

>> A Study Guide on Esther

Esther – *For Such a Time as This*

2018-01-27 (text updated 2020-12; Bible References updated 2024-12; Index added 2023-12-22)

Contents

PREFACE [ACT IA] (EST 1.1-3)	4
<i>Purpose</i>	4
<i>Potentate</i>	8
<i>Place</i>	13
<i>Period</i>	15
<i>Play</i>	18
<i>Primacy</i>	21
PREAMBLE [ACT IB] (EST 1.3-2.23)	26
Party Days (Est 1.3-9)	26
Princess's Disobedience (Est 1.10-12)	37
Protective Decree (Est 1.13-22)	40
<i>Pondering (Est 1.13-15)</i>	40
<i>Priority (Est 1.16-18)</i>	44
<i>Punishment (Est 1.19, 21)</i>	48
<i>Publication (Est 1.20, 22)</i>	54
Proclaimed Designate (Est 2.1-18)	58
<i>Proposal (Est 2.1-4)</i>	58
<i>Procurement (Est 2.5-8)</i>	62
<i>Prophet</i>	67
<i>Preparation (Est 2.9-11)</i>	69
<i>Process (Est 2.12-14)</i>	75
<i>Presentation (Est 2.15-18)</i>	78
Providential Discovery (Est 2.19-23)	83
<i>Patriarch (Est 2.19-20)</i>	83
<i>Prevention (Est 2.21-23)</i>	86
PROTAGONIST [ACT II] (EST 3.1-7.10)	90
Plot Devised (Est 3.1-15)	90
<i>Promotion (Est 3.1-2a)</i>	91
<i>Provocation (Est 3.2b-6)</i>	93
<i>Pur (Est 3.7)</i>	97

<i>Persuasion (Est 3.8-9)</i>	101
<i>Permission I (Est 3.10-11)</i>	104
<i>Pronouncement (Est 3.12-15)</i>	106
Plan Developed (Est 4.1-17)	112
<i>Prayer (Est 4.1-3)</i>	112
<i>Problem (Est 4.4-11)</i>	115
<i>Pressure (Est 4.12-14)</i>	120
<i>Perspicacious</i>	124
<i>Pledge (Est 4.15-17)</i>	130
Prepared Dinner (Est 5.1-8)	135
Puffed Despot (Est 5.9-14)	143
Pride's Downfall (Est 6.1-13)	148
<i>Perusal (Est 6.1-3)</i>	148
<i>Plummet (Est 6.4-11)</i>	154
<i>Pessimism (Est 6.12-13)</i>	158
Plaintiff's Declaration (Est 6.14-7.6)	161
<i>Piqued (Est 6.14-7.2)</i>	161
<i>Petition (Est 7.3-5)</i>	164
<i>Prosecution (Est 7.6-7a)</i>	169
Perpetrator's Demise (Est 7.7b-10)	171
PROTECTION [ACT IIIA] (Est 8.1-9.19)	174
Pre-emptive Defence (Est 8.1-17)	175
<i>Prominence (Est 8.1-2, 15)</i>	175
<i>Plea (Est 8.3-6)</i>	178
<i>Permission II (Est 8.7-8)</i>	181
<i>Proclamation (Est 8.9-10, 13-14)</i>	183
<i>Provision (Est 8.11-13)</i>	186
<i>Praise (Est 8.15-17)</i>	189
Persecutors Destroyed (Est 9.1-19)	192
<i>Power (Est 9.1-4)</i>	192
<i>Purge (Est 9.5-17)</i>	194
<i>Party (Est 9.17-19)</i>	201
POSTSCRIPT [ACT IIIB] (Est 9.20-10.3)	202
Purim Decreed (Est 9.20-32)	202
<i>Prescription (Est 9.20-22)</i>	202
<i>Participation (Est 9.23-28)</i>	207
<i>Precept (Est 9.29-32)</i>	210
Privileged Distinction (Est 10.1-3)	216
Principles Divulged	221
BIBLE REFERENCES	227
INDEX	241

Scripture references and quotations are from the following:

- *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Standard Bible Society, 2001). [ESV]
- *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984). [NIV]
- *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). [NASB]
- *The New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982). [NKJV]
- *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version), (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009) [KJV]
- H. B. Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint*, Cambridge, UK: (Cambridge University Press, 1909). [LXX]
- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*: with Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit Morphology (Logos Bible Software, 2006).

Preface [Act Ia] (Est 1.1-3)

Purpose

1. What is the story covered in the book of Esther? An outline of the story is as follows:
 - 1.1. Ahasuerus, the Persian king held a banquet and asked his wife, Vashti, to appear before the guests so he could show off her beauty.
 - 1.2. Vashti refused to appear. After Ahasuerus consulted with his advisors, Vashti was deposed.
 - 1.3. The advisors recommended that Ahasuerus appoint a new queen, and beautiful virgins were added to the palace harem, from which Ahasuerus could choose a queen.
 - 1.4. One of the virgins was a young woman named Esther, who did not reveal her Jewish heritage.
 - 1.5. When her turn came to go in to Ahasuerus, she pleased him more than any of his other wives or concubines and was appointed queen.
 - 1.6. Meanwhile Mordecai, a Jewish elder, discovered and reported an assassination attempt against Ahasuerus. The perpetrators were executed.
 - 1.7. Haman, one of the nobles of Persia, was promoted by Ahasuerus. When Haman was passing by, Mordecai refused to bow before him. This angered Haman greatly.
 - 1.8. Haman asked permission from Ahasuerus to punish Mordecai and to slaughter all the Jews. A date for the slaughter, about a year later, was selected by divination. A message was sent out to all the Persian Empire authorizing the genocide.
 - 1.9. Mordecai encouraged Esther to ask Ahasuerus to stop the slaughter.
 - 1.10. Esther invited Haman and Ahasuerus to a dinner at which she would plead for protection for her people, the Jews.
 - 1.11. Before the dinner could be held, Ahasuerus couldn't sleep so had the chronicles of his reign read to him and discovered that he hadn't honoured Mordecai for saving his life. With an ironic twist, he ordered Haman to honour Mordecai.
 - 1.12. At the dinner, Esther revealed her Jewish identity and what Haman planned to do to her people.
 - 1.13. In another ironic twist, Haman was executed on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai and Mordecai was appointed to take Haman's place as second in the kingdom—with access to the king's signet.
 - 1.14. Mordecai sent notices to all the empire allowing the Jews to defend themselves by killing their enemies before the dreaded day Haman had appointed.
 - 1.15. Mordecai and Esther established the feast of Purim to commemorate the salvation of the Jews.
2. Why is this story included in Scripture?
 - 2.1. Some people suggest that the primary reason Esther was written was to tell of origin of Purim.¹ However, the purpose of the account is not to give later (e.g., 2nd century BC) Jews a justification for the observance of Purim, any more than the purpose of the book of Job is to explain how Satan could have access to God's throne room (Job 1.6; Job 2.1) or the purpose of the book of Acts is to provide guidance about nautical matters (Acts 27.1-44). The institution of Purim was a response to the great salvation wrought by God, in the same way that the singing of the congregation in the wilderness (Ex 15.1-21) was a response to the salvation provided by God through the dry-land crossing of the Red Sea. If the primary reason for the book's existence was to tell of a non-sacramental celebration it is unlikely that the book would have been received as canonical.
 - 2.2. We cannot study the book of Esther without observing that there is no mention of the name of God (by any of his names, a metonymy, or a synecdoche) anywhere in the book. We will consider possible reasons for why this is later in our studies (see the section entitled

¹ E.g., www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-esther/; www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=40439; L. B. Paton, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Book of Esther* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 54.

Perspicacious). However, while God’s name is not mentioned, as we read the book, we cannot fail to observe that his hand of providence is clearly behind the timing, irony, and outcomes. The book is permeated with coincident events which are so improbable that they fall outside of the realm of ‘chance’ occurrence and show clearly that God’s directing hand was at work.

- 2.3. In a fictional TV drama series called NCIS (based around a team of special agents from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, investigating incidents in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps) Leroy Jethro Gibbs, Special Agent in Charge, has a series of guidelines (referred to as “Gibbs’ Rules”) which he lives by and teaches to the people he works with. One of his many rules is, “There is no such thing as coincidence.” (#39) In one episode one of the characters (Tony) says, “We don’t believe in coincidences around here.” Gibbs adds, “However, we do believe in bad luck.”² This is probably intended to be an ironic contradiction, with coincidences not being the result of chance but bad luck being so. In our ‘guts’ we know that coincidences do not occur by chance.
- 2.4. There are only a few possibilities for explaining apparent coincidences (and ultimately for explaining why anything at all happens):
 - 2.4.1. They are true coincidences, the result of mere chance, and occur in temporal or spatial proximity because of the law of large numbers—i.e., many things happen and sometimes coincidences happen. This is the view espoused by a materialistic naturalist.
 - 2.4.2. They are the result of some form of ‘fate’. However, fate is not an intelligent agent, but an impersonal force. Some religions (e.g., Hinduism and Buddhism) refer to this as *karma*.
 - 2.4.3. They are the result of an intelligent divine force—a god. Judaism and Islam fall into this category. However, since their definition of the god in their religion is not the same as the God revealed in Scripture, their gods do not exist, are idolatrous inventions of the human mind, and are no different from an impersonal force-fate.
 - 2.4.4. They are the result of the conscious and deliberate providential governance of the true Sovereign God.
- 2.5. Thus, the numerous apparent coincidences found in Esther are not coincidences, but acts decreed by God to display his ultimate control over human wills and actions. What are some examples of God’s perfect timing in the book of Esther?
 - 2.5.1. Mordecai discovering the plot to kill the king and reporting it, so that it would be recorded in the chronicles of Persia (Est 2.19-23); thus anticipating a future event—the sleepless night of the king and the reading of the chronicle (Est 6.1-3).
 - 2.5.2. Haman passing through the palace gate while Mordecai happened to be sitting there; thus inciting his anger against the Jews (Est 3.2).
 - 2.5.3. The fall of the lots, giving a date for the extermination of the Jews almost a year out, which allowed the Jews time to appeal to God and to prepare for their deliverance (Est 3.7).
 - 2.5.4. The king’s insomnia on the night before Haman planned to execute Mordecai and the discovery that Mordecai had not been rewarded (Est 6.1-3).
 - 2.5.5. Haman’s arrival at the palace at the exact moment when Ahasuerus was considering how to reward Mordecai (Est 6.6).
 - 2.5.6. The king’s neglecting to mention the name of the person he wished to honour so that Haman thinks it is himself (Est 6.6).
 - 2.5.7. The king’s return from the garden to Esther’s banquet area as Haman was falling on the queen’s couch to beg for his life (Est 7.8).
 - 2.5.8. The availability of the gallows prepared by Haman to hang Mordecai, used for his own execution (Est 7.9-10).

Each event is tied to others in ways that are significant, with one event affecting the outcome of the other. Even though in isolation the events may have appeared to be trivial, they were all

² ncis.wikia.com/wiki/Gibbs's_Rules

threads in an intricately woven pattern. They were like the proverb, “For want of a nail, the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For want of a horse, the rider was lost. For want of a rider, the message was lost. For want of a message, the battle was lost. For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost. And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.” The book of Esther demonstrates that God controls every event and action, including the events occurring in the most powerful pagan kingdoms of this earth.

- 2.6. What is God’s sovereign control over all events and actions often called? Among Reformed Christians it is referred to as *providence*. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* defines providence as: “Q 11: What are God’s works of providence? God’s works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.” Chapter 5 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is dedicated to the topic of providence, and opens with a definition of providence, “God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible fore-knowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.”
 - 2.6.1. God’s providential governance of the universe is explicitly declared in Scripture (Job 38-41; Ps 33.10-11; Ps 94.8-11; Ps 135.6; Dan 4.34, 35; Mt 10.29-31; Acts 17.25-28; Rom 9.17; Eph 1.11; Heb 1.3).
 - 2.6.2. Many people today reject the doctrine of providence, declaring in its place some form of fatalism absorbed from eastern pantheism, absolute human freedom and pure chance, or an impersonal mechanistic physical cause-consequence relationship among all events operating under natural laws (e.g., gravity, natural selection, electromagnetism, and thermodynamics). [Since the definition of relativistic quantum mechanics (e.g., the Schrödinger equation and the Heisenberg uncertainty principle) physicists no longer believe that outcomes can be fully and entirely predicted from current states by invariant cause-effect relationships.]
 - 2.6.3. Either we live in a universe that is entirely ‘ruled’ by chance, or in one that is ruled by the infinite Creator. There is no other logical possibility. And, contrary to what materialistic naturalists claim, it is *impossible* that the universe is ‘ruled’ by chance—therefore it must be ruled by God. The universe cannot be ‘ruled’ by chance, since as a *reductio ad absurdum* (“reduction to absurdity”) argument shows, the denial of God’s providential government of the universe results in an untenable or absurd result. For example, in a truly random/chance universe it is impossible to provide reasonable causal explanations for the existence of: inductive and deductive logic, mathematics, love, morality, existence of evil, justice, purpose or meaning for existence, communication between humans, the origination of anything (including space, time, energy, matter, and life), cause and effect, replication, growth and decay, and death.
- 2.7. We live in a world in which God’s providence is often pushed far from our minds. Technology helps us overcome many aspects of the curse on creation, governments attempt to provide cradle-to-grave healthcare and welfare, and ‘science’ claims that everything can be explained by the application of ‘natural laws’. Thus, the ‘need for God’ is pushed out of mind. However, in Esther’s day, it wasn’t much different. The all-powerful state controlled the lives of the common people and the Magi kept them in submission with appeals to the Fates. Thus, like professing Christians today, the Jews in Persian Empire had a tendency to forget that God was in control—overruling the Persian king and protecting his own people.
- 2.8. The book of Esther was written, and is included in the canon of Scripture, because it teaches that:
 - 2.8.1. While kings may issue ‘unalterable’ decrees (Est 1.19), God overrules and accomplishes his purposes (Prov 21.1).
 - 2.8.2. Human decisions and actions are secondary causes (Est 6.1-3) by which God fulfills his

purposes in the created realm (Prov 20.24; Acts 2.23; Acts 4.27-28). As one writer has said, in commenting on Esther's taking initiative to defeat Haman, "[T]he God of the Bible does not cast any shadows. The prophets and scholars who composed Hebrew Scripture did not conceive of human political initiative as intrinsically distinct from God's initiative and action. On the contrary, in the Bible it is often the independent initiative and action of human beings that constitute God's actions."³

2.8.3. God has a special place in his providence for his own covenant people (Est 4.14; Gen 45.7; Ps 73.23).

3. Why should we study the book and life of Esther?

3.1. It is part of God's word, and therefore it can teach us how to live (2 Tim 3.16, 17). We should study every part of God's word, even when it seems obscure or far removed in time and place, in order to determine what lessons God has for us.

3.2. It teaches us to trust God, even when circumstances appear to present impossible obstacles. God is the God of the impossible—i.e., what appears impossible to us (Gen 18.14).

3.2.1. At times in the past, God used extraordinary direct means to deliver his people (e.g., the ten plagues and the Red Sea crossing). However, he also used means that show him governing through secondary causes, such as the elevation of Joseph to a position of authority and the deliverance of the Jews documented in Esther.

3.2.2. We do not need to see 'signs and wonders' in order to experience his working to protect and deliver his people. In this book we see him working 'behind the scenes' to provide an amazing outcome. God continues to work out his perfect purposes today for us, regardless of how visible is his controlling hand.

3.3. It teaches the importance of our taking action (Est 4.14).

3.3.1. The Bible clearly teaches that God controls all events. However, it also teaches that humans are responsible to act. Some events/times may appear to be more important than others are. However, in reality there isn't such a thing as a trivial action or event. What may appear to us to be trivial may have far-reaching consequences because of the interconnectedness of all events. We need to live knowing that each action we perform and word we utter should be for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom.

