorated for all generations of Jews to celebrate for as long as this earth exists....but we will study more about that in the next lesson.

Without reading any farther, what had the enemies of the Jews hoped for?

And what actually happened? _____

The day had finally arrived, the day of the annihilation of the Jews as written in the first and unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians but also the day of the defense of the Jews as written in the second and unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians. The great day of face to face conflict had arrived. One law permitted the Jews to be destroyed by their enemies; the other permitted the Jews to overcome their enemies.

Have you ever faced a day like this in your life? A day when God has brought you face to face with a conflict where you knew you could be defeated by your enemy but at the same time you knew you had the power to overcome your enemy?

What basic characteristic is needed on your behalf to face a day like this and act according to the truths and promises you know and hold to be true? _____

(great faith)

The Jews certainly acted in great faith. They knew that they were God's chosen people, a Holy nation separate unto Him. God had always promised to protect them and defend them, they had the faith to believe that God would deliver them and they acted upon that faith. God not only fulfilled His promises but He honored their faith with an overwhelming victory.

Verses 2-10:

How did the Jews group themselves for the attack? _____

What would have probably happened if they would have acted separately? _____

Who was able to withstand their attack? _____

What did the officials of the king's provinces do? _____

Do you find anything strange about that? _____

Whose side should they have been on? The gentiles or The Jews

Why did they help the Jews? _____

Who actually motivated that help for them? _____

Who was the prominent man that had a huge impact on this entire conflict? _____

Who is he a picture of for us? _____

How did the Jews arm and defend themselves? _____

What is that a picture of for us? _____

How many men did the Jews kill and destroy in the capital city of Shushan? _____

What other significant men were killed? _____

Why do you think God used 4 whole verses to personally name Haman's sons in the death list?

What did the Jews do with all the plunder of the attacks? _____

Let's remember from our last lesson the spiritual picture that is portrayed by these decrees.

- The first decree, written by Haman (the flesh), gave the enemies of the Jews the right and the power to kill and destroy them and plunder their possessions. This decree was designed to totally destroy God's people. As we have already learned,

spiritually speaking, the first decree represents the law and the effect the law has on a believer's life to destroy him.

Read Romans 7: 5 "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death." The law, like Haman's first decree, was meant to bring us unto death.

What is the result in the life of a believer who lives under the first decree, the law? _____

- A second decree, written by Mordecai (the Holy Spirit) permitted God's people to defend themselves and be freed from their enemies. They had total permission and authority to unite in their mutual defense. It was designed to bring victory to God's people. Again, as we have already learned, spiritually speaking, the second decree represents New Testament grace actively working in the life of a believer. Read Romans 7:6 "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." Grace, like the second decree, was meant to bring victory and life.

What is the result in the life of a believer who lives under the second decree, grace? _____

In both cases, the second decree brings life and victory instead of condemnation. The second decree for the Jews in the book of Esther is a spiritual picture of the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, that which freed us from the condemnation of the first law and gave us the power and the authority to fight the spiritual battle against all evil in Jesus name and thus live in victory.

It is very interesting to note that the Jews united and gathered together to face their common enemy. Had they formed small separate bands their results would have been something less than victorious. They also received help from the king's officials. Those who would have been expected to be fighting for the enemy were actually fighting on their behalf. I wonder what type of help they received. Did they simply point out the enemies or did they actually take up arms and fight? It is also interesting to note that Mordecai had a tremendous impact upon the entire enemy band and was a huge part of the reason the Jews prevailed. The Jews not only had the authority to fight but they also had the power to fight, this power came from Mordecai and the position he held. Finally the Jews fought and destroyed their enemies with the stroke of the sword including all of Haman's sons, those who would have carried on Haman's name and fame to the next generation, and they did not take advantage of any of the plunder. The Jews took their rightful place of victory which God had given them.

We can draw parallels from all these circumstances and apply the same principles to our lives. We must gather together as God's people and solidly unite against our common enemy, first in

solid agreement with God against our enemy, and then again when we engage in battle, we must use the resources God places within our reach to help us in our battle, we must engage the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that we have the authority and power to fight and finally we must take up the sword which is the Word of God as we fight our way to victory destroying even those things in our lives that could potentially give yield to evil in the future. Let's take our rightful place of victory that God has already given us in Jesus Christ.

These verses provide a very important devotional lesson for us too:

God's people will always have an enemy.

And God will always have a way of deliverance prepared for them.

