

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 8**

**THE BOOK OF ESTHER**

**CHAPTER 8**

**INTRODUCTION**

God is not mocked. Haman erected the gallows to hang Mordecai for his defiance against him by not bowing in homage to him. Moreover, he was the chief architect of the evil decree to annihilate God's chosen people, the Jews. Whenever anyone goes against God, he would surely come to a terrible end. It is like kicking against the pricks. Haman was found guilty of gross wickedness and he was hanged from the very gallows that he erected for Mordecai. By the providence of God, the wicked enemy of the Jews was eliminated.

However, the problem of the Jews in the empire remained unresolved. In this chapter, Esther approached the king again to plead for herself and for her people. In this regard, she displayed more of her character. The king once again showed his inability to make decision on his own. Mordecai, who was promoted to the position that was held by Haman, was given the task to draft another decree to counteract the

original decree. The events in chapter three parallel those in chapter eight. With the eyes of imagination, we can see how joyful the Jews would be when they received Mordecai's edict. Not only did God remove Haman, He had placed someone in very high places in the government to look after His people's welfare. God turned the tables in favour of the Jews.

**OUTLINE**

1. The Promotions (vv. 1-2);
2. Reversing the Decree (vv. 3-6);
3. Issuing the New Decree (vv. 7-14);
4. The Rejoicing (vv. 15-17).

**COMMENTARY**

**The Promotions — 8:1-2**

In Persia, when a criminal was executed, his whole estate belonged to the State or government. King Ahasuerus gave *the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy* to Esther the queen. The king kept his promise to Esther, who actually had not asked for any material possessions although the king had offered her even half of his kingdom. The term, *the house of Haman* did not mean only the physical building of his house. It included all his wealth, servants, and any other property; in short, everything that Haman owned. King Ahasuerus gave to Esther an enormous and most generous gift. It appears that Esther accepted the gift.

Esther then introduced Mordecai to King Ahasuerus and told him of her relationship with Mordecai. Mordecai was her guardian and cousin. The king then took off his signet ring and gave it to Mordecai. The signet ring was significant. Previously, it was worn by Haman, and before he was executed, apparently the ring was taken away from him and returned to the king who now wore it. The ring was now given to Mordecai signifying that the king had promoted Mordecai, and that he had the same authority as that of Haman. Mordecai could do almost anything in the name of the king. The king was clearly placing his reputation in the hands of Mordecai.

Now, Mordecai had the means and the authority to draft a second edict to counteract the first one in the name of the king. The statement—*and Mordecai came before the king* (verse 2)—intimates that he could approach the king freely without the usual protocol. This had been Haman's honour and privilege. How sudden was the fall and promotion of man! Surely, this was the work of God to save His people from being destroyed to extinction. The LORD God was a covenant-honoring God. He had promised to bless Abraham and his sons and seeds. Haman's attempt to exterminate the whole Jewish race had met in failure at the very outset. He was fighting against God when he fought against God's people. This truth is applicable even

today and the enemies of the Jews (God's people) should heed the warning that all those who tried to harm God's people would themselves suffer accordingly.

### **Reversing the Decree — 8:3-6**

Esther spoke to the king seeking to put away the devious plan that Haman had made against the Jews. Although the king had been wonderfully gracious to her, she was not presumptuous. She humbly and unashamedly knelt before the feet of the king and sincerely and passionately made her request with tears. The lives of the people of Israel were still at risk of annihilation. The king was obviously touched by Esther's sorrowful demeanour when he held out his golden sceptre towards Esther. This extension of his sceptre was different from the earlier incident when Esther sought an audience with the king. This time the extension of the sceptre was to show that the king was favourably accommodative towards her.

Esther acknowledged it and then stood before the king. She continued. Before she presented the specifics of her petition, she prefaced it with four conditions of fact (verse 5): *if it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes*. These four conditions appealed to the heart and mind of King Ahasuerus. She did well by not taking the king's good and gracious disposition towards her for

granted. Indeed, the king had been pleased with her, and had been exceptionally favourable to her, and surely the king would want to do the right thing. Esther did not abuse her privileged position before the king. Her conditions revealed to us a queen who was humble and righteous. Basically Esther asked that the king do what was just and fair.

Having appealed to the heart and mind of the king, Esther requested that an edict be written to reverse the letters which were devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, and which he wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces (verse 5b). Observe that Esther chose her words very carefully. The first decree had the king's approval. But Esther did not implicate the king at all; not even his complicity in the whole thing. She specifically identified Haman by name, and the guilty party was only Haman. The blame was entirely on Haman.