3.3.2. This conundrum has always presented a challenge for finite human minds. We cannot fully understand how *all* actions can be predetermined by God and yet how man can be a responsible agent. Attempts to explain this often end up limiting God and declaring that man has an ultimately free will—which the Bible does not teach—or accepting fatalism and absolving man of all responsibility.

3.3.3. God uses secondary means to achieve his purposes, and Mordecai's insistence that Esther should act, even with the possibility of losing her own life, emphasizes the importance of our acting in service for God—whether it is working to provide for life's necessities (Eph 4.28; 2 Thess 3.10-12), doing good that evil may be overcome (Ps 34.14; Amos 5.14-15; 3 Jn 11), or presenting the Gospel to the spiritually dead (Mt 28.18-20).

3.3.4. It has been suggested that one of the reasons why the book of Esther makes no reference to God is in order to emphasize the role of human actions in shaping events. This is probably not a reason for the exclusion of direct references to God, since Scripture teaches God's sovereignty and human responsibility in the same breath (Ex 8.15, 19 with 9.12; Acts 2.23).

3.4. It provides practical lessons for living in pagan culture.

3.4.1. Some commentaries or sermons on the book of Esther suggest that we should deal with the book of Esther exclusively from a redemptive-historical perspective—i.e., that God was preserving his covenant people so that the Messiah could be born—and to attempt to

³ Yoram Hazony, "The Miracle of Esther", *First Things*, March 2016; www.firstthings.com/article/2016/03/the-miracle-of-esther

draw moral lessons from the book is inappropriate, since Mordecai and Esther were not God-fearing Jews or good moral exemplars. However, this exclusivist view can be countered from a number of perspectives:

- 3.4.1.1. Everything God does in history has a redemptive purpose. He is providentially working through every event to save a vast multitude of mankind.
- 3.4.1.2. Paul tells us that *all* Scripture is profitable “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3.16-17) This means that we can also derive lessons about how to live before God and the world from Esther.
- 3.5. It teaches us to be consciously aware that God is actively shaping events. No matter what happens around us—natural disasters, war, plague or disease, economic collapse, moral decay, or political chaos—God is in control and working all things for his glory and the good of his people (Rom 8.28). A Barack Obama or a Kathleen Wynne are as much under the control of God as was Ahasuerus the husband of Esther.
- 3.6. It teaches that God is faithful to his covenant promises, even when his people are not. Mordecai probably [we will consider this topic later in our studies] should have returned to Judea instead of continuing to live in Susa. Likewise the other Jews spread throughout the Persian Empire should have availed themselves of the opportunity to return after the decree of Cyrus. Nevertheless, in spite of their disobedience, God did not abandon them. He dealt patiently with them and protected his people in spite of their foolish disregard for his commands. We should praise God for his patience. We are likewise as rebellious, choosing which commands we like and which we will reject. Yet, God continues to provide us with blessings which we do not deserve.

Potentate

1. Who is the Persian king mentioned in the preface of the book of Esther (and throughout the book)?
 - 1.1. Ahasuerus, a king of the Persian Empire at its peak, since he was the ruler of 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia.
 - 1.2. The name Ahasuerus, used to designate a Persian monarch, appears only in the Hebrew Bible.
 - 1.3. It occurs many times in the book of Esther and only in two other places (Dan 9.1 and Ezra 4.6).
 - 1.3.1. The Ahasuerus mentioned in Daniel 9.1 cannot be the same Ahasuerus as the one mentioned in Esther, since the Ahasuerus of Daniel 9.1 was the *father* of Darius—Cyrus the Great. Cyrus’ rule is traditionally dated from 559-530 BC.⁴ Whereas the rule of the Ahasuerus of Esther is later (either 522-486 BC or 486-465 BC, as traditionally dated).
 - 1.3.2. The Ahasuerus mentioned in Ezra 4.6 is also probably not the king mentioned in Esther. He is probably Cambyses II, the son and successor of Cyrus.⁵
2. Who was the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther?
 - 2.1. When the book of Esther is not dismissed as fiction, three Persian monarchs are proposed as being Esther’s Ahasuerus: Darius I (ruled 522-486 BC), Xerxes I (ruled 486-465 BC), and Artaxerxes II (ruled 404-358 BC). The palace at Susa was unusable after the reign of Xerxes because it burned down during the reign of his son, Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC). A new palace was built at Susa by Artaxerxes II.
 - 2.2. Statements in Esther relating to the extent of the Persian territory (Est 1.1), establishment of Susa as a residence for the royal throne (Est 1.2), appointment of seven princes (Est 1.14), and

⁴ Traditional dates for the Persian period are used in this study guide in order to correlate the dates provided in extra-Biblical writings with the events in Esther. However, As David Austin has shown (“Is Darius, the king of Ezra 6:14-15, the same king as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:1?” *Journal of Creation*, 22(2) 2007, pp. 46-52; creation.mobi/darius-is-artaxerxes) the dates used to calculate the duration of the Persian Period may be incorrect since they are generally based on Claudius Ptolemy’s king records; which could be mistaken since he wrote centuries after the Persian period. Austin’s conclusions do not affect the *relative* correlation of dated events in the lives of Darius I and Xerxes I with the dates in the reign of Ahasuerus provided in Esther.

⁵ M. G. Easton, In *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

- taxation of the coastlands/islands (Est 10.1) rule out monarchs *prior* to Darius I.
- 2.3. The Greek version of the OT (Septuagint) translates Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes. Based on this, Jacob Hoschander,⁶ a Jewish writer, argues that Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes II.
- 2.3.1. He bases his argument on the following claims:
- 2.3.1.1. There was a gap of 30 years when Artaxerxes had no Persian queen, which was filled by an unnamed queen (Esther).
 - 2.3.1.2. The Persians prevailed over the Greeks during Artaxerxes' reign and extended their territory to its former extent (Est 1.1; Est 8.9).
 - 2.3.1.3. Artaxerxes laid a tribute on the isles of the sea (Est 10.1).
 - 2.3.1.4. Artaxerxes was portrayed as a weak character by his brother Cyrus, consistent with the portrayal of Ahasuerus in Esther.
 - 2.3.1.5. Artaxerxes defeated his brother and held a 180-day coronation party (Est 1.2-9). He provides no extra-Biblical support for this claim.
 - 2.3.1.6. Artaxerxes rebuilt Susa.
 - 2.3.1.7. Artaxerxes' mother murdered Artaxerxes' wife, Stateira (he claims that this was Vashti), after her refusal to appear at his party.
 - 2.3.1.8. Artaxerxes had many of his nobles murdered, which provides support for his willingness to have Haman executed (Est 7.10).
 - 2.3.1.9. Bar Hebraeus (1226-1286; a bishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church) referred to the tradition that Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes.
- 2.3.2. However, the Septuagint may be using 'artaxerxes' as a generic term for a Persian ruler, with the meaning "righteous king" or "perfect king", rather than as a personal name of a particular king, particularly since Artaxerxes II's personal name was Arsaces.
- 2.3.3. There is no evidence that the Persian Empire extended from India to Ethiopia (Est 1.1) during the reign of Artaxerxes II, even though he reclaimed some of the territory (according to Plutarch) which had been lost by previous Persian kings after Darius I. In addition, the traditional date for the reign of Artaxerxes II (404-358 BC) places the events of Esther after all other books of the OT had been completed (Malachi was written about 430 BC) and after the return of the last group of Jewish exiles (c 432 BC). It is unlikely that the book of Esther would have been included in the OT canon if it had been composed at such a late date.⁷
- 2.4. The overwhelming consensus among most modern commentators is that Ahasuerus was the Persian monarch named Xerxes I (reigned 486-465 BC), the son of Darius I. Some commentators state that there can be no doubt about this identification.⁸ The translators of the NIV assume this identification and include the name Xerxes in the translated text of Esther. This view appears to have been first suggested by Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609), a Dutch scholar, in his work on historical chronology.⁹ James Ussher (1581-1656) took a different view than that of Scaliger, and identified Ahasuerus as the father of Xerxes I—i.e., Darius I (we will consider this option next). There are primarily three arguments presented in favour of Xerxes I being the monarch of Esther:
- 2.4.1. The extra-Biblical events recorded about Xerxes' reign¹⁰ can be correlated with the dates of Ahasuerus' reign given in Esther.
- 2.4.1.1. It has been suggested that the feast recorded in chapter 1 falls within the period of Xerxes' preparation to avenge his father's defeat at the Battle of Marathon (490

⁶ Jacob Hoschander, "The Book of Esther in the Light of History: Chapter IV," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jul., 1919), pp. 81-119; www.jstor.org/stable/1451318.

⁷ We will consider the question of Esther's canonicity later; see the section titled, *Perspicacious*.

⁸ L. B. Paton, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Book of Esther* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 53.

⁹ Richard Edmund Tyrwhitt, *Esther and Ahasuerus: An Identification of the Persons So Named*, (Burntisland, Scotland, 1868), p. 3.

¹⁰ Identifying exact dates for most of the events in the lives of Persian monarchs is difficult. Dates for specific events may vary, depending on the source consulted.

- BC) against the Greeks.
- 2.4.1.2. The feast may have included planning sessions with the leaders (subject kings and satraps) of the provinces called to Susa, and provided an opportunity to solicit financial support for the costly undertaking of staging a fleet and army to attack Greece. However, when Xerxes was in Persia he spent most of his time in Persepolis—not Susa, where the events of Esther take place over a 10-year period (Est 1.1). The use of Susa as a royal residence declined after Darius I until the time of Artaxerxes II.¹¹ There is no evidence that Xerxes spent much time in Susa.¹²
- 2.4.1.3. After, Xerxes' navy was defeated at Salamis and he returned to Persia, he could have then married Esther in the seventh year (Est 2.16) of his reign (479 or 478). However, the fact that he would have been away in Greece the year before presents a difficulty for explaining how he agreed to the decision to collect virgins for his harem (Est 2.1-4) and organized their preparation (Est 2.12).
- 2.4.2. It has been suggested that Herodotus refers to Xerxes' capricious and tyrannical nature, and that this is consistent with the nature of Ahasuerus described in Esther. However, Herodotus was a Greek, with no love for the Persians. He attributes harshness to many enemies of the Greeks.¹³ And, the same character traits attributed to Xerxes can be attributed to other Persian (and before them, Babylonian; and after them, Greek and Roman) monarchs. Such is the nature of man, that when he is allowed to have absolute power and permitted to be worshiped as a god, he will behave in a tyrannical manner—one only needs to consider Kim Jong-Un, the 'supreme' leader of North Korea to see this reality.
- 2.4.3. Roland G. Kent (1877-1952), a linguist at the University of Pennsylvania translated many of the cuneiform inscriptions from the period (e.g., on pillars, stone slabs, walls, and statues in the ruins of Susa and Persepolis). In the cuneiform, Xerxes refers to himself as, *xshayârshâ xshâyathiya*,¹⁴ which is translated by Kent as 'Xerxes the King'. It is claimed by some OT scholars that the name Ahasuerus is a Hebrew approximation of the Old Persian *khshayarsha* (*xshayârshâ*). However,
- 2.4.3.1. A previous Persian (or Median) monarch, named Cambyses I, was also called Ahasuerus in the Biblical text (Dan 9.1). He was the father of Darius the Mede (likely, Cyrus the Great). There is no evidence that his personal name was Xerxes (however, the LXX translates the name as Xerxes).¹⁵ It is likely that the Ahasuerus mentioned in Ezra 4.6 is also a different one than is mentioned in Esther.¹⁶
- 2.4.3.2. The term *ahasuerus* (if it is a transliterated approximation of the Old Persian *xshayârshâ*) is believed to mean 'mighty man' or 'mighty eye' from '*aha*' and '*suerus*'; which may be related to *artaxerxes*, from '*arta*' and '*xerxes*', meaning 'just king or kingdom'. The name Ahasuerus is translated in the Septuagint in Esther (Est 1.1) as Artaxerxes. If *ahasuerus* is a transformation of *xshayârshâ* or

¹¹ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 22, 119.

¹² Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 454, 461, 464.

¹³ Emily Baragwanath, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ *Old Persian Texts*, www.avesta.org/op/op.htm

¹⁵ Based on this word association, the NIV translates Ahasuerus as Xerxes in Daniel 9.1. However, there is no evidence that the Persian equivalent of the name, translated as Xerxes, was used by the Medes prior to the consolidation of the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus. In addition, Xerxes I (518-465 BC) could not have been the father of the Darius (Cyrus) of Daniel, who was 62 years old in 539 BC (Dan 5.31). The NIV translation introduces unnecessary confusion by translating Ahasuerus as Xerxes.

¹⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, (Ed.), *Esther* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), p. 1; with H. D. M. Spence-Jones, (Ed.), *Ezra* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), p. 45.

artaxerxes, then Ahasuerus could be translated into English as Artaxerxes, but not as Xerxes.

- 2.4.3.3. It may be that the OT writers used the name Ahasuerus as a generic name for a number of Persian monarchs. The writer of Esther may indicate this with the statement “in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned ...” (Est 1.1). This is equivalent to saying, “in the days of the king, the king who ruled ...” There is no record of there being a Xerxes in the Medo-Persian Empire prior to Xerxes I, and Xerxes II reigned for less than a year, so if Ahasuerus is translated as Xerxes, it wasn’t necessary for the author to say ‘*the Xerxes*’—as everyone would have known which Xerxes was being referred to. So, from a Jewish perspective, the name Ahasuerus appears to have been a title for Persian monarchs rather than their personal names, as the name Pharaoh (the Hebrew equivalent of the Egyptian ‘*pr-’o*’ meaning ‘great house’) was used in the OT to refer to many Egyptian kings, regardless of their personal names (e.g., Jer 44.30). We use the appellation ‘Caesar’ in a similar way. In Esther 1.2 (etc.), ‘king Ahasuerus’ could be equivalent to saying, ‘Ahasuerus the king’ as in ‘Pharaoh the king’ (Dt 11.3).

- 2.5. The other likely possibility for Ahasuerus is the monarch Darius I Hystaspes¹⁷ (reigned 522-486 BC; who is mentioned in a number of places in Ezra (Ezra 4.5, 24; Ezra 5.5-7; Ezra 6.1, 12-15), Nehemiah (Neh 12.22), Haggai (Hag 1.1, 15; Hag 2.10) and Zachariah (Zech 1.1, 7; Zech 7.1), and was the father of Xerxes I. He was a different Darius from the one mentioned in Daniel (Dan 5.31; Dan 6.1ff; Dan 9.1; Dan 11.1). There are a number of reasons for accepting this identification:¹⁸

2.5.1.1 Esdras 3.1-2 (in the Apocrypha) uses the name Darius as the king who reigned over 127 provinces from Egypt to Ethiopia; as did the Ahasuerus of Esther (Est 1.1-3).

2.5.2. Equating Ahasuerus with Darius I, rather than with Xerxes I, is supported by the association of the name Artaxerxes with Darius I in Ezra 6.14. If we translate the ‘and’ as ‘even’¹⁹ then Artaxerxes is Darius I, which supports the suggestion of Roland Kent that the name Ahasuerus is a Hebrew approximation of the name Artaxerxes.

2.5.3. The timing of events in the life of Darius I, from extra-Biblical sources, can be correlated with the dates in Ahasuerus’ reign given in Esther:

2.5.3.1. With the help of six princes (possibly six of the seven mentioned in Est 1.14) Darius seized power from the usurper Gaumata and ascended the throne in 522 BC.²⁰ He was occupied during the first few years of his reign with subduing revolts in the provinces and reconquering the empire founded by Cyrus.

2.5.3.2. During this time, he married Atossa (Vashti; Bishop James Ussher, in his *The Annals of the World*, equates Atossa with Vashti²¹), a daughter of Cyrus, and fathered a son (Xerxes) by her (518²² BC).

¹⁷ See, “The Identity of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther” in Floyd Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2009), pp. 199-205.

¹⁸ James R. Hughes, “Which Persian monarch was the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther?” *Journal of Creation*, Volume 30, Issue 3, December 2016; pp. 74-77.