Throughout the pages of the Bible we read of God's people and their enemies great and small. There were the Amalekites (Haman's people) and the Jebusites, then the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans. In the Old Testament the battle was physical, once the church was established in the New Testament the battle became spiritualtoday our enemies are the devil, the flesh, sin, and the world. Ephesians 6:12. We must remember that God has always provided deliverance. First it was Moses, then Joshua, Gideon, later on David was raised up, even Esther and Mordecai can take their rightful place.... and the list continues into the New Testament where the GREATEST MAN of ALL the Lord Jesus Christ delivered all mankind of all history once and for all from the wages of sin which was death. Today we have the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the blood of Christ, and the Armor of God to deliver us from our enemies. We must take the place of victory that God has already given us in Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed....."

Do you have the faith to trust God for deliverance in times of attack? _____

Take heart and maintain hope just like the Jews did in King Ahasuerus' kingdom.

Verses 11-17

Who received the death report from Shushan the citadel? _____

With whom did the king share the report? _____

What did the king ask Esther? _____

Why do you think the king inquired of any additional requests of the queen? _____

What were Esther's 2 additional requests? 1) _____

2) _____

In what specific region was the first detail of the second decree extended? _____

What happened on the 14th day of the month of Adar in Shushan? _____

Why do you think they extended the battle there one additional day? _____

How many more men were killed on that day in Shushan? _____

What did they do with the plunder? _____

What happened on the 14th day of the month of Adar in the other 126 provinces of Persia?

How many enemies were killed in the other 126 provinces on the 13th day? _____

What had been done with the plunder in the other 126 provinces? _____

What was the final death toll of the enemy? _____

Three evidences that mark genuine victory are found in this account. What do you think they are?

1)

2)

3)

It is interesting to note that the King still appreciated Queen Esther's advice and direction. The king knew that she was a woman with great character, dignity, wisdom, compassion and maturity; we know she was a picture of a godly woman lead by the Holy Spirit. For this reason he asked her what additional request she might have. He trusted her request to be one that would be beneficial to the kingdom and its inhabitants.

As per her request, the battle against the enemy was extended one additional day in the capital city. It was not physically possible to get this message out to the entire expanse of kingdom so it was limited only to the capital city where its communication was easily carried out. The queen also requested that the 10 already dead sons of Haman be hung on the gallows. The king gladly approved and ordered all that Esther requested. An additional 300 men were killed on the second day in Shushan and Haman's dead sons were hung on the gallows. The death toll was received from the outside provinces from the previous day, 75,000 enemies had been killed. No hands were laid on the plunder at anytime during these 2 days of battle. All the provinces outside the capital rested and made the second day a day of feasting and gladness.

There are 3 genuine marks of victory in this event that we can apply to our lives.

- First, the fact that the battle was extended an additional day in the capital was a genuine mark of victory. Had the Jews not experienced victory the first day they would not have had the ability to extend the battle an additional day. **When God has given us genuine victory one day we should be motivated to extend the battle to the next day with the confidence of continued victory. We may have strongholds in our lives that need an additional time of battle. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) Also when God has given us genuine victory in our heart over a matter, then we should take the next step and allow that victory to be extended and notably manifested in our lives.**
- Second, the public hanging of the 10 dead sons of Haman was another genuine mark of victory. The victory was made public by the impaling of these dead men for all to see, this is an unmistakable sign of victory. **When God has given us a genuine victory we should give public testimony of it. (Colossians 2:14-15)**
- Third, the fact that the Jews never laid a hand on the plunder was another genuine mark of victory. They did not need to enrich themselves with any spoils of battle,

they did not need to take advantage of what was left behind, and they did not need to use the plunder in any way to gain self advancement. They were victors because God gave them the victory and they needed no extra rewards to confirm that. They were perfectly content with the victory and did not want to risk falling into any temptation by taking the spoils of the battle. *When we have won genuine victory over those things that have enslaved us we should not care about gaining any personal advantage, advancement or reward for ourselves, we should rest confident and content in the victory and give all the glory to God. (1 Timothy 6:8-9)*

In conclusion we can draw another very important devotional lesson:

God's people have been called to lives of warfare.

God promises victory to all who call upon His name.

So, the next time God brings you face to face with a conflict where you know you could be defeated by your enemy but at the same time you know you have the power to overcome your enemy, how will you respond?