Esther concluded her plea with two rhetorical questions (verse 6): *For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?* She underscored her appeal with her personal and enduring relationship with her people. By now Esther had revealed that she was Jewish. We wonder whether the king would accede to her request. Although Haman the enemy had been executed, Esther and Mordecai had

received honour and position, the fact was that the doom, which hovered over the Jews, still remained. Esther's original intention to save her people had not changed. Her mission was only half completed. The architect of this dastard deed is dead but the dastard act itself remains a real threat to the very existence of all of God's people. Hence, this second petition was necessary. Would King A-has-u'erus accede to Esther's request on behalf of the Jews in the empire?

#### **Issuing the New Decree — 8:7-14**

Esther hoped to have a favourable response from the king. King Ahasuerus replied to Esther and Mordecai who was with her. The king rehearsed that he had given Haman's estate to Esther and Haman had been permanently removed because he had purposed to oppress the Jews. The king proceeded to explain to Esther and Mordecai to write another decree in any way they liked. He would approve and seal it with his signet ring. The decrees of the king when once they had been written and sealed, no one could cancel or repeal them. The king's initial response seems to be misunderstood by some. Some held the view that King Ahasuerus was perturbed by Esther's impassioned plea, and felt impotent to do anything more. He seemed to say to Esther that he had already done all he could for Esther and Mordecai. He had made them wealthy beyond their expectation. He

had destroyed the enemy. He had elevated Mordecai to the position of Prime Minister. He had done enough for them. And he said to them to do what they liked.

On the other hand, some remarked that the king was just rehearsing what he had done for Esther and Mordecai. In other words, the king understood exactly what was required of him by Esther and Mordecai. By relating to them the nature of his gifts to Esther and the promotion of Mordecai, in fact the king was telling them that all that I can do as king in this matter has already been done according to Persian law. His advice to them was most perceptive. In an obtuse manner, he taught them how to circumvent the first unalterable decree. It is a decree that not even the king of Persia can reverse once it has been approved and sanctioned by the king. He told them to make whatever resolution they desire and the king would seal it with his ring. He would approve and endorse it without question! And this decree too could not be revoked. This latter view is more probable.

The king literally gave Mordecai a *carte blanche* (pronounce, *kart blansh*). Mordecai could write whatever he liked. Accordingly, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the third month of Sivan, Mordecai summoned all the king's scribes or lawyers together. The date in our calendar was 25<sup>th</sup> June, 474 B.C. The

first decree was declared on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan (that is, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 474 B.C.). There is a delay of two months and ten days. Why did it take so long for the second decree to be issued? A few reasons could be suggested. It would be better to prepare the counter-decree carefully instead of rushing it even though the Jews had to experience anguish for the period of the delay. The slow mode of transportation and communication can be another reason for the delay. Another reason could be that the bureaucracy in those days was unlike what we are used to today, and therefore it took a longer time to complete the decree. However, it would be another eight months more before the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Adar when the enemies of the Jews were allowed to rise and take arms against the Jews.

The decree was ready for announcement and Mordecai called all the king's lawyers to gather together on this day. A summary of the decree is given in verse 11. Mordecai almost echoed the words of the first decree, particularly the part where the Jews were allowed to *stand for their life to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish* all those who would attack them. If one thing Mordecai had learned from Haman, it was the way the decree was declared to all the provinces of the empire. All the three classes of rulers in the one hundred and twenty seven provinces were to declare the second decree as

it was. The edict was sent by couriers, and here again Mordecai learned from Haman. He used the couriers on horse-back, donkeys, camels and even young dromedaries (young horses specially trained to run fast) to deliver the decree.

The decree allowed the Jews in every province of the empire the right to defend themselves if they were attacked by their enemies. They were not only allowed to defend themselves but also *to destroy, to slay, and cause to perish* their attackers. And they were also allowed to confiscate the property of their attackers. Mordecai's decree was no less harsh than Haman. But there is a great difference. In this second decree, the Jews would kill the enemy only when they were attacked. They were not to make the first move to destroy, slay and kill those who were non-Jews. It was purely for self defense.

On the other hand, Haman's decree was a blanket order to destroy all Jews indiscriminately, irrespective of age and gender, and to confiscate their property. While Mordecai's decree was no less harsh than that of Haman's, the fact remains that Mordecai's decree was meant as a deterrent to neutralize the 1<sup>st</sup> decree of Haman. If there were no attackers on that terrible day, there would not have been any killing at all and no one would need to die and lose his property. So, any criticism that Esther and Mordecai were blood-thirsty, and

that they were no different than Haman was unjustifiable. If the Jews had resisted and defended themselves before or without the 2<sup>nd</sup> decree, then the Jews would be charged with rebellion against the entire Persian Empire. With the 2<sup>nd</sup> decree, the Jews can now legally defend themselves. No one would dare to carry out the 1<sup>st</sup> decree because of the severity of the 2<sup>nd</sup> decree.