¹⁹ David Austin, “Is Darius, the king of Ezra 6:14-15, the same king as the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:1?” *Journal of Creation*, 22(2) 2007, pp. 46-52. creation.mobi/darius-is-artaxerxes

²⁰ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_I; see: Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 84;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+3.84&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

²¹ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, archive.org/stream/AnnalsOfTheWorld/Annals_djvu.txt; sections: 1009, 1027, 1035.

²² If Xerxes was born in 518 BC (some place his birth in 520 BC), this could appear to present a problem for the identification of Ahasuerus as Darius, since Vashti was deposed before Xerxes was born. However, the banquet lasted 180 days (Est 1.4). It may have been started in late 520 BC and continued into 519 BC. If Xerxes was conceived near the end of the banquet period, he could have been born after his mother was deposed as queen, in 518 BC.

- 2.5.3.3. Darius built a significant palace in Susa²³ and appears to have been in the city in 519 BC²⁴ in the third year of his reign, which correlates with Ahasuerus being in Susa in the third year of his reign (Est 1.3)
- 2.5.3.4. After deposing Vashti, Darius had to leave Susa to deal with a rebellion in Babylon. He conducted a siege of Babylon and recaptured it (519 BC). After his return from Babylon he again spent some time in Susa. During this stay, a decision was made to collect virgins for his harem (Est 2.1-4), and a year later (Est 2.12) Esther was brought to him and appointed queen (516 BC).
- 2.5.3.5. He then left for a couple of years to invade Scythia and to expand the empire along the banks of the Indus River (Est 1.1) in 515 BC.
- 2.5.3.6. After his return, Haman put forward his proposal to eliminate the Jews. Esther had not been called into Ahasuerus' presence since he had returned from his conquests.
- 2.5.4. The extent of the Persian Empire was at its greatest during the reign of Darius I. According to Thucydides,²⁵ Darius I subjugated the islands of the Aegean Sea. In an inscription at Susa, Darius said, "By the grace of Ahuramazda, here are the peoples I have conquered outside Persia. They obey me; they bring me *tribute*. What I order them to do, they accomplish. They respect my law: ... the *Greeks who guard the sea* ..." ²⁶ According to Herodotus, a taxation of the coastlands/islands was imposed by Darius I: "Later in his reign the sum was increased by *the tribute of the islands*, and of the nations of Europe as far as Thessaly. The Great King stores away the tribute which he receives after this fashion—he melts it down, and, while it is in a liquid state, runs it into earthen vessels, which are afterwards removed, leaving the metal in a solid mass. When money is wanted, he coins as much of this bullion as the occasion requires."²⁷ Esther 10.1 refers to such a tribute. However, this territory was lost by Xerxes I after his defeat by the Greeks in 480 BC after the Battle of Salamis, *before* the book of Esther would have been composed, if the monarch of Esther was Xerxes I.
- 2.5.5. According to Herodotus, it was Darius I, who on his arrival at Susa, founded the council of the seven princes of Persia (Est 1.14).²⁸
- 2.5.6. There is no evidence that Amestris, the wife of Xerxes I, was ever deposed or viewed unfavourably by Xerxes. She continued to have significant influence when her son, Artaxerxes I, became king. In contrast, there may be an indication that Atossa was deposed or viewed with less favour by Darius I. Darius married Atossa, the previously twice-married daughter of Cyrus, for political reasons—to consolidate his claim to the throne. Atossa was one of the many wives of Darius, and, according to Herodotus, not his most favoured. His most favoured wife was the virgin Artystone—Herodotus states that she was a younger daughter of Cyrus²⁹ but Ussher suggests that she was Esther (Est 2.17), whose Jewish origin was concealed by the Persian chroniclers. Darius honoured Artystone by making a golden statue of her.³⁰ Even though Atossa was the mother of Xerxes, she is

²³ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013).

²⁴ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 411-412.

²⁵ Thucydides, *History of Peloponnesian War*; bk 1, chapter 1, classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.1.first.html

²⁶ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 283.

²⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 96; mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/herodotus/Herodotus3.html

²⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapters 70-71, 74, 76; mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/herodotus/Herodotus3.html

²⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 88; mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/herodotus/Herodotus3.html

³⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 7, chapter 69; www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+7.69&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

rarely mentioned in the *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*,³¹ but Artystone (Irtašduna, in the *Fortification Tablets*) is mentioned as an influential woman who owned great estates (Est 8.1).³² This may indicate that Atossa had lost favour with Darius, as the book of Esther indicates of Vashti (Est 1.19-22).

- 2.5.7. The names of the eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, who plotted against Ahasuerus (Est 2.21) are given as Gabatha and Tharra in the Greek apocryphal portion of Esther [12.1], in the days of Mordecai (Mardocheus in the Greek). Mordecai informed *Artaxerxes* of the plot. This same Artaxerxes ruled over 127 provinces from Egypt to Ethiopia (apocryphal portion of Esther, 13.1), as did the Ahasuerus of Esther.
- 2.5.8. One of Haman's sons is named *Vaizatha* (Est 9.9). Yamauchi refers to linguistic studies which concluded that the diphthong³³ "ai" had shifted to "e" during the reign of Xerxes before the reign of Artaxerxes I. "This indicates that the name transmitted in Esther is strikingly old and authentic."³⁴ This is evidence that the book of Esther was written by a contemporary of Esther and not during the late Hellenistic era, as is often suggested. In addition, it suggests that Esther was composed in Hebrew during (or shortly after) the lifetime of Darius I rather than during or after the reign of Xerxes.
- 2.5.9. We are told that Mordecai was taken captive at the time of Jeconiah (597 BC) in Esther 2.6. He could have been taken captive as a baby with his family. If we date Ahasuerus as reigning from 486-465 BC, then Mordecai would have been at least 124 years old when he was promoted to vizier (Est 8.1-2) in Ahasuerus' 13th year (473 BC). However, if he was promoted by Darius I, he would have been about 88 years old; a more realistic age for an elder sitting at the king's gate (Est 2.19).

Place

1. What was the extent of the Persian Empire at the time of Esther?
 - 1.1. It extended from India to Ethiopia.
 - 1.1.1. India: The only mention of India in the Bible is in Esther (Est 1.1; Est 8.9).
 - 1.1.1.1. The Hebrew word used here (יִנְדֻּי; *hōd·dû*) is from Old Persian. We derive our word Hindu from it. Our word 'India' comes from the same source, the Sanskrit word (*sindhu*), which was applied to the Indus River, and means something like 'great river' or 'to flow'.
 - 1.1.1.2. The province of India included the land in the Indus Valley (now Pakistan), but did not extend into the largely unpopulated desert areas to the east, and thus not into the territory that we call India today.
 - 1.1.1.3. Darius I was the Persian monarch who subjected this territory.³⁵ It was one of the major districts (the 20th satrapy) of the Empire: "These are more in number than any nation of which we know, and they paid a greater tribute than any other province, namely three hundred and sixty talents of gold dust."³⁶
 - 1.1.2. Ethiopia: In the Hebrew this is Cush. It is generally considered to be the upper Nile region. This territory was added to the Empire by Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus. The territory of Cush likely included regions to the east (i.e., today's Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia). The peoples populating these areas were likely descendants of Cush, one of the

³¹ www.livius.org/pen-pg/persepolis/fortification_tablets.html

³² www.livius.org/da-dd/darius/darius_i_4.html; www.livius.org/ar-ar/artystone/artystone.html

³³ Diphthong: two adjacent vowel sounds occurring within one syllable.

³⁴ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The archaeological background of Esther: archaeological backgrounds of the exilic and postexilic era, pt 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April-June 1980): pp. 99-117; www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bsac/1980_099_yamauchi.pdf

³⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 4, classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt

³⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 94; www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+3.94&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

sons of Ham (Gen 10.6). They may have migrated from the Middle East through Egypt or, more likely, crossed from the southern Arabian Peninsula (i.e., today's Yemen) at the narrow channel at the mouth of the Red Sea [25kms or 20kms from Birim Island; less distance than from Toronto to Niagara on the Lake across Lake Ontario]; since according to ancient historical records (some of) the people who settled in the southern Arabian Peninsula appear to have also been descendants of Cush, through Seba.³⁷

- 1.1.3. India and Ethiopia provide representative territories at the extreme edges of the Persian Empire. However, the Empire extended west beyond Egypt into Libya, north to Turkey (Lydia) and Bulgaria (Thrace) and the territory around the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea which included Turkmenistan (Parthia), Uzbekistan, parts of Kazakhstan, reaching the western borders of modern China (Sogdiana), and Tajikistan and Afghanistan (Bactria; from which Bactrian camels get their name).
- 1.1.4. This was the largest empire until that time. Alexander's empire may have been slightly larger as it included Greece, but may not have included some parts of the northeastern area such as Tajikistan and the parts of Kazakhstan. However, Alexander's empire lasted for just over six years. Comparable empires, in terms of territory and duration, include the:
 - 1.1.4.1. Roman in the 2nd century AD. This was the longest lasting empire, lasting about 500 years.
 - 1.1.4.2. Mongolian, under Genghis Khan (in the 13th century AD). Lasted only 50 years.
 - 1.1.4.3. Ottoman, 1350-1700 AD.
 - 1.1.4.4. British in the 17-20th centuries. Lasted for 150-200 years.
- 1.1.5. The reference to India in the book of Esther is circumstantial evidence that the book was composed in the time of the Persian Empire in the East, and not in the days when the Jews lived under the late Seleucids, who had no connection with distant parts of the former empire.
- 1.2. It consisted of 127 provinces.
 - 1.2.1. This enumeration also testifies to the time period in which the book was written.
 - 1.2.2. It also provides information about Darius' reign which is not available from other sources.
 - 1.2.3. It appears that at the time of Cyrus (Dan 6.1) the Persian Empire was divided into 120 satrapies. About 20 years later, under Darius I, it had added territory and provinces.
 - 1.2.4. Herodotus mentions that the empire, under Darius, was divided into 20 territories (satrapies), each with its own governor.³⁸ The Hebrew word (מְדִינָה) can refer to any district or region of any size. Herodotus lists some of the sub-divisions of these major territories and identifies six smaller jurisdictions within each. Some territories or districts may have had more or fewer than six. Thus, considering Herodotus and Esther 1.1, the Empire consisted of 20 major territories or districts, which were broken into smaller organizational jurisdictions—like modern provinces/states and their counties.
 - 1.2.5. Judea was one of the provinces within the satrapy of Syria.
2. Where, within the Persian Empire, did the events of Esther primarily take place?
 - 2.1. In Susa, one of the four or five capital cities of the Persian Empire.
 - 2.2. Susa (Heb: שׁוּשַׁן; the town of about 60,000 near the ruins of Susa is called Shush today) was situated near today's Iraq-Iran border, in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains, about ~375km SE of modern Baghdad.
 - 2.3. It was primarily used as a winter residence. During the hot season the king moved his court to the cooler Ecbatana, in Media (Ezra 6.2).
 - 2.4. Susa's name was derived from the lily that grew in the nearby mountain valleys. The English

³⁷ Arthur Custance, *Noah's Three Sons*, www.custance.org/Library/Volume1/Part_II/Chapter3.html

³⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, 89;
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+3.89&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

name Susan is a direct equivalent of this ancient name.

- 2.5. The site was visited by Austen Henry Layard in 1841. Extensive investigations of the ruins of Susa began in the 1850s and have continued intermittently until the present (under French direction until the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and under Iranian direction until the present). The Iranian government maintains the site as a tourist attraction. The excavations of the citadel have revealed the layout of the palace, including the throne room, inner court (Est 4.11; Est 5.1), and treasury, the likely location of the harem, and the location of the palace garden beside the river (Est 1.5; Est 7.7, 8).³⁹
- 2.6. Persepolis was another of the capital cities of the empire. It was also built by Darius.⁴⁰ Another two were Babylon and, possibly, Pasargadae.
3. Where did Ahasuerus establish his court?
 - 3.1. The expression ‘sat on his royal throne’ is used figuratively to indicate that the king was present in the city with royal authority, not specifically sitting in a chair.
 - 3.2. In the citadel, a fortified royal palace. It was a rectangular acropolis (platform) rising about 20m above the city. The city was surrounded by a wall of 4km in length.
 - 3.3. The palace at Susa was built by Darius I. He recorded the construction:
 - 3.3.1. “This is the *hadish* palace which at Susa I built. From afar its ornamentation was brought. Deep down the earth was dug, until rock bottom I reached. When the excavation was made, gravel was packed down, one part sixty feet, the other thirty feet in depth. On that gravel a palace I built. And that the earth was dug down and the gravel packed and the mud brick formed in molds, that the Babylonians did. The cedar timber was brought from a mountain named Lebanon; the Assyrians brought it to Babylon, and from Babylon the Carians and Ionians brought it to Susa. Teakwood was brought from Gandara and from Carmania. The gold which was used here was brought from Sardis and from Bactria. The stone—lapis lazuli and carnelian—was brought from Sogdiana. The turquoise was brought from Chorasmia. The silver and copper were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned was brought from Ionia. The ivory was brought from Ethiopia, from India, and from Arachosia. The stone pillars were brought from a place named Abiraduch in Elam. The artisans who dressed the stone were Ionians and Sardians. The goldsmiths who wrought the gold were Medes and Egyptians. Those who worked the inlays were Sardians and Egyptians. Those who worked the baked brick (with figures) were Babylonians. The men who adorned the wall were Medes and Egyptians. At Susa here a splendid work was ordered; very splendid did it turn out. Me may Ahuramazda protect, and Hystaspes, who is my father, and my land.”⁴¹
 - 3.4. Xerxes completed the work his father began in Susa. However, during the reign of Darius’ grandson, Artaxerxes I Longimanus, the palace was destroyed by fire. Artaxerxes II planned to restore the main place and built a new, smaller, one on the western side of the river. The specific references to the citadel-palace in the book of Esther are additional evidence that the book was written within the lifetime of the principal characters and not at some later date (e.g., during the period of the Seleucids).

Period

1. When did the events in Esther take place?

³⁹ www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/susa/; www.livius.org/su-sz/susa/susa_palace_darius.html; Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. xvi-xvii, 54-65, 125-138, 209-240.

⁴⁰ Ali Mousavi, *Why Darius Built Persepolis* (Odyssey, Nov-Dec 2005) www.academia.edu/1510481/Why_Darius_built_Persepolis

⁴¹ Quoted in A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (University of Chicago Press, 1948) oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/history_persian_empire.pdf

- 1.1. We have already established the general period from the identification of Ahasuerus as Darius I, who reigned 522-486 BC, by the traditional reckoning. Therefore the events of Esther take place over an 11-year period from 520-510 BC:

Verse Reference	Event in the Book of Esther	Year of Ahasuerus' Reign	Month	Day(s)	Date (BC)
1.3-4	Ahasuerus holds banquet that lasts 180 days	3			520-519
2.16	Esther declared queen	7	10		516
3.7	Haman casts his lots	12	1	1	511
3.12	Haman issues his decree	12	1	13	511
8.9	Mordecai issues his decree	12	3	23	511
3.13	Date planned for the annihilation of all the Jews	13	12	13	510
8.12; 9.1	Date upon which the Jews could defend themselves	13	12	13	510
9.6-22	Sons of Haman executed; Purim celebrated	13	12	14, 15	510

2. What could be the significance of the expression used by the writer, “now in the days”?
- 2.1. The phrase is preceded by the discourse marker ‘and it was’ (וַיְהִי)—translated ‘now’ (ESV), ‘now it took place’ (NASB) or ‘now it came to pass’ (NKJV)—which indicates that the account is about events which occurred in the past.
 - 2.2. A Jewish tradition held that when this expression (“and it was, in days”) was used it indicated a time of sorrow and distress for the covenant people.
 - 2.3. This expression is used in eight other places in the Hebrew OT (Gen 14.1; Gen 26.1; Judges 15.1; Ruth 1.1; 2 Sam 21.1⁴²; 2 Chron 26.5; Is 7.1; Jer 1.3). The context of most of the occurrences is consistent with the idea that this expression is a signpost indicating dolorous times, such as famine, war, captivity, or spiritual declension.
 - 2.4. Esther, like Ruth, begins with a time of despair but ends with victory for the covenant people.
 - 2.5. Zoroaster (c 630-553 BC) had founded the Persian religion during the time that the Jews were in captivity. He was a contemporary of Daniel. He died around the time Esther was born. The rapid ascendancy of this religion in the Persian Empire could have caused distress among the righteous Jews of Daniel, Mordecai, and Esther’s day, and been a contributing factor in their general feelings of despair.
3. What else was going on among the Jewish people at this time?
- 3.1. Daniel had probably died in Susa, 10-15 years before the events in Esther began. He may have been known to Mordecai, although Esther might have been too young to have known him.
 - 3.2. The first group of exiles had returned with Zerubbabel to Judea about 15 years before the book of Esther (Ezra 1.8, 11; Ezra 5.14, 16). The second group would return under Ezra, 60 years after the close of the book of Esther, during the reign of Darius’ grandson, Artaxerxes I (the king for whom Nehemiah was cupbearer; Neh 2.1).
 - 3.3. About 20 years before Esther became queen, the Jews in captivity had been permitted by Cyrus to return to Judea from the Persian provinces (2 Chron 36.22-23). They had faced considerable challenges from their enemies while rebuilding the Temple and re-establishing the sacrificial system. The Temple rebuilding project (536-515 BC) was completed a year after Esther became queen.
 - 3.4. The prophet Zechariah wrote at the same time as the events taking place in the book of Esther.
 - 3.5. Aramaic was replacing (Old) Hebrew as the common language of Judea—for example much of the book of Daniel was written in Aramaic. And the Aramaic script (which we call the Hebrew alphabet today) had recently been adopted even for recording Hebrew texts. Jesus would speak

⁴² The word ‘famine’ appears between the two other words, “and it was” and “in days”.