- 1) Firmly unite with God in agreement against your enemy. v. 2
- 2) Utilize all the resources God places within your reach to help you. v 3
- 3) Engage the leadership of the Holy Spirit throughout the entire process. v 3-4
- 4) Take up the sword which is the Word of God as you fight. v 5
- 5) Keep fighting until all strongholds have been eliminated. v 13-15
- 6) Give public testimony of the victory God has given you. v 13-14
- 7) Take your rightful place of victory that God has already given you in Jesus Christ and give God ALL the glory. v 15-17

Write 2 Corinthians 2:14 in this space and commit it to your memory.

A Victory to Always Remember

Our wonderful trip through the Book of Esther is quickly coming to a close. Although we have never seen God's name written in the pages of this exciting story, we have seen His Almighty Everlasting Hand on every page, between every word, in every life, and in every circumstance. We remember Queen Vashti's dismissal because she courageously stood in opposition to her overzealous, party animal, self seeking husband, King Ahasuerus, as he sought united kingdom support for his own agenda. We remember the king's disastrous invasion of Greece to avenge his father's humiliation and how this set the stage for a lonely, tired, defeated, and discouraged king to seek out a new wife. The beauty pageant plan to select the best possible woman in the kingdom from over 400 contestants as the king's new wife taught us the value and importance of internal over external beauty. As in all good stories a villain and an evil plot were introduced. Haman had a plan to utterly destroy the Jews, but God had a better plan, his name was Mordecai and her name was Esther and she had INDEED come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Esther accepted the very difficult challenge to help save the Jews even if it meant her own death. While Haman plotted against Mordecai one sleepless night, the king realized that Mordecai was overdue to receive honor for saving his life. As luck, oops I mean God, would have it, upon the king's request, Haman, clearly deluded, detailed all that should be done for "the man" the king delighted to honor. What a shock when the tables were turned and Mordecai received the royal honor Haman expected for himself. Very soon there after, the queen ignored protocol, presented herself before the king, revealed her identity and pleaded for the life of her people. With great dignity, strength, and courage she unmasked the wicked Haman and his evil, criminal plan. God's enemy was confronted and the death sentence was read and realized. We learned that death is the only way to effectively deal with God's enemies. Haman's death was only the beginning of the battle that could have lead to death and defeat or life and victory in Ahasuerus' kingdom as well as ours. Haman's death left an open position which was quickly filled by Mordecai and a new decree was written giving Jews throughout the kingdom a huge ray of hope. Two decrees were in operation in the kingdom, one to bring death, the other to give life. Finally the dreaded day of face to face conflict arrived, the 13th day of the 12th month which was the month of Adar in the 12th year of King Ahasuerus reign in Persia. With great faith in Almighty God, the Jews united together to defend

themselves against their common enemy, they graciously accepted battle help from the enemy foes turned friends, and they fought and destroyed their enemies with the stroke of the sword and in one day took their rightful place of victory that God had designed for them all along. The characters and events of the story are all spiritual pictures for us to learn how to effectively identify and eradicate the enemies we face in our lives so that we can joyously live in the victory Christ has already won for us. The time of celebration has now officially arrived.

Please read Esther 9:18-10:3

Verses 18-28

What would you say is the central theme of this passage? _____

v. 18: What 2 things did the Jews in Shushan do on the 15th day of the month of Adar? _____

v. 19: What 2 things did the Jews in the outlying villages do on the 14th day of the month of Adar? _____

v. 20-21 What did Mordecai write, establish and proclaim? _____

v. 20 How extensive was this proclamation? _____

v. 22 What fact motivated Mordecai to proclaim this celebration? _____

v. 23 Did the Jews accept Mordecai's proclamation? _____

v. 24-25 Why did the Jews so readily accept this proclamation? _____

v. 26 What name did the Jews give to these days? _____

v. 26 Why did they choose this name for these days? _____

v. 27 In addition to the Jews alive on the 14th and 15th days of the 12th month of the 12th year of the reign of King Ahasuerus, who else received the imposition of this proclamation? _____

v. 27 How often was this celebration to be observed? _____

v. 28 Why do you think that this celebration was to be ALWAYS remembered and ALWAYS kept throughout EVERY generation, EVERY family, EVERY province, and EVERY city? _____

Rest, celebration, feasting, gladness, and joy are clearly the central themes of this passage. Mordecai recognized the importance and significance of celebrating this victory over their enemies and wanted to insure its remembrance and practice throughout the entire extension of Persia for the remainder of Jewish history. The Jews readily accepted Mordecai's proclamation because they also greatly appreciated the victory over their enemies and the new lease on life they had been given. The days were called Purim, after the name Pur, which was the lot Haman cast to determine the date of their annihilation. Mordecai's proclamation was established for yearly celebration and imposed upon all Jews living at that time and also to their descendants and all those who would join them in the future forever.