### **The Rejoicing — 8:15-17**

Mordecai's garments are described in detail. The garments he wore depicted the honour and position the king had bestowed upon him. His garment of fine linen with colours of blue, white and purple were royal colours. Just like yellow is the colour of royalty in China. Moreover, he wore a great crown of gold although the crown was not the king's. It portrayed his power and authority in the palace. The Jews now had one of them in the highest place in the government of Medo-Persia who was seated next to the king. The tables were turned in favour of the Jews. This could only happen by the providence of God who kept His covenant-promise with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their descendents would be as the stars in the heavens. Any enemy of the people of God with the evil purpose to wipe them out of existence in the world would himself be met with his own death. Any attempt from any quarter to attack God's people is an

attack against God Himself, and God will not be mocked. He would justly mete our judgement against the enemy. This truth is well illustrated in this chapter.

When the Jews in the one hundred and twenty seven provinces received Mordecai's edict, there was great rejoicing and gladness, even in Shushan the capital city. Four words described their happiness: *light, and gladness, and joy, and honour* (verse 16). Light is in contrast with darkness. Before the second edict, a dark gloom of death hovered over them. Now they saw light, which dispelled the darkness. That doom was lifted and removed. Their mourning, fasting, weeping and wailing (4:3) were things of the past. In place of these feelings were gladness, joy and honour. The Jews could carry their heads high among the people. There were celebrations among the Jews in every province. And many people of the land became Jews, who had a special place in the empire. However, they became Jews because they feared the Jews. Did they fear the God of the Jews?

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

There are many valuable lessons to be learned. The most important lesson is about the LORD—the only One Living and True God, and there is none else! He is the God that chose the children of Israel to be His special people as His channel of blessing of hope to a lost

world. Today, we Gentiles have been grafted into the tree of Israel, and we, the Church enjoy the same privileges and blessings, which the LORD God promised Abraham. We are the spiritual sons of Abraham. So we see that God will always protect His people, individually and corporately. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to go and make disciples in the world and He promised to be with us even to the end of the age. We have seen that the opposition against us may initially seem powerful and formidable. However, things can change overnight. Light dispels darkness, and weeping turns to gladness. Let us be comforted and encouraged, and let us serve the LORD our God more fervently and devotedly. The LORD rewarded Mordecai. He too will reward us if we remain faithful to Him.

Esther's determination was exemplary. When she was out of danger herself and had been richly rewarded, she did not stop there. She carried on with the original plan to save the Jews. She might have been nervous but the important thing is that she took courage to plead for the Jews, many of whom she did not know, but only because they were Jews, the people of God. She teaches us to have the same measure of commitment and singleness of mind to do the will of God. In addition, we should love and care for one another within the family of God instead of cutting and

destroying one another. We should be like Esther who showed courage, unselfishness, fortitude and kindness. We also learn from her how to build camaraderie and loyalty among ourselves. A friend in need is a true friend in deed.

The deployment of the means of communication in those days provides a valuable lesson for us today. In spreading the gospel of salvation and the teaching of the Word of God, we should use all the modern resources and technology to advance the kingdom of God. In this way, we will hasten the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would then put away the political, economic, and social system of this world and establish a better system in the world to come when He will rule with justice and equity. Let each of us be an evangelist to our friends, colleagues and neighbours, and to include our loved ones and relatives. AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Esther 8:1-8; Hebrews 7:25. Romans 9:1-5.

**TUESDAY:** Esther 8:9-14; Ecclesiastes 7:17.

**WEDNESDAY:** Esther 8:15-17; Luke 16:19-31.

**THURSDAY:** Esther 8:1-14; Psalm 126:1-6.

**FRIDAY:** Esther 8:1-14; Revelation 7:9-17. Ezekiel 18:31-32.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Was it wrong for Esther to accept the gifts from King A-has-u-e'rus and Mordecai his promotion (vv. 1-2)?

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2. How do you see the promotion of man in your workplace? Is there such a thing as promotion in the church?

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3. Are the Jews today the same as the Jews in the OT times, in the spiritual sense i.e. with a spiritual significance? How are the Jews in the OT similar to the Christians in

the local churches today? When did the church begin?

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4. How did King Ahasuerus respond to Esther's plea? Did the king answer rightly or ignorantly (vv. 7-8)?

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5. What do verses 3-6 reveal more about Esther's character and heart?

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6. What did Mordecai's edict in the name of the king allow the Jewish people to do without breaking the first edict (vv. 9-13)?

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7. On what day was the second edict proclaimed? How did the Jews respond to the second decree (vv. 9, 15-17)?

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8. In what way did the second edict evidence God's provision and protection for His people?

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(Genesis 15:1-5)? How does this impact you?

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15. Will God change the law of Romans 6:23? If not, please elaborate.

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16. Some people of faith argue that total trust in God means it is never right to defend oneself against the charges or attacks of the wicked. What do you think about this argument and about Mordecai's decree?

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