Aramaic as well as Hebrew and Greek, and might have known some Latin.

4. Why were Mordecai and Esther living in Susa?
 - 4.1. Isaiah and Jeremiah had urged the Jews to return from their captivity—even before it happened (Is 48.20; Jer 50.8; Jer 51.6). They knew that the captivity would last 70 years (Jer 29.10; Dan 9.2) and that they were then expected to return. By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (almost 100 years after the decree of Cyrus) many had still not returned to Judea.
 - 4.2. The Jews' continued presence in Babylon and Persia as a separatist minority group caused suspicion. As a result, their practices and existence were the subject of threats—as witnessed by Haman's words to Ahasuerus (Est 3.8-9).
 - 4.3. There might have been legitimate reasons for a few of the Jews to remain in Babylon or Persia. However, the likely reason most did not choose to return was that they were comfortable in their current places of residence and did not want the hassles of the move to Judea. They were happy to dwell among pagans as long as they could continue with their comfortable existence.
 - 4.4. Even though they knew what God wanted them to do, they were (collectively) disobedient to his revealed will.
5. What was going on elsewhere in the world at the time of Esther?
 - 5.1. Greek-Persian wars.
 - 5.1.1. About twenty years after the last events recorded in Esther, Darius mounted two campaigns against Greece. The first, in 492 BC, was a failure when the Persian fleet (watching over the land-based troops marching toward Greece) sailed too close to the rocky coast near Mount Athos and was smashed by a storm. The second campaign, in 480 BC, included the Battle of Marathon where a smaller Athenian force defeated the Persians using a pincer tactic. The runner messenger Pheidippides was associated with this battle. He was first sent to Sparta to request help when the Persians landed at Marathon. He ran about 240 km [150 mi] in two days. He then ran about 40 km [26 mi] from the battlefield near Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over the Persians. He collapsed with the words “hail, we are the winners” on his lips.
 - 5.1.2. Darius died four years later, and Xerxes prepared to avenge his father's loss at Marathon with another campaign against the Greeks. This time, the massive Persian army crossed the Hellespont on a temporary bridge of planks laid across boats lashed together. Their first encounter was at Thermopylae (480 BC) against an alliance of about 7,500 Greeks, which included the famous 300 Spartans (which are the focus of the 2007 movie, *300*). The Persians won that battle (killing all the Greeks) but then Xerxes' navy was defeated at Salamis. Xerxes returned to Persia, defeated, and Persia never conquered the Greeks. The Persians empire had passed its zenith and began to lose territory from that point. 150 years later the Persian emperor Artaxerxes V was killed by Alexander's army and the Persian Empire came to an end.
 - 5.2. If Esther was around 15 years old when she was taken into Darius' harem, and lived to be 70 years old, she would have lived and died during the ascendancy of Athens. Athens' Golden Age is considered to have been from 480-430 BC. In Athens at the time of Esther the Greeks had:
 - 5.2.1. Solon's (638-558 BC) laws.
 - 5.2.2. The oracle at Delphi and its priestesses, at their peak.
 - 5.2.3. Pythagoras (c 580-497), a philosopher and mathematician.
 - 5.2.4. Pericles, who was elected to be the Athenian general (443 BC) for 15 years, his funeral oration was given in 431 BC.
 - 5.2.5. Herodotus, the historian (485-424 BC).
 - 5.2.6. Socrates, the philosopher (470-399 BC).
 - 5.2.7. Hippocrates, a physician (b 460 BC)
 - 5.2.8. Sophocles, who wrote *Antigone* (443 BC), Euripides who wrote *Medea* (431 BC), and

Aristophanes (born 450 BC)

5.2.9. The rebuilt Acropolis (448-433 BC) with the Parthenon, which was completed and dedicated (438 BC)

5.2.10. The marble temple of Apollo at Delphi (built c 478 BC)

5.2.11. The temple of Zeus at Olympia (built c 460 BC),

5.2.12. A thirty-year truce (445-415 BC) between Athens and Sparta. Around this time, Sparta used chemical weapons (WMD) made of charcoal, sulfur, and pitch.

- 5.3. The Indian kingdom of Magadha (in eastern India) had been established (c 600 BC) about 80 years before Esther became queen. Hinduism had been the dominant religion of the region. However, Magadha became the “cradle of Buddhism” at this time. Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (c 550-480 BC) was a contemporary of Esther. Buddha left his home to devote himself to philosophy and asceticism and preached his first sermon in a deer park in the ‘holy’ city of Benares (c 521), about the time that queen Vashti was deposed.
- 5.4. Kung Fu-tse (Confucius) in China (551-479 BC) was also a contemporary of Esther. In China the feudal states were in decline and the Chou dynasty was founded.
- 5.5. Marseilles was flourishing as Western Europe’s portal to the Greek and Etruscan civilization. The Phoenicians, who had dominated the Mediterranean and had circumnavigated Africa in three years about 130 years before Esther became queen, were in decline as their coastal colonies were overwhelmed by the Persians.

Play

1. How would you characterize the literary form of the book of Esther?
 - 1.1. It is a story; i.e., not poetry, historical narrative, propositional discourse, didactic exhortation, or apocalyptic vision.
 - 1.1.1. Within scripture there are other stories included as part of the historical narrative.
 - 1.1.2. Esther and Ruth are the only books which consist almost entirely of the story narrative form.
 - 1.2. The story is fast moving with high drama. Nothing in extra-Biblical literature presents a better story. It has been referred to as a “story par excellence” and “brilliantly written”, with “considerable literary merit”.
 - 1.2.1. What adds to the drama is the fact that the account is entirely true. We like to read stories or watch movies which are based on a true story. Esther isn’t merely based on historical events; it is an accurate account of what actually happened.
 - 1.2.2. It is not, as some have suggested, an historical novella⁴³ or a reworking of historical events.
2. What are the basic elements of a good story, which are found in the book of Esther?
 - 2.1. *Strong Plot* – The story has a swift moving, strong plot
 - 2.1.1. Good stories present a challenging problem which must be resolved. In this case, the principle protagonists face a threat to their lives along with the threat of the destruction of their nation.
 - 2.1.2. It uses conflict between good and evil, suspense, dramatic irony, surprising reversals, and poetic justice to pull the reader along.
 - 2.1.3. It even has an element of romance and a happy ending.
 - 2.2. *Clear Theme* – Although there are different views about the theme of Esther, we noted previously that the principle theme is to demonstrate that God controls every event and action, including the events occurring in the most powerful pagan kingdoms of this earth.
 - 2.3. *Developed Characters* – The book has interesting characters with almost prototypical characteristics. The primary characters are:

⁴³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Esther; Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 476.

- 2.3.1. Esther: She is the beautiful (Est 2.7) leading lady of the narrative. Her character develops throughout the account. She is first portrayed as being a timid victim of circumstances, who hid her true identity and participated in the pagan lifestyle, including a year of beauty treatments in the harem. She then becomes the reluctant and courageous heroine of her nation's cause. The story ends with her being an influential leader within the Empire. Her Hebrew name (Hadassah) means myrtle (a perennial shrub common in Palestine, with white flowers that are used for perfume). Her Persian name (Esther) means 'star'—a fitting name for how bright her light shines. Examples of this kind of reluctant heroine in modern literature and film could be Katniss Everdeen from the *Hunger Games* trilogy or Tris Prior from the *Divergent* series.
- 2.3.2. Haman: He is the vain (narcissistic), evil, and vengeful villain. There is nothing in his character which appeals to the reader. We can only cheer when he gets his just deserts. Comparable villains include Edmund, from Shakespeare's *King Lear*; Count Fosco from *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins; Sauron, from *The Lord of the Rings*; and Lord Voldemort (aka, Tom Riddle), from the *Harry Potter* series.
- 2.3.3. Mordecai: He is the wise and moral advisor to Esther who works behind the scenes to engineer the Jews' safety. He has rough equivalents in modern literature and film such as Merlin, in the *Arthur* saga; Obi Wan Kenobi, the Jedi Master, from *Star Wars*; Dumbledore, from the *Harry Potter* series.
- 2.3.4. Ahasuerus: He is the petulant, pleasure-loving, autocratic king with no moral backbone. History is full of this kind of ruler, including Herod, Nero, Caligula, and Hitler. Modern equivalents are sadly found in many nations.
- 2.4. *Interesting Setting* – The setting is in the Persian court, which had an element of exotic intrigue even for the Jews in the centuries following the book of Esther's composition. It continues to be exotic for us, far removed from royal courts, lavish feasts, and stocked harems.
- 2.5. *Polished Style* – There are a number of examples in the narrative which show that the writer was an effective communicator, who knew how to sustain interest, such as:
 - 2.5.1. The entire story can be comfortably read in one sitting.
 - 2.5.2. He writes from a third-person point of view which allows him to report events which otherwise would have been outside of his purview if he were using the first-person perspective—for example, the king's restless night (Est 6.1).
 - 2.5.3. He uses a basic vocabulary when describing action, but enlarges the vocabulary when describing the richness of specific scenes (e.g., the banquet).
 - 2.5.4. He also uses borrowed Persian words to introduce an element of mystery into the story. Some of the words are borrowed because there was no equivalents in Hebrew (e.g., אֶחָדָּרְפָּנִי, 'satraps' in Est 3.12; כִּרְפָּס, 'cotton curtains' in Est 1.6; and הִינְדִי, 'India' in Est 1.1), but some were borrowed for effect (e.g., הַפְּרָתִימִים, Est 1.3, 'nobles', used instead of תַּרְגִּים, as in Neh 2.16 or גְּדִיָּי, as used in Num 21.18; דֵּת, Est 1.8 [+ ~20X], 'edict', used instead of מִשְׁפָּט, 'rule', as in Num 15.16; and פְּתִיגָה, 'decree', used instead of טֵעָם, as in Ezra 6.1).
 - 2.5.5. He alternates between action and description; and includes other techniques such as cataloguing (e.g., for the genealogy of Mordecai, 2.5; and the sons of Haman, 9.7-9).
 - 2.5.6. He uses multiple synonyms to highlight excessiveness (Est 3.13; Est 7.4; Est 8.11, 16). This is a form of Hebraism in which words are repeated for emphasis; a three-fold repetition of a word, or of synonyms, is used for even greater emphasis (e.g., Is 6.3; Dan 4.34; Dan 7.14, 18).
 - 2.5.7. He repeats phrases to establish contrasts (Est 3.10/Est 8.2; Est 3.12-13/Est 8.9-11; Est 3.14/Est 8.13).
- 2.6. *Crafted Structure* – The account is consciously crafted in the style of a dramatic play by an accomplished storyteller.
 - 2.6.1. The book of Esther is a continuous narrative. However, there are a number of temporal markers which allow for easy division of the text into clear narrative sections (e.g., 'now',

1.1, 2.19; ‘after’ 3.1; ‘month’ 3.7; ‘then’ 3.12; ‘when’ 4.1).

2.6.2. The narrative appears to have been deliberately structured. Commentators have identified possible chiasms, for example:

- A Introduction and background (chapter 1)
- B Ahasuerus’ first decree and the pending slaughter of the Jews (chapters 2-3)
- C Haman’s hatred for Mordecai and his people (chapters 4-5)
 - D “On that night the king could not sleep” (Est 6.1)
- C’ Mordecai’s triumph over Haman and his people (chapters 6-7)
- B’ Ahasuerus’ second decree and the Jews’ self-defence (chapters 8-9)
- A’ Conclusion (chapter 10)

Another example is as follows:

- A Introduction and extent of Ahasuerus’s kingdom (Est 1.1)
- B Two feasts (Est 1.2-22)
- C Esther appears before the king and conceals her Jewishness from Gentiles (Est 2.1-23)
- D Haman’s prominence (Est 3.1-2)
- E The 13th of Adar to be a day of slaughter (Est 3.3-7)
- F Haman is given the king’s signet and issues letters; Mordecai tears his clothes; the Jews fast (Est 3.8-4.17)
- G Esther’s first feast; Haman is proud (Est 5.1-8)
- H Haman’s and his associates are optimistic (Est 5.9-14)
- I The king could not sleep and Haman honours Mordecai (Est 6.1-11)
- H’ Haman and his associates are pessimistic (Est 6.12-14)
- G’ Esther’s second feast; Haman is humbled (Est 7.1-10)
- F’ Mordecai is given the king’s signet and issues letters; Mordecai is dressed in royal garments; the Jews feast (Est 8.1-17)
- E The 13th of Adar is a day of slaughter (Est 9.1-2)
- D’ Mordecai’s prominence (Est 9.3-11)
- C’ Esther appears before the king and Gentiles profess to be Jews (Est 9.12-17)
- B’ Two feasts (Est 9.17-32)
- A’ Conclusion and extent of Ahasuerus’s kingdom (Est 10.1-3)⁴⁴

Another example is as follows:

- A Introduction: the glory of Ahasuerus (Est 1.1-2)
- B Two feasts of Ahasuerus (Est 1.3-22)
- C Esther’s triumph over her rivals (Est 2.1-18)
- D Mordecai foils the plot against the Ahasuerus (Est 2.19-23)
- E Conflict between Haman and Mordecai is initiated (Est 3.1-6)
- F Haman appears, and requests the death of the Jews (Est 3.7-15)
- G Mordecai and Esther conspire against Haman (Est 4.1-17)
- H Esther appears before the king unbidden (Est 5.1-8)
- G’ Haman and Zeresh conspire against Mordecai (Est 5.9-14)
- F’ Haman appears and requests the death of Mordecai (Est 6.1-14)
- E’ Conflict between Haman and Mordecai is concluded (Est 7.1-10)
- D’ Mordecai foils the plot against the Jews (Est 8.1-17)
- C’ The Jews triumph over their rivals (Est 9.1-17)
- B’ Two feasts of the Jews (Est 9.18-32)

⁴⁴ Adapted from: Bryan R Gregory, *Inconspicuous Providence: The Gospel According to Esther* (P&R Publishing, Kindle Edition, 2014); Kindle Locations 1824-1853.

A' Conclusion: the glory of Ahasuerus and Mordecai (Est 10.1–3)⁴⁵

Some refer to this as a U-shaped structure with a descent into potential tragedy and an upswing to a happy conclusion.

2.6.3. The narrative appears also to have been structured much like a three-act play⁴⁶:

2.6.3.1. Act I, *Setup*: setting the stage, establishing the main characters (chapters 1-2); ending with a first 'turning point' (Mordecai's discovery of the assassination plot 2.19-23).

