

# Esther

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## Lesson 2: The Plot Thickens

Five years have passed since Esther became queen and the plot to assassinate the king was uncovered.

### Chapter 3

#### **Read 3:1-7**

Not much is known about this man named Haman except for what we learn about him in the book of Esther. It is apparent, however, that he becomes a great enemy of the Jews.

It was common for a ruler to make the people of his province bow to him. It would also make sense that the lower officials in a kingdom would be required to bow to the higher officials.

There are times throughout Israel's past where people bowed down to rulers out of respect. Abraham bowed to the Hittite rulers, Jacob bowed to Esau and David bowed to Saul.

**Q:** Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow to Haman?

Notice that the other officials gave Mordecai plenty of time to adhere to the king's decree.

Mordecai wounded Haman's pride when we refused to bow to him. Haman's response was completely out of proportion. He was not satisfied with killing just Mordecai but, instead, decided to destroy all of Mordecai's people as well. It seems that irrational thinking was a common thing for the rulers of Persia during this time period.

In verse 7 it says that Haman cast the "pur" or the lot. It fell on the month of Adar, which was 12 months later. The Lord is giving Mordecai and Esther plenty of time to act.

#### **Read 3:8-9**

**Q:** How does Haman go about convincing the king to go along with his plan?

**Read 3:10-11.** The phrase the NIV translates as "Keep the money" is very confusing. The Hebrew phrase is *הַכֶּסֶף נְתוּן לָךְ* and is literally translated as "The silver is given to you." This could be taken as the king telling him to keep the money. It could also be taken to mean that the money is Haman's and he can do whatever he wants with it, including putting it into the royal treasury. This seems more likely considering reference is made later to Haman paying Xerxes.

Xerxes shows a complete lack of regard for the situation. He gives Haman permission to kill an entire people without even investigating the situation further.

**Read 3:12-15.** The plans are drawn up and the edicts sent out. The entire Jewish race is to be exterminated on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month.

**Q:** How is Haman and Xerxes' response to this edict different from the people's response?

#### Chapter 4

##### **Read 4:1-3**

Mordecai puts on sackcloth and ashes and wails in the city. Sackcloth was usually black and made of goat's hair. It was worn as a sign of mourning and humility. The ashes were also a sign of humility and abhorrence to the events that were happening.

##### **Read 4:4-11**

**Q:** Mordecai was familiar with the ways of Xerxes' court. Why would he ask Esther to go before the king if he knew it might get her killed?

**Q:** Mordecai realizes that overcoming this plot will be very difficult. What two things needed to be conquered in order for the Jews to be saved? (Hint: one thing concerning Haman and the other concerning Xerxes)

**Q:** Why do you think no one was allowed to approach the king without an invitation?

##### **Read 4:12-17**

**Q:** What is Mordecai absolutely convinced of?

Chapter 4:14 is the pivotal line of the book of Esther. God had placed Esther into the position she had for this very reason, so that she could save her people and preserve the line of the Messiah.

**Q:** How do the words of Mordecai in verse 14 apply to us today?

The Lord had set the stage for Esther to deliver her people. Now we see the reason why he did so. The plot against the Jews was also a plot against the Lord himself. God will not stand for it. He will take action and rescue his people once again.