

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
SINGAPORE**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 7
THE BOOK OF ESTHER
CHAPTER 7**

INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins where the previous chapter ends with Haman hurriedly escorted to the second banquet that Esther had prepared for the king and Haman. Up to this point of time, although Haman was humiliated, the fate of the Jews remained unchanged. It was a time of fear and anxiety for the Jews as they think of the 13th day of the month of Adar. However, God could not be mocked. Anyone who goes against God's people is to go against God; and He will deal with the enemy. In this chapter, Haman, the enemy of the Jews and the chief architect of the decree to exterminate all the Jews, would be removed and executed. The chapter relates the doom and death of Haman.

The king's patience had been tested to the limit. He had asked Esther for her petition on two previous occasions but Esther procrastinated and promised to put forth her petition at this second

banquet. Ancient Near Eastern kings, who were typically despotic, could have dismissed Esther and sent her back to his harem and to wait for his call. Esther would be condemned for not petitioning the king when given the opportunity. Again, we observe the unseen hand of God working marvelously and providentially to save His people.

Esther performed brilliantly. Contrary to what many picture her as a weak and naïve lady, Esther displayed courage, determination and alertness before the king and Haman – the two most powerful men in the Persian Empire. Esther's petition provides some valuable insight in learning to resolve conflicts. On the other hand, Haman's attempt to seek remission for his evil deeds illustrates what one ought not to do.

The following outline would familiarize us with the flow of events in this chapter:

- 1) Esther's petition (7:1-4);
- 2) Esther's accusation (7:5-6);
- 3) Haman's plea (7:7-9); and
- 4) The King's Judgement (7:10).

COMMENTARY

Esther's Petition – 7:1-4

King Ahasuerus came to Esther's second banquet. The king came expectantly to learn what Esther's request might be. He had repeated the offer twice to Esther granting her desire even up to half of

his kingdom. On this occasion whether he would repeat the same offer remained to be seen. Only one day had passed since the last offer was made at the first banquet. Esther had promised the king that she would tell him what her request was at this time. Haman was hurriedly escorted from his home. He had not gotten over the humiliation he had experienced earlier that day.

Added to this humiliation, his wife and friends had told him that if Mordecai were of *the seed of the Jews*, he would be doomed. It was with an uneasy and uncertain state of mind and heart that Haman went to the banquet. He had no choice but to attend Esther's banquet for the king. True enough the king repeated his magnanimous offer to Esther. This was probably done after dinner. He asked Esther what her petition was. It was most appropriate that the king addressed Esther as *Queen Esther*. This would give Esther the courage to present her request in the face of Haman, the mortal enemy of the Jews. The king repeated precisely the same offer to Esther and assured her that whatever she asked would be carried out, even the request for half of his kingdom. This was a gesture of great honour. This meant that the king regarded her as second only to him in power.

Then Esther presented her request. She began with a humble attitude by putting herself in the mercy of the king: *if I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it*

please the king.... Then she proceeded straight to the point with her request. She pleaded to the king to let her life be spared, and also the life of her people. She continued that she and her people had been sold *to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*.

However, if they had been sold as male and female slaves, she would not have bothered the king with this request; and added that *although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage* (v. 4). By using the passive mood, Esther was careful not to implicate the king for the problem caused in the first decree. The king was not to be blamed. She shrewdly aroused the king's attention by implying that his queen was about to lose her very life. She did not ask for any property or material gains, but she pleaded for her life and the lives of her people. Significantly, she did not even mention the decree. She was careful not to refer to it, instead she used the exact words which were incorporated in the decree. She and her people were *to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*.¹

She also subtly implied that there was monetary transaction, which took place when she made the statement that if she and her people had been sold as slaves. No mention was made of Haman and the king.

¹ In the original language that is Hebrew, the phrase which appears here 7:4 is exactly the same as that in 3:13.

Esther's plea was personal and concise. She was deliberately ambiguous. Her subtle ambiguity raised more questions arousing the curiosity of the king. Esther showed great courage and resourcefulness for she was speaking to the most powerful man in the empire, and his second in command who was implicated. By now, Haman must be feeling most uneasy and mentally disturbed.

The last portion of Esther's words: *although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage* has stirred up some debate over its meaning. A literal reading would be: *although the enemy is not equal to the damage of the king*. The Hebrew reading is not altogether clear. John C. Whitcomb's comments express the meaning very well: "But it may mean that the punishment of Haman for his crime would involve far less financial loss to the king than the destruction of thousands of Jews. By contrast, however, Esther would have remained silent if the Jews had been sold as slaves, for this would doubtless have brought much initial profit to the king."²

Esther's accusation – 7:5-6

King Ahasuerus' curiosity was aroused. Evidently, he was enraged at the audacity of the unnamed assailant who would dare to kill his queen and her people. The king shot

out two questions in quick succession: *Who is he, and where is he?* He was clearly angry and outraged. He wanted to know the identity of the assailant and his whereabouts. His motive was clear. Esther immediately said that *the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman* (v.6). It was Haman the traitor who wanted *to destroy, to kill and to cause to perish* Esther, the queen; and he was also the enemy of her people. Esther described Haman as wicked.

In this incident, Esther revealed her Jewish ethnicity. She had kept it secret until now. Esther should be commended for her straightforward and forthright speaking with political skill and subtlety. She was like Nathan, who in the same manner accused King David over his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12). King Ahasuerus' anger was righteous because it was against injustice, which was meted out towards innocent and defenceless Jews. In this regard, the king was angry but he did not sin. Haman, on the other hand, was afraid before the king and the queen. He deserved it. He was now being accused but Esther did not falsely accuse him the way Haman had done when petitioning the king to destroy all the Jews.