2.6.3.2. Act II, *Confrontation*: rising action with a key turning point (the casting of the lots by Haman, 3.7); with the mid-point (the king's sleepless night, 6.1) and the second turning point (Haman's hanging, 7.7-10).

2.6.3.3. Act III, *Resolution*: resolving the tension (chapters 8-10); Esther is given the estate of Haman (Est 8.1), a climax is reached (the killing the sons of Haman and the enemies of the Jews in Susa, 9.5-10), and a new order established (Purim decreed, 9.32; and Mordecai appointed second in the kingdom, 10.3).

2.6.4. Esther opens with sin, but ends with salvation; with grime, but ends with glory; with pending catastrophe, but ends with celebration—it is God's drama.

Primacy

1. The book of Esther is often considered to be historical fiction and to contain historical inaccuracies.⁴⁷ Why might this be the view of many secular and religious scholars?
 - 1.1. *It is part of the Bible* – Men by nature do not want to accept as true anything that God has communicated (Rom 1.18).
 - 1.2. *It is considered to be a Jewish polemic* – It is claimed that the account was concocted to explain the origin of Purim for Jews living in the late Hellenistic era. Those making this claim do not appreciate the over-riding purpose of the book (see item 2.9 in *Purpose*, above)—to demonstrate that God controls every event and action, including the events occurring in the most powerful pagan kingdoms of this earth.
 - 1.3. *It refers to Ahasuerus* – It once was claimed that there was no such Persian king. Although, now even secular sources generally acknowledge that Ahasuerus is a Hebrew name (or title) for a Persian king—in the same way that Daniel had a Hebrew name and a Babylonian name.
 - 1.4. *It contains apparent historical inaccuracies* – It is claimed that it contains information which is inconsistent with the information provided by other writers, such as Herodotus or Thucydides.
 - 1.5. *It is claimed that it contradicts other parts of the Bible* – For example, it is claimed that Mordecai could not have been carried away in the captivity (Est 2.6) or he would have been too old at the time of the events recorded in Esther. However, this apparent contradiction is based on the faulty identification of Xerxes I with Ahasuerus. If Ahasuerus was Darius I, this 'problem' disappears.
2. How can we respond to the critics claims?
 - 2.1. *Accuracy* – Contrary to the suggestion that the account contains historical inaccuracies, the text displays historical authenticity through its use of embedded detail.
 - 2.1.1. Esther provides details about the court life at the height of the Persian Empire that is unavailable from any other source. It provides this detail in a manner that displays an intimate familiarity with places, persons, and events. There are numerous examples, including:

⁴⁵ Adapted from: A. Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. (H. W. House & W. Barrick, Eds.), n.d., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Logos electronic ed.).

⁴⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-act_structure

⁴⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Esther

- 2.1.1.1. Enumeration of the number of provinces (Est 1.1)
- 2.1.1.2. Names and number of the Persian princes (Est 1.14)
- 2.1.1.3. Names of the chief servants (Est 1.10; Est 2.8, 14; Est 4.5)
- 2.1.1.4. Nature, timing, and duration of the feast (Est 1.4-8)
- 2.1.1.5. Priority and perpetuity of central laws and rulings (Est 1.19; Est 8.8)
- 2.1.1.6. Identification of citadel spaces: the court in the palace garden (Est 1.5; Est 7.8), the gate of the king (Est 2.19), the inner court (Est 4.11), the outer court (Est 6.4), the preparation area for the virgins (Est 2.8-9), and the second harem for the concubines (Est 2.14)
- 2.1.1.7. Prohibitions against entering the palace precincts dressed in mourning clothes of sackcloth (Est 4.2) and against entering the throne room without a summons (Est 4.11).
- 2.1.1.8. Details about Haman's family (Est 4.13; Est 9.7-9)
- 2.1.1.9. Chronicles of the king's reign (Est 6.1-2; Est 10.2)
- 2.1.1.10. Imposition of an empire-wide tax (Est 10.1).
- 2.1.2. No one reading this account objectively, can deny that the author was not writing from a distant time and place but within the context of an immediate familiarity with the events.
- 2.1.3. In contrast, Herodotus (c 484-425 BC) and Thucydides (c 460-395 BC) wrote from a pro-Greek perspective about many events which occurred before they were born. Their reliability as historical sources for events in Persia during the time of Esther has been questioned by at least one modern scholar⁴⁸—the events recorded in Esther end in 510 BC.
- 2.1.4. There is no legitimate basis for dismissing Esther as ahistorical or unhistorical. Rather, our default position must be to accept the evidence of eyewitness genuineness throughout the narrative.
- 2.2. *Authority* – On what basis should the statements of Herodotus (or any other non-Biblical) writer be considered more accurate than what is stated in Esther? This question resolves down to the question of our ultimate authority.
 - 2.2.1. There is nothing which we could select as a higher authority to determine whether Herodotus or the Bible is correct. Whatever we selected to make the determination would in turn have to be subjected to the same scrutiny under an even higher authority. This would result in an infinite regress.
 - 2.2.2. The only possible way to avoid the infinite regress is to assume (as a fundamental presupposition) that the Bible is correct in all that it states and is the final authority for assessing the correctness of other historical witnesses.
 - 2.2.3. The Bible is the ultimate self-attesting authority. As such, it cannot be subjected to proof.
 - 2.2.3.1. This is not a logical contradiction. Any ultimate authority must be self-attesting. It must prove itself. Nor is it a vicious circular of reasoning. It is the very nature of ultimate authorities.
 - 2.2.3.2. For example, God can swear by no other, so he swears by himself (Heb 6.13).
 - 2.2.3.3. Consider logic as another example of self-attestation. If the laws of logic did not exist or weren't consistent, we couldn't make any arguments. Since we can make rational arguments using logic, the laws of logic must exist. Logic proves its own existence. You cannot step outside of the laws of logic to prove the laws of logic. Ultimately, logic reflects the mind of the self-existent God.
 - 2.2.4. In every domain of knowledge, God's mind is supreme. The natural man, in sin, does not want to hear this truth because it places God at the centre of epistemology and not man. It means that what God says in his Word is the definitive standard of truth in all areas in

⁴⁸ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The archaeological background of Esther: archaeological backgrounds of the exilic and postexilic era, pt 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April-June 1980): pp. 99-117; www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bsac/1980_099_yamauchi.pdf

which it speaks. Thus, when the Bible records history it is not merely another source for history, to be compared with archaeology, secular writings, and manuscript evidence; it is the final source. When the Bible gives a name, event, or date all other sources for history must be correlated with it.

2.2.5. We reject the idea that there can be such a thing as neutral historical facts. All facts are filtered by assumptions, preconceptions, presuppositions, beliefs, and experiences. The assumptions one starts with radically colour the interpretation one gives to the facts. When we accept the Christian presuppositions, all facts can fit a coherent interpretation. Rarely, if at all, will secular historians be able to challenge the factual statements in the Bible. The real issue is not the methodology but the presuppositions. Our assumptions are based on our worldview, and our assumptions cause us to interpret the facts according to that worldview.

2.3. *Acceptance* – The book of Esther has been recognized and received as Scripture since the time it was written. Regardless of the fact that at times post-NT Jewish and Christian (including some Orthodox and Reformed) scholars have questioned its inclusion in the OT canon.

2.3.1. The Jews before the time of Christ included it in the OT canon of Scripture but did not include other writings such as the Apocrypha.

2.3.1.1. For example, Josephus writing before the close of the 1st century AD, said: “For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.”⁴⁹

2.3.1.2. The 22 books of which he speaks are identical to the 39 we have in our OT, with a number of our separate books being considered as one in the Hebrew canon (e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, the twelve Minor Prophets, Judges and Ruth, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and Ezra and Nehemiah). Esther stood alone as a book in its own place in the accepted Hebrew OT canon.⁵⁰

2.3.2. Jesus and the Apostles accepted the entire Hebrew OT canon as the inerrant word of God (Mt 5.18; Jn 10.35; Rom 15.4; 2 Tim 3.16-17; 2 Pt 1.20-21). Even though it has been pointed out that Esther does not mention the name of God, nor is it quoted in the NT, its implicit acceptance of divine providence overruling the plans of men is a sufficient reason for the acceptance of its place within the OT canon.

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Against Apion*, book 1, www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/apion-1.htm

⁵⁰ Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 235-273.

3. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.1-3)
 - 3.1. *Decreed Failure* – The creation of large empires and the desire for (and abuse of) power have been a part of fallen mankind's life since the beginning.
 - 3.1.1. What are some examples?
 - 3.1.1.1. The Nephilim (Gen 6.4) were the first tyrants. We can only imagine the evil which they were able to perpetrate as they consolidated power and warred with one another as they lived for centuries. They became excessively proud and had no fear of God or man as they executed their designs with lawless abandon. The earth was filled with their violence (Est 6.13), so God determined that it was necessary to put an end to mankind through the flood and to shorten human life to 70 or 80 years (Ps 90.10) so that no single human could ever again wield such power and inflict such violence on his fellow humans. God now removes tyrants with death long before they can become too dominant.
 - 3.1.1.2. Tyranny returned to the earth within two generations after the flood. Nimrod the grandson of Ham (Gen 10.8-12) founded an imperial kingdom and established a polytheistic mystery religion centred around the tower at Babel. Nimrod was an historical person, not legendary as many historians claim, who is also known as Sargon I, the founder of the dynasty of Akkad. Historians date Sargon's reign from 2270 to 2215 BC. The dates for the flood (about 2345 BC) and the construction of the city and tower at Babel (between 2245 and 2215 BC), correspond with the dates for Sargon. Even while Noah and Shem were still alive, and able to bear witness to the judgement which came upon the tyrants in the antediluvian world, Nimrod pursued his ambitious course of consolidating power, exercising authority over his neighbours, and challenging God. God used the disruption at Babel to bring to an end Nimrod's ambitions and the first postdiluvian world empire. Historians have identified a period of chaos after the death of Sargon and the demise of his dynasty, in which Mesopotamia had no central authority for over a century. This was precipitated by the confusion of languages (Gen 11.7-8).
 - 3.1.1.3. There was an attempt by a Sumerian dynasty (in southern Mesopotamia) to consolidate power in Mesopotamia. It is called the Third Ur Dynasty period. It is reported to have lasted until around 2000 BC. Abraham was born during this period, and lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11.28, 31). Out of the turmoil in Mesopotamia, an Amorite king, Hammurabi (reported to have reigned c 1792-1750 BC) established a new empire, based in Babylon. He was successful in consolidating power in Mesopotamia and restored a measure of centralized order. He is known for his law code, of which parts have been preserved on a number of stele and clay tablets.
 - 3.1.1.4. During the period of chaos in Mesopotamia, migrating peoples began to establish dynastic kingdoms in other parts of the world. Among the earliest was the kingdom established in Egypt by Ham's son Mizraim. His family initially occupied the area around the lower Nile and the delta. Elsewhere, a dynastic kingdom arose in China (Xai dynasty). And, significant kingdoms appear to have developed on Crete, in the Indus River valley, and in Anatolia. All of these, except for the kingdom in China, became part of the Persian Empire.
 - 3.1.1.5. Dynasties controlling Mesopotamia were important throughout the period of the Israelite occupation of Palestine, because they had significant interactions with God's covenant people. After Hammurabi, these empires were the neo-Assyrian (e.g., Tiglath-Pileser and Sargon II), neo-Babylon (reaching its height under Nebuchadnezzar), Persian (e.g., Cyrus the Great and the Darius of Esther), Greek

- (e.g., Alexander and Antiochus Epiphanes), and Roman.
- 3.1.1.6. Since Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, men have aspired to recreate a new Babylon with world-strangling empires—Cyrus the Persian, Alexander the Great, Ashoka in India, Rome under Julius Caesar, Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Hitler’s Nazis, and Stalin’s USSR.
 - 3.1.2. An *orbis unum* (one world) government founded on humanistic, statist, and socialistic principles continues to be a goal of many. However, God has shown through his judgement on each of these empires that man’s attempts at empire building are doomed to failure. God will never permit a worldwide human government to exist. He will not tolerate any challenge against the kingdom of his Son. No single earthly kingdom will ever reach the heights of rebellion against him that the neo-Babylon empire did. Only the Kingdom of Jesus Christ will be a world-encompassing kingdom (Dan 2.44; Mt 28.19).
 - 3.2. *Dysfunctional Fixation* – The Persians inaugurated the first systematic postal system.⁵¹ Some historians credit the invention of the Persian system to Cyrus the Great, while other writers credit it to Darius I—it was probably re-organized by Darius. Mounted couriers could travel the 2,700km from Susa to Sardis in seven days. Herodotus, speaking of the Persian messengers said, “These are stopped neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed.”⁵² They also had a network of roads spanning the Empire; for example, The Royal Road ran from Susa, through today’s Iran, Iraq, and Turkey to the Aegean Sea. Communications were sent by swift messengers, who travelled along the royal highway system and used staged horses. So, the Persian court at Susa would have had news, within days, from the edges of the Empire. Yet, the book of Esther makes no reference to contemporary events anywhere else in the empire (e.g., the rebellion in Babylon between the time of Vashti’s deposing and the elevation of Esther or the invasion of Scythia five years before Haman seeks to destroy the Jews). The focus of the account is exclusively on the wickedness of Haman and how he was defeated.
 - 3.2.1. The Bible often speaks of events related to Israel as if they were separate from events in the rest of the world. The Bible ignores ‘world’ events as ultimately of no consequence (Ps 2.1-12).
 - 3.2.2. In contrast, our culture (including many Christians) has a fixation on keeping up with contemporary news. Many people stay tuned to news channels (City Pulse 24, 680 News, CNN, Fox News) all day, follow events on Facebook or Twitter, or check Internet-based news sites a dozen times a day.
 - 3.2.3. Meanwhile, the account in Esther covers a decade-long period and focuses exclusively on the protection and advancement of God’s covenant people.
 - 3.2.4. Its example teaches us that we need to cultivate, and maintain, a balance between being ignorant of contemporary events and innovations which could have an impact on the Church and being fixated on the ephemeral and inconsequential. For example, knowing the name of Taylor Swift’s latest boyfriend seems to be something about which we don’t need to be concerned. On the other hand, being able to discern and assess culture changing events (1 Chron 12.32)—such as the challenges that the enforced acceptance of homosexual marriage by governments will have on the Church—requires a degree of awareness that appears to be beyond the grasp of most Christians today. Satan prefers that we keep up-to-date with inconsequential trivia and ignore important trends.
 - 3.2.5. What are some examples of contemporary events and innovations in our culture about

⁵¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail#Persia

⁵² Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 8; chapter 98,
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D8%3Achapter%3D98%3Asection%3D1

which we probably should be aware?

- 3.2.5.1. The use of contemporary media for evangelism.
- 3.2.5.2. A decline in education and awareness of history; and an associated revisionist approach to the documentation of history.
- 3.2.5.3. The influence TV shows, movies, video games, and music can have on our youth (in particular those in the Church).
- 3.2.5.4. Changes in moral boundaries (e.g., wide acceptance of sexual acts outside of marriage or the redefinition of marriage).
- 3.2.5.5. The undermining of science with scientism.
- 3.2.5.6. An increasing confusion about the role of religious tolerance and the dangers of religious pluralism.
- 3.2.5.7. An increasing dependency on government programs to fulfill the people's needs and wants and a corresponding decline in personal responsibility for one's own health, welfare, and education.

3.3. *Divine Faithfulness* – God is faithful to his covenant promises even when his people are not obedient to their covenant obligations.

