

Esther

Chapters 1:1-3, 10-12, 19; 2:4-7,10, 17; 3:2, 5-6, 8-10;
4:1-2, 6-17, 5:1-5, 7:1-9; 8:8-10, 17; 10:3

Today we will read of Queen Esther and her older cousin Mordecai who raised her as his own daughter when her parents died. Esther and Mordecai were Jews who lived after the time the Jews were exiled to Babylon. After Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the Jews, the Babylonians were conquered by the Medo-Persians. The king who ruled during that time was called king Xerxes. Let's read the story from the Book of Esther, and learn about Esther, Mordecai and King Xerxes.

Whenever you say the name

Xerxes or *King* have students **bow their heads**.

Esther have the students sign **"ahhh"**.

Mordecai, have the students **cheer**.

Haman have the students **"boo"**.

Read the condensed Bible story below, asking questions when prompted.

Chapter 1

1 This is what happened during the time of **Xerxes**, the **Xerxes** who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: ² At that time **King Xerxes** reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, ³ and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when **King Xerxes** was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him...¹¹ to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. ¹² But when the attendants delivered the **king's** command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the **king** became furious and burned with anger.

The king's officials responded:

¹⁹ "Therefore, if it pleases the **king**, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she.

Chapter 2

⁴ Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the **king**, and he followed it.

⁵ Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named **Mordecai** son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, ⁶ who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin^[a] king of Judah. ⁷ **Mordecai** had a cousin...whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as

Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. **Mordecai** had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

¹⁰ **Esther** had not revealed her nationality and family background, because **Mordecai** had forbidden her to do so.

¹⁷ Now the **king** was attracted to **Esther** more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Questions:

Did Esther become queen because of something she was given or because of something she did?

Something she was given by God – beauty.

How much do you think God was involved in her becoming queen? Involved in the whole thing.

Chapter 3

² All the royal officials at the **king's** gate knelt down and paid honor to **Haman**, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But **Mordecai** would not kneel down or pay him honor.

⁵ When **Haman** saw that **Mordecai** would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶ Yet having learned who **Mordecai's** people were, he scorned the idea of killing only **Mordecai**. Instead **Haman** looked for a way to destroy all **Mordecai's** people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of **Xerxes**.

⁸ Then **Haman** said to **King Xerxes**, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the **king's** laws; it is not in the **king's** best interest to tolerate them.

⁹ If it pleases the **king**, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the **king's** administrators for the royal treasury."

¹⁰ So the **king** took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to **Haman** son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ "Keep the money," the **king** said to **Haman**, "and do with the people as you please."

Questions:

Why did Haman ask the king to have the Jews destroyed? Pride/Jealousy, didn't like Mordecai refusing to bow to him.

What does this passage tell you about Haman? Mean, ruthless, prideful, hateful, murderer who was extremely jealous, full of pride and anger.

What does this passage tell you about King Xerxes? Easily swayed by others opinions.

Chapter 4

When **Mordecai** learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. ² But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.

⁶ So Hathak went out to **Mordecai** in the open square of the city in front of the **king's** gate. ⁷ **Mordecai** told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money **Haman** had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to **Esther** and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the **king's** presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

⁹ Hathak went back and reported to **Esther** what **Mordecai** had said. ¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to **Mordecai**, ¹¹ "All the **king's** officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the **king** in the inner court without being summoned the **king** has but one law: that they be put to death unless the **king** extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the **king**."

¹² When **Esther's** words were reported to **Mordecai**, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the **king's** house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Questions:

What did Mordecai ask Esther to do?

Do you think it was fair of Mordecai to put Esther under such pressure? Why or why not?

Was this an easy request for Esther to fulfill? Why or why not?

At this point before continuing, name all the options that Esther had at this point? Do nothing and pretend she was not a Jew. Go to the king right away. Run away. Etc.

Chapter 4 Continued

¹⁵ Then **Esther** sent this reply to **Mordecai**: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

¹⁷ So **Mordecai** went away and carried out all of **Esther's** instructions.

Questions:

How was Esther responsible and brave?

How was Mordecai responsible and brave?

Have you ever felt scared to do what God wanted you to do?

Are you willing like Esther and Mordecai, to put God first and be responsible and brave?

Chapter 5

On the third day **Esther** put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the **king's** hall. The **king** was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. ² When he saw Queen **Esther** standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So **Esther** approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

³ Then the **king** asked, "What is it, Queen **Esther**? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

⁴ "If it pleases the **king**," replied **Esther**, "let the **king**, together with **Haman**, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

⁵ "Bring **Haman** at once," the **king** said, "so that we may do what **Esther** asks."

Chapter 7

So the **king** and **Haman** went to Queen **Esther's** banquet, ² and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen **Esther**, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

³ Then Queen **Esther** answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. ⁴ For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the **king**."

⁵ **King Xerxes** asked Queen **Esther**, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?" ⁶ **Esther** said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile **Haman**!" Then **Haman** was terrified before the **king** and queen. ⁷ The **king** got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But **Haman**, realizing that the **king** had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen **Esther** for his life.

Chapter 8

⁸ Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, **Haman** was falling on the couch where **Esther** was reclining.

The **king** exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?"

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered **Haman's** face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by **Haman's** house. He had it set up for **Mordecai**, who spoke up to help the king."

The king said, "Impale him on it!" ¹⁰ So they impaled **Haman** on the pole he had set up for **Mordecai**. Then the **king's** fury subsided.

¹⁷ In every province and in every city to which the edict of the **king** came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

Chapter 10

³ **Mordecai** the Jew was second in rank to **King Xerxes**, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

Questions:

What happened to Esther because of her being responsible and brave?

What happened to Mordecai because he was responsible and brave?

What happened to Haman because of his hatred and jealousy?

From this account, how does God work in our lives today? He protects us from evil people, He guides us, He puts us in situations that allow us to show His love, power and glory.

***Because of time we were not able to read the entire book of Esther. I encourage you this week to read the whole small book on your own to learn of the entire story.**