The celebration could have easily been observed just that one year coinciding with their victory over their enemies that sought to destroy them, but Mordecai established it to be observed yearly forever. With what you have learned thus far why now do you think that Mordecai established a yearly celebration for the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar for all Jews for all generations? _____

This final passage in the book of Esther has very important historical, devotional and doctrinal applications.

- Historically: It is designed to tell us how the Jewish people celebrated their deliverance from the plot of evil Haman to exterminate them and how they desired that this very special victory be remembered and celebrated throughout all generations as the tradition called Purim.
- Devotionally: It is designed to teach us the importance and necessity of remembering and celebrating our deliverance and victories over the enemies we face in our lives so that we may be encouraged in our battles and how we should give testimony of these victories to our children and grandchildren so that they also may be encouraged in their battles.
- Doctrinally: It is designed to give us a spiritual picture of eternity, the final victory celebration when our final enemy will be defeated. The Jews fought for their lives and when they had been delivered from their enemies there was time for celebration. The celebration was characterized by "rest, feasting and gladness, celebrations, holiday, and joy". The time of celebration was also characterized by a time for remembering and honoring their deliverers. There is coming a day when our battles will be over forever and on that day we will rest, we will feast at the table God has prepared for us and be truly glad, we will celebrate, it will be a holiday filled with joy, and most importantly we will remember and honor our Deliverer, The One who came to this earth and died to deliver us from the flesh, the devil, this world's system, death and hell. What a time of celebration it will be!

To this day, the Jewish people celebrate the holiday of Purim on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar on the Jewish calendar. This almost always falls during the month of March on our calendar. It is a very special celebration. The first day is marked by fasting to commemorate Esther's prayerful 3 day fast before she went into the king. The fast begins 72 minutes before sunrise and ends 40 minutes after sunset. At the conclusion of the fast they gather together in their temples and they read the book of Esther very interactively, which is written on one very long scroll. The adults as well as the children masquerade as one of the main characters and carry noise makers, little drums and horns. When Haman's name is mentioned in the reading they loudly shake their noise makers, pound on their drums, loudly blow their horns, boo and hiss. The adults stamp their feet to symbolize the eradication of the name of Amelek. When Mordecai and Esther's names are mentioned, they cheer and make sounds of gladness and joy. Then simple to elaborate food baskets may be prepared for sharing with each other, but are not delivered until the next day.

The second day is set aside for feasting, fun, the exchanging of gifts with each other and charitable contributions to the poor. Hamantashen is the traditional food eaten on Purim. These are small, three-cornered cakes filled with fruit jams or poppy seeds. Hamantashen is Yiddish for Haman's pockets, or in Hebrew, *Oznei Haman*, which means Haman's ears. The three-cornered shape is supposed to look like the hat that Haman was said to have worn. This celebration is observed yearly in memory of the liberation of God's people by Esther and Mordecai in the days of the Persian Empire about 500 years before the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews have observed this tradition now for about 2500 years and celebrated the memory of this miraculous deliverance. They celebrate Purim because God established it; He never wants the Jewish nation to forget His faithfulness and this uniquely wonderful, historical day of deliverance from their enemies.

Why is this special celebration called Purim? The word "Pur" is an ancient Persian word that means luck. Haman cast Pur (like we might cast dice) to determine the date of the annihilation of the Jews. It is interesting to note that in English when we want to form the plural of a particular word we add an "s" or in some cases an "es". In Hebrew an "im" is added to a word to form its plural, thus Pur im. Purim or lucks represents the idea that in one moment of time certain death for the Jews flipped and became a day of life, hope and a better future. As the Scripture says in verse 22, sorrow turned to joy and mourning to holiday.

Clearly the historical application of this passage is fascinating but the spiritual application is extraordinary. Please never forget the spiritual lessons you have learned in the book of Esther.

There are 5 spiritual truths in this final passage that God wants us to see.

1. **True victory always brings forth good fruit.** When the Jews were delivered from their enemies they were able to rest, feast, be glad, celebrate and share gifts with each other and the poor. Since their battle was physical, the rewards or fruits they enjoyed were also physical. When we are truly delivered from our enemies (the flesh, the devil and this world's system) we may also enjoy the good fruits of the victory. Since our battle is spiritual, the rewards we enjoy will also be spiritual. We will enjoy peace, joy, hope, the building of our faith and generosity and concern towards others. What other fruits can you think of that we might enjoy as a result of true victory over our enemies?