- 3.3.1. All of the Jews should have returned to Judea from Babylon and Persia after the decree of Cyrus permitted them to—unless they had a legitimate reason not to return, such as Daniel serving in the government. Many remained in their established locations for invalid reasons—they had comfortable lifestyles, were making a lot of money, had married non-Jews, etc.
- 3.3.2. If they had been obedient and had returned to Judea, Haman would not have been provoked by Mordecai. However, on the other hand, Esther would not have been chosen queen and been able to protect the scattered Jews for a generation.
- 3.3.3. Thus, God worked out his plans behind the scenes to engineer the safety of his people so that the Jews were preserved throughout the empire, so that the Messiah would eventually be born in Judea.
- 3.3.4. God, likewise, works his plans in spite of Christians' unfaithfulness. He saves and protects his people, not because of they are obedient, good, or lovely, but because of his love and grace. He is faithful when we are not (Rom 3.3; **2 Tim 2.13**; 1 Thess 5.24; 2 Thess 3.3, 4; Heb 10.23).

Preamble [Act Ib] (Est 1.3-2.23)

Party Days (Est 1.3-9)

- 1. How many feasts are mentioned in these verses?
 - 1.1. Three: a 180 day feast given by Ahasuerus, a seven day feast given by Ahasuerus for the people (men?) of the citadel of Susa, a feast given by Vashti for the women in the palace, at the same time as the second feast given by Ahasuerus.
 - 1.2. Along with these three feasts, six other feasts (meals or festivals) are mentioned in Esther:
 - 1.1.1. Esther's coronation feast (Est 2.18)
 - 1.1.2. Haman's meal with Ahasuerus (Est 3.15)
 - 1.1.3. Esther's two banquets for Ahasuerus with Haman (Est 5.5-8 and 7.1-6)
 - 1.1.4. The Jews' holiday and feast over the decree of Mordecai (Est 8.17)
 - 1.1.5. The feast of Purim (Est 9.17-32).
 - 1.3. Most commentators observe that the Persians were reputed (e.g., by Ctesias⁵³) to have thrown lavish banquets that included the consumption of considerable alcohol. However, there doesn't appear to be anything unique about Persian monarchs throwing feasts lubricated with wine.

⁵³ John Eadie, *Early Oriental History*; in *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, Vol XVIII (Richard Griffin and Co., Glasgow, 1852) p. 310; books.google.ca/books?id=mhpCAAACAAJ&

Belshazzar's feast, for a thousand of his lords in which he made a spectacle of drinking wine in front of them (Dan 5.1), occurred about 20 years before this feast of Ahasuerus. While the Greeks frowned on public drunkenness, adherents of the Dionysian cult had a reputation for inebriety. The Macedonians viewed intemperance as a sign of masculinity and were known for their drunkenness.⁵⁴ Alexander was reputed to have been a heavy drinker, drowning his anxieties in alcohol. It has been suggested that he died of alcohol poisoning. And, debauchery and decadence are almost synonymous with Roman emperors.

1.4. Why are we told about these three feasts?

1.4.1. The sequence of feasts and the events which follow from the feasts have a direct outcome on the future of the Jews.

1.4.2. In Esther, all the feasts mentioned are fundamental factors in the unfolding of the pending destruction and subsequent deliverance of the Jews.

2. What was the nature and purpose of the first feast? (3-4)

2.1. Whom did the king invite to this feast?

2.1.1. His officials ('princes of him', שְׂרָרִי) and servants, nobles (equivalent to 'first men'; a Persian loanword that occurs only here), governors ('princes', שָׂרֵי) of the provinces, and senior commanders or officers⁵⁵ from the (at times) million-plus strong army.

2.1.2. What do you notice as a difference between Daniel 5.28 and Esther 1.3?

2.1.2.1. In Daniel (Dan 5.28; Dan 6.8, 12, 15; Dan 8.20) the Medes are mentioned before the Persians. In Esther (Est 1.3, 14, 18, 19) the Persians are mentioned before the Medes (except in 10.2).

2.1.2.2. Why do you think this might be?

2.1.2.2.1. There were two lines in the Achaemenid dynasty. Cyrus represented one line, which ended with Cambyses II (522 BC). Cyrus was a Median king. The other line was founded by Darius, when he seized power in 522 (two years before the events in Esther begin). Darius was a Persian king.

2.1.2.2.2. Daniel was an administrator in the government of Cyrus, so he placed the Medes first when referring to the united Empire.

2.1.2.2.3. The writer of Esther (likely Mordecai⁵⁶) wrote from Susa, in Persia, under a Persian king, so he placed the Persians first.

2.2. How long did this feast last?

2.2.1. On quick reading it appears that the feast lasted 180 days.

2.2.2. However, if we follow the punctuation in the ESV (and NIV), a period is introduced after the feast is mentioned. Then, mention is made of the army being before the king for 180 days.

2.2.3. So, there may have been a feast at the start and at the end of the 180-day period during which the army (its commanders or officers) were brought before the king. Thus, the feast opened a six-month period of open court.

2.2.4. It is unlikely that all of the officials from all the regions within the empire were in Susa for six months. No one would have been governing the territories, and at least some of the territories would have exploded into rebellious chaos. One commentator observed that, "Clericus is of the opinion that all the princes did not remain together during the 180 days

⁵⁴ David J. Hanson, *History of Alcohol and Drinking around the World*, www2.potsdam.edu/alcohol/Controversies/1114796842.html#_UyH_-XIOXGg

⁵⁵ The term חֵיָל ('army') with כָּל ('all'; e.g., in 2 Kings 25.1) refers to the commanders and the soldiers. However, when חֵיָל is used alone, it may refer only to the commanders as representatives of the army.

⁵⁶ Refer to the section below following 2.8, entitled 'Prophet' where the authorship of Esther is addressed.

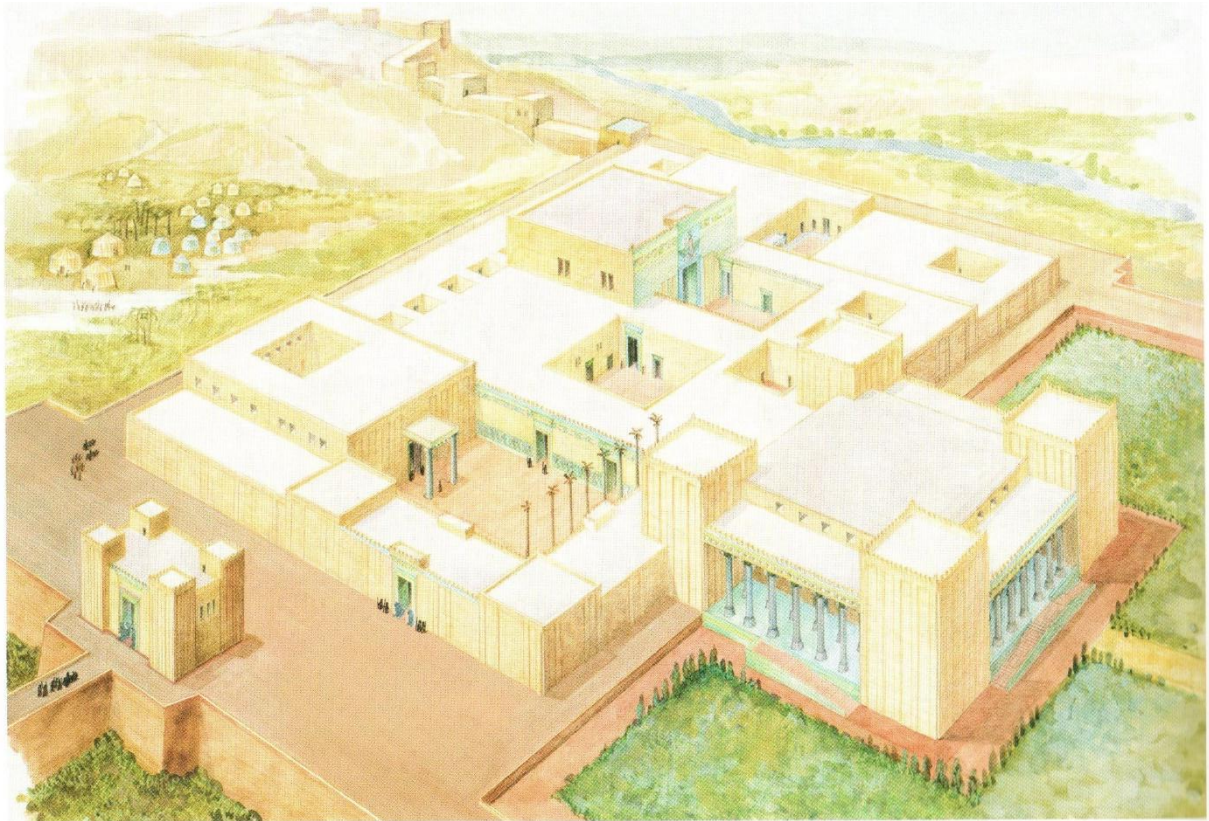
of the feast, but that they took their turn, some left when new ones arrived.”⁵⁷

- 2.3. Why did the king hold this feast?
 - 2.3.1. The purpose of feast is explained in Esther that he was showing off, or boasting.
 - 2.3.2. By displaying his wealth he would have been declaring to his subjects that he had been blessed by the gods (compare with 5.11). He wished the regional leaders and army commanders to be impressed with his greatness so that they would agree to support the proposed military campaign.
 - 2.3.3. We can surmise that he held a war council, to prepare for the invasion of Scythia and the territory west of the Indus River; not, as most commentators state, to prepare for a campaign in Greece.
3. What was the nature and purpose of the second feast? (5-6)
 - 3.1. How long did this feast last?
 - 3.1.1. Seven days, after the 180-day period of displaying his wealth and planning a military campaign.
 - 3.2. What is an implication of the reference to a seven-day feast?
 - 3.2.1. The Persians observed the same unit of time that we call a week.
 - 3.2.2. Most scholars believe that the seven-day week is nothing more than an artifact of ancient Mesopotamian culture. For example, an article that appeared in the *Economist* (2001-12-20) claims that Mesopotamian stargazers framed, and local warlords imposed, the seven-day week on mankind around the time of Sargon I. The article goes on to raise questions about why such a construct (that cannot be explained by the natural cycles of Earth’s revolution around the sun or the moon’s revolution around earth) should have persisted for so long. The explanation provided is that the Sumerians worshipped seven objects in the sky as gods (apparently the sun, moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn), however in fact they had more celestial objects in their pantheon. The Hebrews were supposed to have picked up the pattern and to have retrospectively attributed its origin to the time of creation. From the Middle East, the week of seven days spread throughout the world and the names of gods have continued to be associated with the names of the days (e.g., ‘sun day’, ‘moon day’, ‘Saturn’s day’).
 - 3.2.3. However, the week is not a measure of time based on selected astronomical objects but was established by God at creation (Gen 1.1-2.2). God could have created the entire universe in an instant but chose to create over six days and to rest on the seventh, to set an example and establish a pattern for mankind. The Jews did not obtain the idea of a seven-day week from the Sumerians, the Sumerians obtained the account of the institution of the week and the Sabbath from Shem who received it from the Adam and his descendants. The origin of the week, therefore, pre-dates the ‘Mesopotamian stargazers’. They may have associated names of gods with the days of the week, but the week was not formed to match the Sumerian pantheon. The extreme anomaly of a seven-day week, which does not fit any natural cycle (year, month, day), clearly points to God’s creation ordinance.
 - 3.2.4. There have been attempts throughout human history to overrule the seven-day week. Apparently, there were attempts in ancient China and in some African cultures. During the French Revolution a ten-day week was established but the experiment lasted for about twelve years. The Bolsheviks in 1917 tried to imitate the French revolutionaries and in 1929 Stalin imposed five-day and six-day weeks on the Soviet Union. He wished to eliminate the seven-day week with its Sabbath because of his hatred of anything that could be attributed to religion. These attempts all failed, and the entire world uses the seven-day week.

⁵⁷ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 20; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAIAAJ

- 3.3. Whom did the king invite to the second feast?
 - 3.3.1. The people present in the citadel of Susa, both great and small.
 - 3.3.2. Although the Hebrew word (עַם) used here for ‘people’ can include males and females, it is probable that the invited diners were only males. This may be implied by the fact that Vashti held a feast at the same time for the women (9).
 - 3.3.3. This was not an open invitation to all the inhabitants of Susa. Rather it was confined to those residing at the time in the citadel (i.e., the fortified palace complex). This would have included the visiting satraps (princes; Est 1.11) and military commanders and the various functionaries serving in the administration. It would not have included slaves, at least not menial ones such as those working in the kitchens and serving the diners.
- 3.4. How is the venue for the feast described?
 - 3.4.1. It was held in a garden court adjacent to the king’s palace.
 - 3.4.1.1. A simulated reconstruction (see diagram below⁵⁸) of the citadel palace by Jean Perrot shows that there was a large enclosed garden to the north of the palace’s residential complex, with a tributary of the Choaspes (Karkheh, today) River running north-to-south at the base of the acropolis, to the west of the garden. Google satellite images show that the garden area could have been about 2-3 football fields in size. How much of this garden would have been in place in 519 BC is not known. There was certainly a palace present in 550 BC when Daniel served as a Babylonian ambassador to Cyrus’ administration (Dan 8.2). By the time Esther gave the feast for the king and Haman (in 511 BC), the garden of Perrot’s reconstruction was probably the garden (or an early part of it) which the king entered to vent his anger (Est 7.8).
 - 3.4.1.2. This garden wrapped around (on three sides) the central hall in the final form of the palace (which may have been under construction at the time of this feast). This part of the palace had 36 pillars in the central hall and was surrounded on three sides by adjacent porticoes with two rows of 12 pillars. This central hall with its adjacent porticos was about 100m wide by 75m deep (i.e., about 7,500 m²; 75% of a football field).

⁵⁸ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 218.



- 3.4.1.3. The Persians allocated considerable resources to creating formal gardens, which they viewed as an earthly paradise (the word ‘paradise’ is a Persian loanword brought through Greek [used in the NT in Lk 23.43; 2 Cor 12.3; Rev 2.7] into English). These gardens included sculpted trees, trellises, and pavilions and walls to block direct sunlight and to provide an interplay of light and shade. Shallow pools were fed from underground tunnels, with the water being pumped to the surface by slaves or animals. The outdoor space was often integrated with interior courtyards through thematic elements such as arches and paved paths.
- 3.4.2. The garden was draped with white and violet curtains hung from pillars and suspended rods.
- 3.4.2.1. It has been observed that the standard colours of the Persian kings were white and blue.⁵⁹
- 3.4.2.2. The curtains were likely awnings hung throughout the garden area to provide shade over the seating and dining areas. They were supported by silver rods⁶⁰ suspended between marble pillars. The awnings were fastened to the silver rods with cords of fine (white) linen with purple threads. Also hanging from the silver rods were violet (blue/purple) curtains to provide a measure of enclosure for seating areas. Thus, there appears to have been a series of ‘tents’ scattered throughout the garden. An alternate format has been suggested, with larger curtains running from the main building complex over the entire garden.
- 3.4.2.2.1. The word translated ‘cotton’ (כֶּרְסִיס) is a Persian loanword appearing only here. It may indicate cotton, but could also be translated as ‘linen’ or a

⁵⁹ Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Schultz, W., & Strong, J. *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Esther* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1884), p. 33. books.google.ca/books?id=y0MXAAAAAYAAJ.

⁶⁰ Note the ESV's alternate translation in a footnote, ‘rings’; also in the NIV, etc.; a doubtful translation when compared with its other use in Song 5.14.

generic white ‘fabric’.

3.4.2.2.2. The Hebrew words for ‘white’ and ‘violet’ are actually nouns and not adjectives, as they are used in the English translations. Thus, they refer to materials of a particular colour, rather than to the colours themselves.

3.4.2.2.3. The pillar bases found in the ruins of the citadel palace at Susa were made from a grey-blue limestone, not marble (the Septuagint has στύλοις παρίνοις καὶ λιθίνοις; “pillars of marble and stone”). A few stone pillars, of the same limestone, have been found in the ruins of the citadel palace. Later in the same verse, the word is used a second time to refer to the paving stones. Throughout the ruins of the palace and gardens paving stones have been found which were made of the same grey-blue limestone. Marble is limestone transformed under pressure and heat. The word could also be translated ‘alabaster’ (a fine-grained, white form of gypsum, which it related to limestone). It is possible that the word could be used generically for all types of calcium carbonate stone. It appears that some⁶¹ of the pillars may have been made of wood and plastered and painted, since suitable stone was unavailable around Susa and had to be imported.⁶²

3.4.3. Distributed throughout the garden were ornate couches placed on exotic mosaic pavements.

3.4.3.1. It is not clear whether the frames of the couches were made of solid gold and silver (they would have been very heavy), gilded with gold and plated with silver, or covered with brocades woven with patterns of gold and silver threads.