Haman's Plea – 7:7-9

In his anger, the king stormed out of the banquet hall into the palace

² John C. Whitcomb, "Esther, the Triumph of God's Sovereignty", p.94.

garden, which apparently was located near to the hall. One wonders why he walked out of the hall. Was it because he was angry at Queen Esther for her accusation against Haman, the Prime Minister? This could not possibly be the reason because the king delighted in Esther and he had shown much favour towards her during these few days having attended her banquets, merrily eating and drinking, and had even repeated three of his magnanimous offer to her. A more probable reason could be that the king was furious at the shockingly evil intention of Haman, and was trying to calm down and avoid making a spur of the moment decision concerning Esther his queen and Haman his prime minister.

As the king stormed out of the banquet hall, Haman saw that *there was evil determined against him by the king* (v.7). Haman now feared for his life. He was now experiencing what the Jews in Shushan and in the empire had been feeling when the decree was proclaimed to destroy all the Jews. Haman instinctively stood up by taking advantage of the king's absence to approach Esther apparently to beg for his life. Esther was unmoved as she reclined on her couch. Haman had gone too far by falling upon Esther's couch. The text does not state what Haman was saying to Esther, and at that very moment, the king returned to the banquet hall.

His eyes caught Haman in a position which he interpreted Haman's action as an attack on Esther or perhaps accosting her. King Ahasuerus commented: *Will he force the queen also before me in the house?* As he spoke these words, the king's chamberlains *covered Haman's face*. This indicates that there were chamberlains present in the banquet hall as in all the other instances. The chamberlains understood the meaning of the king's remark against Haman. The covering of the face was Persian practice, indicating that a person was sentenced to be executed.

The King's Judgement – 7:10

As Haman was escorted away to be executed, Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, who was present approached the king. Harbonah was one of the seven personal chamberlains of the king, who was ordered by the king to bring Vashti to the king's banquet (1:10). He said to the king that Haman had erected a gallows fifty cubits high (one cubit equals 18 inches or approx. 45 cm) by his house for Mordecai, who had been loyal to the king. The king ordered: *Hang him thereon* (v.9). So they hanged Haman on his own gallows. Then was the king pacified. The just retribution was meted against God's enemy!

PRACTICAL VALUE

Haman deserved to be executed and the mode of his

execution befits his crime. Out of his pride and arrogance, he concocted the evil plan to destroy, kill and annihilate the Jews for no other reason than for the fact that Mordecai refused to pay homage to him. His pride was hurt but he was greedy and had schemed to amass his personal wealth when the riches and property of the Jews would be confiscated. In his arrogance and anger, he erected an exceptionally high gallows to hang Mordecai.

However, God was not mocked. God would soundly punish anyone who harms God's people that are doing the will of God. Haman met his death because he fought against God! He was trying to stop the plan of God for man's salvation. Moreover, God's Word has warned that anyone who would cause evil on another, that evil would befall him³. We learn that obedient believers are loved and protected by the LORD, God in many ways. Anyone who is against us is against God and his curse on us would turn back towards him. It happened to Haman, and it will happen to the enemies of God.

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all therein. Everything belongs to God, and He is Sovereign over the world.

Therefore, God is in control over the affairs of men. We see this clearly in the lives of the protagonists in the book of Esther. Mordecai, Esther and the people of God were at the mercy of Haman, but God was able to use the king and Esther in their respective places to deliver His people. Both of them acted responsibly on their own and yet their actions fulfilled the purpose of God. This is a wonderful and comforting truth. There are no accidents in the believer's life.

Esther's presentation of her request aptly illustrates the Lord Jesus' teaching about communication with one another. We should be brief and forthright: *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil* (Matthew 5:37). Esther did not beat around the bush. She was truthful and factual in presenting to the king the heart of the matter. Esther's urgency coupled with her wisdom made her case convincing against Haman. It was not personal. It was all Haman's fault. A careful and detailed study of Esther's short and powerful presentation should yield interesting insights and benefits. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Esther 7:1-6; Ecclesiastes 3:7

³ Proverbs 26:27 Whoso diggeth a **pit** shall **fall** therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

TUESDAY: Esther 7:7-10; Romans 8:17-18.

WEDNESDAY: Esther 7:1-10.

THURSDAY: Esther 7:1-10; Psalm 127:1-5; Genesis 50:19-21.

FRIDAY: Esther 7:1-10; 2 Timothy 2:13; Daniel 2:46-49.

Discussion Questions

1. How many times had the king repeated his offer to Esther? What does this tell us about the king's attitude towards Esther? Would you say that this could be the providence of God, and if so, why?

2. What do you think could be the thoughts and emotions of King Ahasuerus and Haman and Esther as they went for the banquet?

3. What was Esther request?

4. How is Esther's humility and courage shown in the way she presented her request to the king?

5. What is the meaning of the last words of Esther's request: *although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage* (7:4)?

6. How did the king handle himself after Esther's revelation? Would

you behave the same if you were in the king's shoes?

7. Esther accused Haman for being the wicked enemy; and yet she invited him to her banquets. Was Esther being hypocritical or strategic? Why?

10. Should Haman plead for forgiveness from the king rather than Esther? Why and why not?

8. What was Haman's response to Esther's accusation?

11. What character trait(s) did Haman show in this instance?

9. How did Haman plead for his life? How did the king interpret Haman's action?

12. What did Haman reap what he had sown? What does Haman's experience teach us about being godly?

13. How does Haman's experience teach us about the futility of worldly riches?

14. What knowledge of God can we learn in this chapter that will comfort and encourage us in our daily living?

15. What can we learn from this chapter about resolving conflicts? Should Esther not have turned the other cheek here?