2. **You can't have the fruits without the process.** The only reason the Jews were able to enjoy the wonderful fruits of victory was because they fully submitted themselves to the process. They fully exposed Haman as the enemy, they put him to death, they adopted the leadership of Mordecai who devised a solution, they gathered together as a united force, graciously accepted the help that was provided, they appropriately armed and defended themselves, they went the second day to clear out the strong holds and they gave public testimony of their victory. We too must fully submit to the process if we want to enjoy the wonderful fruits of victory. It is impossible to enjoy the fruits of victory if you are living in the flesh under the command of Haman. (The

fruits of that life will be confusion, sadness, desperation and defeat). Too many times we look for short cuts, loopholes, we make excuses or justifications, we may side step or just overlook a part or parts of the process. We live in a world where everything is instant, fast and now. But true victory over our enemies takes time, patience and obedience and requires the application of the whole process. We must first recognize and fully expose our enemy, then put it to death. We must adopt the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life and live under the new decree of grace that has been written for us, we must unite forces with God against our enemy, utilize the help He has already given us (The Holy Spirit, The Word of God, The Blood of Christ and the Armor of God), go the extra distance to clean out the strongholds and give public testimony of victory God has given us. Only then will we be able to enjoy the sweet fruit of victory.

We must now look at the remaining verses of this passage in order to fully appreciate the next 2 spiritual truths God wants us to see.

Verses 29-32

v. 29-30: What did Esther and Mordecai do? _____

v. 31-32 What was the purpose of their actions? _____

v. 31 What was the designated time frame intended by this second confirmation letter?

3. Remembering and celebrating our victories must be continuous. Just as the Jews have established a remembrance and continuous Purim celebration commemorating their victory over their enemy for all future generations to observe, we must also establish a remembrance and the continuous celebration of our victories over our enemies for the rest of our lives and for the benefit of future generations. We must teach these truths to our children and our grandchildren (both physical and spiritual) so they might see what it means to walk in victory over the flesh, the devil and this world's system and be encouraged to walk in that same victory.

Verses 10:1-3

v.1: What did the king do? _____

What do you think that is a demonstration of? _____

v. 2: What was written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia about the king? _____

What was written about Mordecai? _____

v.3: Who was number one in command in the kingdom? _____

Who was number two in command in the kingdom? _____

How did the Jews feel about Mordecai? _____

In what 2 recorded ways does Mordecai occupy himself at the end of this story? _____

4. **The power behind the kingdom (life) that enjoys victory must be publicly recognized.** The book of Esther closes with King Ahasuerus strong and powerful as evidenced by the tribute he imposed upon all the land and islands of his kingdom. His power and might were recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia right along side Mordecai's advancement to greatness. Mordecai was publicly recognized. The source of the king's power and might was Mordecai's greatness; the king had submitted himself to Mordecai's authority and power to change the future of the kingdom. Mordecai made it all possible didn't he? He deserved to be recognized. The power behind the throne must be recognized. The decisions we make in our lives determine the outcome of our kingdom. When we follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and find ourselves delivered from our enemies, enjoying the wonderful fruits of victory we must publicly recognize the source of it, it is God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life. Isn't it He who made it all possible?

Our final truth comes from the doctrinal application of this passage:

5. **Heaven is going to be more awesome than we can ever imagine.**

Clearly the victory celebration following the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies was wonderful. Jews today still celebrate this victory by resting, feasting, sharing gladness and joy as well as by taking time to honor those responsible for their deliverance; every Jew has the opportunity to look forward to this celebration yearly during their entire natural life. But there is coming a time in the future when earthly celebrations will cease and all of life will be ushered into eternity. All those who have placed their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation will be ushered into a victory celebration unlike anything ever imagined by the human mind. We will rest forever from our enemies, we will feast and sing and be glad at the Lamb's Table, we will celebrate the victory Christ already won on the cross, it will be like a nonstop holiday of joy. One of the greatest reasons for the celebration in heaven will be the fact that our final enemy will be forever defeated. What is our final enemy? (1 Corinthians 15:26)

_____ There will be continuous praise and worship and honor bestowed upon Him who delivered us. Isn't it He who made it all possible?

John was blessed by a divine glimpse of heaven. Allow that glimpse to bless you today.

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angles around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying in a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne And to the Lamb, forever and forever!'; Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." Revelation 5:11-14

What a time of celebration it will be!