3.4.3.1.1. Herodotus uses similar terminology to refer to furnishings found in Xerxes’ tent after he abandoned Greece—after the sea Battle of Salamis (480 BC) won by the Greek fleet and Xerxes received news that the rest of his fleet anchored at Mycale had been burned and all his supplies were destroyed—“Then Pausanias made a proclamation that no man should touch the spoils, and ordered the helots to gather all the stuff together. They, spreading all over the camp, found there tents adorned with gold and silver, and couches gilded and silver-plated, and golden bowls and cups and other drinking-vessels; and sacks they found on wagons, in which were seen cauldrons of gold and silver.”⁶³

3.4.3.1.2. Herodotus then reports that ‘... Pausanias, when he saw golden and silver couches richly covered, and tables of gold and silver, and all the magnificent service of the banquet, was amazed at the splendor before him ... Pausanias sent for the generals of the Greeks. When these had assembled, Pausanias ... said: “Men of Hellas, I have brought you here because I desired to show you the foolishness of the leader of the Medes who, with such provisions for life as you see, came here to take away from us our possessions which are so pitiful.”’⁶⁴

3.4.3.1.3. This display of inordinate luxury by the Persians was part of the impetus which led the Greeks to begin their conquest of the east and led to the

⁶¹ Although, Darius declares in a foundation tablet found at Susa, “All the columns are of stone.” Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 289.

⁶² Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 101, 128, 377, 381.

⁶³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 9, chapter 80,
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+9.80&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

⁶⁴ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 9, chapter 82,
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+9.82&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

conquest by Alexander the Great. The departure of Xerxes from Greece was the beginning of the end for the Persian Empire.

3.4.3.2. The four words used to describe the pavement on which the couches were placed are all loanwords (e.g., from Persian) and appear only in this verse in the Bible. It is difficult to determine whether they are materials or colours (e.g., green, blue, white, and black). The Septuagint does not provide direct translations at this point so is not helpful in providing guidance. Modern translations (ESV, NIV, NASB) giving “mother-of-pearl and precious stones” are probably missing the mark, as these materials would not be used for paving, unless as edgings.⁶⁵ The exact materials probably have to remain unknown at this time. However, what is being described is probably a tessellated mosaic tile flooring.

3.4.4. The point of the author was to describe, using rare words (from a Hebrew reader’s perspective), an expensive, ornate, and exotic setting. It is as if he said something like, “Oh, you should have seen the luxury!” Clearly this account is provided by someone who was an eyewitness to the event (e.g., Mordecai, who may have had a court-appointed position⁶⁶).

4. What are we told about the consumption of wine at the second feast? (7-8)

4.1. Fancy gold drinking cups of different kinds were used.

4.1.1. The golden vessels were another symbol of the wealth and luxury of the Persian monarchy.

4.1.2. The reference to gold vessels may indicate that drinking wine was viewed by them to have a religious significance—they likely gave homage (toasts) to their gods (Dan 5.4)—as the cups in the Temple in Jerusalem were made of gold to honour God (1 Ki 7.50).

4.1.3. Different kinds of drinking vessels may have been used as a symbol of conquest.⁶⁷ The king had ample gold and could have displayed his glory by having a master craftsman make a set of standard cups—as it appears Sargon II did for banquets in his palace at Khorsabad.⁶⁸ However, behind each cup there was likely a story of conquest—it had been taken from a conquered king, who would then likely have been obliged to drink from a clay cup as a sign of submission.

4.1.4. Vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple in Jerusalem were *not* included among the vessels used at this feast. They had been taken by Cyrus when he captured Babylon on the night of Belshazzar’s feast (Ezra 1.7), but were returned to the Jews by Cyrus about twenty years before the events recorded in this chapter (Ezra 5.14, 15).

4.1.5. As with the description of the garden decorations, the observation about the use of different cups indicates that the author of Esther was an eyewitness to the events, or received the account from an eyewitness.

4.2. They drank royal wine.

4.2.1. The royal wine (‘wine of the kingdom’) may mean that the wine was supplied from the king’s wine cellars; that it was a high quality, expensive wine; or wine that came from a particular district north of Damascus known for its quality wine (Ezk 27.18).

4.2.2. The exact definition does not need to be debated, as the meaning is clear—the king supplied good wine in abundance.

4.3. They drank with ‘no compulsion’. According to the king’s orders, each man was to be allowed to drink as he desired. What do you think verse 8 means?

4.3.1. There could be a number of ways for how to interpret this statement. For example, “The

⁶⁵ Robert D. Holmstedt and John Screnock, [draft] *Grammatical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (for the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible) 2014; ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/esther-1-1-9/

⁶⁶ We will consider his position and probable authorship of the book in a later section of this study.

⁶⁷ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.19;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Xen.+Cyrop.+8.8&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0204

⁶⁸ George Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, vol. 2 (London: J. Murray, 1862), p. 214; archive.org/details/fivegreatmonarch021862rawl

- drinking was according to the regulation ‘There is no constraint!’”, “The drinking was according to regulation. There was no constraint, because ...” or “The drinking was according to regulation (no constraint existed), because the king ...”⁶⁹
- 4.3.2. The word (חֹק) translated as ‘order’ appears 18 times elsewhere in Esther and is translated in the ESV as ‘law’ (Est 1.19), ‘regulation’ (Est 2.12), ‘decree’ (Est 3.15), and ‘edict’ (Est 8.17). When used in this verse (8), it likely does not have the force of being a permanent law of the Persians and Medes (Est 1.19), but a specific order or instruction (NIV) given to the palace staff, to be applied to this banquet.
- 4.3.3. Some have suggested that the order was not to force some folks to drink (heavily), when they would have preferred to be temperate and avoid intoxication. These interpreters claim that heavy drinking was the custom of the Persians and temperance was generally considered a sign of weakness. So, the king was being generous letting people not drink (heavily) if they wished not to become drunk.
- 4.3.4. However, this seems to be a misunderstanding of what was happening at the banquet and ignores the tone of the passage which emphasizes a gaudy display of licentious luxury. The excessive consumption of wine bore witness to what later writers would say about the Persians. For example, Xenophon wrote, “They had also the custom of not bringing pots into their banquets, evidently because they thought that if one did not drink to excess, both mind and body would be less uncertain. So even now the custom of not bringing in the pots still obtains, but they drink so much that, instead of carrying anything in, they are themselves carried out when they are no longer able to stand straight enough to walk out.”⁷⁰ And, Herodotus wrote, “They [the Persians] are very partial to wine. ... Moreover, it is their custom to deliberate about the gravest matters when they are drunk; and what they approve in their deliberations is proposed to them the next day, when they are sober, by the master of the house where they deliberate; and if, being sober, they still approve it, they act on it, but if not, they drop it. And if they have deliberated about a matter when sober, they decide upon it when they are drunk.”⁷¹
- 4.3.5. If the understanding about Persian (ancient Middle Eastern) practices is correct, then the tradition was suspended which had people attending a banquet drink only when the king hoisted his cup or the toastmaster indicated that they should drink. Thus, the order was given to allow people to drink as much of the expensive royal wine as they wanted to, when they wanted to consume it—i.e., to let every man indulge his desires to the fullest without any restraint.
- 4.4. Why are we told these things about the way wine was drunk at the party?
- 4.4.1. The writer of Esther demonstrates that the Persian kings believed that they lived in an invincible greatness and they could do anything they pleased, including participating in excessive debauchery. Thus, he sets up a contrast between man’s declaration of autonomy and God’s sovereign control over the events of history.
- 4.4.2. By reporting about the alcohol consumption at the feast, he subtly ridicules the Persians and sends his Jewish audience a message: “The Persians are such fools that they boast about drinking. They do not heed the wisdom of our greater king, Solomon, when he said that ‘wine is a mocker’, of the wise Lemuel who warned kings not to be infatuated with wine, or of our prophet, Isaiah, who warned against tarrying over their alcohol.” (Prov 20.1; Prov 23.30, 31; Prov 31.4-9; Is 5.11)

⁶⁹ Robert D. Holmstedt and John Screnock, [draft] *Grammatical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (for the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible) 2014; ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/esther-1-1-9/

⁷⁰ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.19;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Xen.+Cyrop.+8.8&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0204

⁷¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 1, chapter 133,

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+1.133&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

5. Why did the king hold this feast?
 - 5.1. The feast was probably held as a final drunken and debauched old-boys' club meeting to wrap up the six-month planning efforts. Female dancers would have been brought in to entertain the crowd and get their blood pumping before the military campaigns against the Scythians and the territories (Hindus/India and Thatagus/Sattagydia) west of the Indus River.
 - 5.2. There may have been another reason for holding the feast. Although Susa had been a royal administrative centre for the Persians from before the time of Esther—e.g., under Cyrus (Dan 8.2; c 550 BC)—the construction of the citadel palace reached its peak under Darius I (Ahasuerus), whose reign began in 522 BC. This feast may have been held in conjunction with the launch of the extensive palace re-construction activity (which commenced in 519 BC⁷², the same year that the feast was held⁷³). Darius may have had scale models on display to show the visitors at the feast what the re-construction would look like.
 - 5.3. Since wealth could be transformed into military might (purchasing supplies, making armaments and paying salaries), the display of wealth and luxury would have been used to inspire awe among the satraps and generals.
 - 5.3.1. Ahasuerus was behaving like a prototypical salesman dressed in a Brooks Brothers' custom-fit suit with Louis Vuitton shoes and wearing a Rolex watch, who picks up his clients in a Cadillac XTS and takes them to dinner at Canoe or Soto Soto, and is clearly out to impress his clients with his symbols of success and convince them to buy what he is selling.
 - 5.3.2. His display of wealth at the palace was like what a Bay-street law firm does when it sets up fancy offices. The partners want to convince their clients that they can win battles on their behalf.
 - 5.3.3. Ahasuerus was selling his success so that his satraps and generals would buy into his military campaign.
6. What was the nature and purpose of the third feast? (9)
 - 6.1. It was a feast for the women of the citadel of Susa, given by Vashti while the men (8) were at Ahasuerus' feast. She may have held the feast in a woman's court or garden adjacent to the main court being used by Ahasuerus.
 - 6.1.1. According to one of the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, Artystone (whom we identified above as possibly being Esther; see the section titled, *Potentate*), had 1,940 liters of wine delivered to one of her houses for some occasion, perhaps indicating that she was hosting a banquet similar to that given by Vashti in Susa.⁷⁴
 - 6.2. Who was Vashti?
 - 6.2.1. The wife of Ahasuerus designated as queen.
 - 6.2.2. She is referred to as the queen each time she is mentioned until she is deposed (Est 1.9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17). Thereafter, she is referred to only by her name (Est 1.19; Est 2.1, 4, 17). Her title as queen was derived from her being the wife of Ahasuerus (like Kate will be called queen if William becomes king), not from being an hereditary title, such as Queen Elizabeth has.
 - 6.2.3. She was a daughter of Cyrus and the mother of Xerxes I, who ruled Persia after his father. She may have been deposed before Xerxes was born, but as Ahasuerus' firstborn son by a queen, Xerxes was declared heir.

⁷² Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. xxxi.

⁷³ See the chronology of events in Esther in the section entitled *Period*, above.

⁷⁴ The order for wine is recorded in R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), no. 1795, quoted in: A. Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. (H. W. House & W. Barrick, Eds.), n.d., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Logos electronic ed.)

- 6.2.4. Her name, from the Persian, means ‘beautiful woman’⁷⁵ or ‘the best’. It may be a formal title, an informal title (like, George Ruth was called ‘The Babe’ or ‘The Bambino’), or an alternate proper name (since she is known through extra-Biblical history as Atossa).
- 6.2.5. Jewish scholars before the time of Christ considered her to be one of the four most wicked women in the world, along with Jezebel (1 Ki 16-22) and Athaliah (daughter of Jezebel, 2 Kings 11.1) in Israel, and Semiramis (legendary queen who succeeded her husband, king Ninus of Assyria the founder of Nineveh, in the 9th c BC).⁷⁶
- 6.3. Why did she give the feast?
- 6.3.1. It appears that at times Persian women attended feasts with their husbands (like the Babylonians, Dan 5.2; and later Romans). However, women also attended separate feasts at the same time as the men held theirs. With conflicting opinion, we cannot make a definitive statement about what was common practice at that time in the Persian Empire. However, we can state that Vashti held a separate feast for the woman at this time.
- 6.3.2. Her reason could have been:
- 6.3.2.1. She, and the other women, had not been invited to the party, since its purpose was to finalize the military campaign against the Scythians and the territories west of the Indus River.
- 6.3.2.2. Persian queens did not attend banquets with their husbands, since “Persians, who never let their wives appear, but drink, dance, and wanton with their whores.”⁷⁷ So, she invited the other wives to dine with her.
- 6.3.2.3. She did not want to participate in a debauched party where the men would become drunk and ogle the dancers.
- 6.3.2.4. She was late in her pregnancy (with Xerxes) and was ‘confined’ to her chambers or did not want to appear in public; so she had a party for the women only.
- 6.3.2.5. She was declaring a streak of independence from her husband. Some historians claim that Darius used his marriage to Cyrus’ daughter as a means of reasserting the right of his family line to the Persian throne after he had seized power from the usurper Gaumata. She may have felt that she had more power than she actually did.
- 6.4. Why does the writer tell us about Vashti’s feast?
- 6.4.1. At this point the reference to the feast appears to be an irrelevant detail.
- 6.4.2. However, it is necessary to explain her absence from Ahasuerus’ feast so that she can later be called into his feast and reject the summons—leading to her being deposed and the elevation of Esther to the office of queen.
- 6.4.3. Also, she is introduced as the current queen, with a degree of independence, as a counterpoint to Esther who would replace her and become an equally legitimate queen, with power to act independently (Est 9.29-32).
- 6.4.4. The separate feasts may indicate that Ahasuerus and Vashti “were not acting in accord with each other. Their actions foreshadowed their separation soon to come.”⁷⁸
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.3-9)
- 7.1. *Power’s Corruption* – Men endowed with unlimited power become immensely corrupt. Much power in the hand of one person is a dangerous thing.
- 7.1.1. The display of luxury and the debauched feast are the trappings of arbitrary power. Rarely

⁷⁵ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 26; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAAIAAJ

⁷⁶ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 26; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAAIAAJ

⁷⁷ Plutarch, *Symposium* [1.1]; ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plutarch/symposiacs/complete.html#section2

⁷⁸ M. Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), Logos electronic ed., Vol. 10, pp. 306–307).

- can men acquire power (in politics, business, academia, military, ‘Hollywood’) without abrogating to themselves the lavish symbols of entitlement.
- 7.1.2. People in positions of power try to impress their subjects with displays of wealth rather than by a concern for fulfilling a just administration. They love the accolades of the adoring crowd rather than the obscurity of humble service (Jam 4.6)
- 7.1.3. People in positions of power are often only interested in their own wicked ambitious schemes and not with the reality that they will be trampling on the rights of others and leading many into sin and destruction.
- 7.2. *Pride’s Complacency* – Men endowed with unlimited luxuries become immensely complacent.
- 7.2.1. First, they suppress the truth that they are accountable to the only true God. They live by the motto “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor 15.32).
- 7.2.2. Second, they choose to ignore the fact that all that they have has come from the hand of God (Acts 17.28; Jam 1.17) and not from their own abilities and wisdom; and refuse to give God thanks (Rom 1.21).
- 7.2.3. Third, they are blind to the reality that the bigger they are in this life the harder their fall will be (Prov 16.18; Prov 29.23; Mt 23.12)
- 7.3. *Providence’s Control* – God overrules all the plans of men, including the most audacious.
- 7.3.1. The Persians may have been successful in their campaign against the Scythians and the territories west of the Indus River. But their success would be short lived. Twenty years after the events in Esther, Darius would be embarrassingly defeated by the Greeks at Marathon (490 BC) and then Xerxes, his son, would be defeated again at Salamis (480 BC); and from that point, the Persian Empire would go into a rapid decline.
- 7.3.2. God had prophesied through Daniel (Dan 2.39; Dan 8.4-7; Dan 11.2, 3) that the Persian Empire was subject to his control. All nations and all kings are under God ultimate control (Prov 21.1; Dan 2.21; Dan 4.17, 34, 35; Rom 13.1). Others who had to learn this, included: Pharaoh (Ex 7.3-5), Sennacherib (Is 36-37), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3.1-30; Dan 4.1-37), Belshazzar (Dan 5.1-30), Herod Agrippa (Acts 12.20-23); and many other anti-Christian monsters who have paraded through history—such as: Nero, Titus, Domitian, Shapur II,⁷⁹ Timur (Tamerlane),⁸⁰ Pope Martin V,⁸¹ Tipu,⁸² Charles II and Archbishop Sharp, Mao Tse-Tung, Stalin, Hitler, and Kim Il Jong.
- 7.3.3. Ahasuerus thought he was his own master and plotting his own destiny, but he was soon to learn that he was God’s instrument for the advancement of God’s kingdom and the benefit of the God’s covenant people.
- 7.4. *Proper Commission* – Man’s responsibility is to serve God, not self.
- 7.4.1. As the *Shorter Catechism* states it, man’s purpose is to glorify God. This account illustrates the short-sightedness of men who glorify themselves instead of God. Our responsibility is to use our God-endowed wealth and power for the advancement of the kingdom of righteousness, not for debauched indulgence (1 Cor 10.31).
- 7.5. *Princely Contrast* – Jesus, the Prince of Peace, hosts a great feast that is superior to anything a worldly prince can offer.
- 7.5.1. Jesus, the King of kings, invites us to a feast (Is 25.6; Is 55.1; Mt 22.1-14; Jn 6.35; Rev 19.9; Rev 22.2) which, in contrast to the feast of Ahasuerus, is:
- 7.5.1.1. Filled with thankful sobriety, not boastful drunkenness
- 7.5.1.2. Full of true joy, not raucous hilarity

⁷⁹ Zoroastrian; ordered the massacre of all Christians in Persia in 341 AD.

⁸⁰ Muslim warlord of Turco-Mongol descent who conquered Persia, Mesopotamia and Syria in the 14th c; he had 70,000 Assyrian Christians beheaded in Tikrit and 90,000 in Baghdad.

⁸¹ Had John Huss burned at the stake on July 6, 1415, and in 1420 proclaimed a crusade "for the destruction of the Wycliffites, Hussites and all other heretics in Bohemia".

⁸² In India in the 1780s issued orders to destroy more than 50,000 Christians.

- 7.5.1.3. For all mankind from the lowest to the highest, not excluding women and slaves
- 7.5.1.4. Satisfying body and soul, not full of empty calories
- 7.5.1.5. Eternal, not merely seven days.

Princess's Disobedience (Est 1.10-12)

1. Why did the king command Vashti to appear before him?
 - 1.1. He was drunk. Whatever other reason there could be, his decision to call her into the feast was directly the result of his having lost control of his rational faculties. He undertook an action that he would not likely have considered doing if he had been sober.
 - 1.2. He was vain. He chose to show off her beauty as a rich man today would display a 'trophy wife' at a work function. Since she was the daughter of Cyrus, he was using her natal position to reinforce his claim to be the great king of the Persians.
 - 1.3. He wished to reinforce his authority. Commanding a queen, the daughter of Cyrus, to appear at a men's drunken orgy would make him appear to be tough before his regional leaders and generals. It is similar to how some uncouth men treat their wives demanding in front of others so that they can appear to be in control of their households.
 - 1.4. To humiliate Vashti. Vashti was likely a proud person in her own nature—having been born to royalty—and Ahasuerus was senselessly using this as an opportunity to treat her as a servant, dancing girl, concubine, or prostitute.
2. How was the command delivered?
 - 2.1. Through seven eunuchs.
 - 2.1.1. Eunuchs were often chosen from among slaves taken from subject peoples and mutilated as boys before they had reached puberty.⁸³ They were trained in the customs of the Persian court and often used as translators.⁸⁴ They often rose to positions of high rank within the courts which they served (Est 2.3, 14; Neh 1.1 (Septuagint); Dan 1.3; Acts 8.27). Because of their condition they could be trusted to have no aspirations to rebel and start their own dynasties.
 - 2.2. Why was the message delivered through eunuchs?
 - 2.2.1. Only eunuchs could carry a message into the royal harem. Other men serving the king could not be trusted among the women.
 - 2.2.2. It has been suggested that the words used in verse 12 (lit: "to come at word of the king which *in hand* of the eunuchs") may be hinting at a miscommunication.⁸⁵ When we say in English that a message was delivered 'second hand' we imply that it may not be as accurate as a 'first hand' declaration. If such a construct was also used in Hebrew, then the author of the account may be suggesting that the message delivered by the eunuchs was garbled—whether or not it was deliberate.
 - 2.3. Why were seven eunuchs sent with the message?
 - 2.3.1. Persian formal court etiquette required that the message should be delivered by a courtier to call the queen before the king.⁸⁶
 - 2.3.2. Delivering the command through seven courtiers would emphasize its importance and expectation that it be obeyed.
 - 2.3.3. The number *seven* had superstitious merit for the Persians (Est 1.14). For example, the seventh month in the Persian calendar was dedicated to the Zoroastrian god Mithra and

⁸³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 8, chapter 105,

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+5.18&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

⁸⁴ David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011), p. 122.

⁸⁵ Robert D. Holmstedt and John Screnock, [draft] *Grammatical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (for the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible) 2014; ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/esther-1-1-9/

⁸⁶ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 28; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAIAAJ

there were seven Amshaspands who were the first order of angels in the Zoroastrian hierarchy.

2.4. Why are the eunuchs names recorded here?

2.4.1. The use of their names serves to reinforce the historical accuracy of the account. Anyone reading it later, within the lifetime of those mentioned, could confirm with any of the eunuchs to ascertain the truthfulness of the record.

2.4.2. The Bigtha mentioned in this verse may be the Bigthan/Bigthana (Est 2.21; Est 6.2) who attempted to assassinate the king. Ironically his name appears to be the Persian equivalent of ‘the gift of God’.

3. How was Vashti to appear?

3.1. With her royal crown.

3.1.1. Although often translated ‘crown’ the ESV’s alternate reading ‘headdress’ is likely more accurate. Persian queens did not wear crowns of precious metals set with large precious stones like those worn by Western monarchs. It was probably more like a shawl, possibly with a veil, with a series of delicate strings of pearls or jewels.

3.1.2. The implication was that he expected her to appear in her regal apparel—not only to show off her beauty but her riches.

4. Why did Vashti refuse to appear?

4.1. The author does not give a reason, partly because the reason is not relevant and partly to create suspense and conflict in the story. If she had had an invalid reason, then Ahasuerus’ anger at her refusal to appear may have been somewhat justified. Leaving the reason unstated adds to the mystery around Vashti and her dismissal.

4.2. What *might* have been valid reasons for her refusing to appear?

4.2.1. She may have been pregnant at the time and had felt self-conscious to appear before a party of men.

4.2.2. She may have been concerned about being mauled by a pack of drunks. Herodotus records the following incident which occurred a few years after the events in the book of Esther, ‘The Persians who had been sent as envoys came to Amyntas (the Macedonian king) and demanded earth and water for Darius the king. He readily gave to them what they asked and invited them to be his guests, preparing a dinner of great splendor and receiving them hospitably. After dinner, the Persians said to Amyntas as they sat drinking together, “Macedonian, our host, it is our custom in Persia to bring in also the concubines and wedded wives to sit by the men after the giving of any great banquet. We ask you, then, (since you have received us heartily, are entertaining us nobly and are giving Darius our king earth and water) to follow our custom.” To this Amyntas replied, “We have no such custom, Persians. Among us, men and women sit apart, but since you are our masters and are making this request, it shall be as you desire.” With that, Amyntas sent for the women. Upon being called, the women entered and sat down in a row opposite the Persians. Then the Persians, seeing beautiful women before them, spoke to Amyntas and said that there was no sense in what he had done. It would be better if the women had never come at all than that they should come and not sit beside the men, but sit opposite them to torment their eyes. Amyntas, now feeling compelled to do so, bade the women sit beside them. When the women had done as they were bidden, the Persians, flushed as they were with excess of wine, at once laid hands on the women’s breasts, and one or another tried to kiss them.’⁸⁷ In response, the Macedonians later dressed up some beardless young men as women and they killed the Persians.

⁸⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 5, chapter 18,
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+5.18&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

- 4.2.3. If her refusal was based on a concern about being mauled, her refusal was morally justified. A husband, even one who is an absolute monarch, has no right to subject his wife to humiliation. In this situation, if she had been wise she might have been able to devise an excuse which would have satisfied the king without her having to be subjected to the humiliation of being on display before the lecherous fools in Ahasuerus' company (Prov 25.15).
- 4.3. What *might* have been an invalid reason for her refusing to appear?
 - 4.3.1. She may have been displaying a spirit of independence, thinking that she deserved more respect as the daughter of Cyrus. She may have displayed this before; and Ahasuerus, because of having drunk too much wine, may have been baiting her to get a reaction or to humble her.
- 4.4. Some interpreters have suggested that she knew that if she refused to appear, she would be challenging the king and be subject to censure—they suggest that she put her moral standards above her crown. However, the fact that Ahasuerus had to ask for advice about what to do in response to her refusal (Est 1.15), indicates that it was unprecedented, and the outcome was uncertain.
- 4.5. The ultimate reason why she refused to appear at the feast was that God was working out his overruling plan. It was necessary for Vashti to refuse, and be deposed, so that Esther could eventually take her place and be positioned to save her people.
 - 4.5.1. Vashti's refusal, though her own response, was in accord with God's providence. Her refusal was similar to Pharaoh's refusal to let the Jews leave Egypt (Ex 10.20, 27).
5. What was the king's reaction to her refusal to appear?
 - 5.1. He became angry. He may have had a short-fused temper (see, Est 7.10).
 - 5.1.1. That he had a temper would not be surprising as he likely had been raised in an environment in which his wishes were always accommodated by sycophantic courtiers and slaves.
 - 5.1.2. Also, historical records indicate that a number of the Persian monarchs (e.g., Xerxes and Darius II) were known for having irrational tempers and being excessively cruel and capricious.
 - 5.1.3. The expression 'anger burned' is an idiom which indicates an extreme anger.
 - 5.2. What can we conclude about his anger?
 - 5.2.1. It was unfounded; as it appears that he had not enquired into the reason for her refusal. He should have determined if her refusal was a personal affront, based on a legitimate reason, or if it was based on an illegitimate breach of the laws of Persia.
 - 5.2.2. It was petulant, like that of a spoiled child—it was certainly fueled by wine.
 - 5.2.3. It was the result of a wounded pride—her refusal made him look foolish before his adjutants and regional satraps.
 - 5.2.4. It was sinful (Prov 14.29; Prov 16.32; 2 Cor 12.20; Jam 1.19)
 - 5.3. What reasons might he have given to justify his anger? He would have claimed that a:
 - 5.3.1. king was to be obeyed absolutely, whether or not the command was morally proper. The Bible teaches otherwise (Acts 5.29);
 - 5.3.2. woman should not challenge the authority of a man;
 - 5.3.3. wife should not disobey the orders of her husband, regardless of how right or wrong the order might be.
6. What can we conclude about Ahasuerus from this episode with his wife and the previous one regarding hosting the feast?
 - 6.1. He was pompous and vain—a prisoner of pride.
 - 6.2. He was selfish and inconsiderate.
 - 6.3. He had no love for his wife. This is not surprising. He likely had married her only to advance his

claim to Cyrus' throne since Cambyses II, of the Anshan line descended from Achaemenes, had left no heir.

- 6.4. It is difficult to imagine that Esther would have been able to love such a man. However, if Esther was Artystone, then it may be that her gentle demeanour and circumspection tempered his behaviour. As we noted previously, Artystone was his favourite wife.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.10-12). We learn of Ahasuerus':
 - 7.1. *Alcohol* – Wine and lust are co-conspirators to evil. While drinking alcohol is not a sin (Jn 2.9; 1 Tim 5.23), drunkenness and accompanied debauchery are (Rom 13.13; Eph 5.18). The Bible advises kings to control their alcohol consumption (Prov 31.4; Prov 23.31). All Christians need to heed this advice. A good way to avoid drunkenness, if you show any tendency to over indulging in drinking alcohol, is to abstain entirely.
 - 7.2. *Anger* – An unjust anger blinds a person to facts and hardens the heart to wise consideration. It is often the bastard stepchild of excessive alcohol consumption. One organization has reported that, in the US:
 - 7.2.1. 36% of those under correctional supervision were drinking at the time of their conviction offense.
 - 7.2.2. 40% of convicted murderers, being held in either in a jail or state prison, had consumed alcohol around the time they committed murder.
 - 7.2.3. 40% of all violent crimes include alcohol as a factor.⁸⁸F. Scott Fitzgerald is reported to have said, "First you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you."⁸⁹
 - 7.3. *Attitude* – The king dishonoured his wife and himself as a husband. Instead of protecting her he wished to make her the object of lust for drunken lechers. A husband is supposed to love his wife and honour her (Eph 5.25, 28, 31; Col 3.19). Among all religions and worldviews only Biblical Christianity and the Gospel of Jesus Christ set women free from the tyranny of men (Gal 3.28).
 - 7.4. *Asininity* [from the Latin for ass; a donkey] – He thought he could control an empire, but he could not control his own passions—pride, lust, and anger. He made decisions impetuously and later had to deal with the unintended consequences—commanding his wife to appear, having her refuse; agreeing to Haman's request, and almost destroying a wife and her people. He was as foolish and obstinate as a donkey.
 - 7.5. *Authority* – Both Vashti and Esther's examples make it clear that the king of Persia was not the final authority. Vashti's refusal to appear teaches that moral behaviour has a higher authority than the command of a monarch. And Esther's later refusal to accept the destruction of her people teaches that God's authority overrules the command of a monarch—even if it is written as the law of the Persians and Medes.

Protective Decree (Est 1.13-22)

Pondering (Est 1.13-15)

1. What did Ahasuerus do after Vashti refused to appear in his presence?
 - 1.1. He called a council to determine what should be done with her.
2. What is surprising about his calling this council?
 - 2.1. Even though he was very angry, he did not take rash action and have her immediately executed. If he had chosen to take that course of action no one would have stopped him, as his command would have been absolute.
 - 2.2. He was probably not particularly attached to Vashti since his marriage to her had likely been for

⁸⁸ National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, www.ncadd.org/index.php/learn-about-alcohol/alcohol-and-crime

⁸⁹ www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/f/fscottfit103951.html#LkOmuwkO0h1dgCoo.99

convenience—i.e., to increase his claim to the throne. His harem was likely full of attractive women, most of whom would have been from noble or royal families, and he may not have called Vashti to his chambers for a while (compare with 4.11). So affection was likely not the factor which held him back from executing her.

- 2.3. It is unlikely that it was out of respect for law that he restrained his action. If he had chosen to execute her, he would have created a law retroactively to cover the situation, if one was needed.
 - 2.4. Likewise, it is unlikely that he had the power of self-restraint—his drunken party indicates his lack of control. He would have been used to having people defer to his will. Persian monarchs were not known for being principled or in control of their tempers. Compare Henry VIII's actions with regard to his many wives and consider that Ahasuerus was a king in a far more brutal time where arbitrary and violent actions by kings were the norm and almost expected.
3. Why did he not execute Vashti, and instead called a council?
 - 3.1. He may have known that she was pregnant and did not want her executed so that he could save the life of a potential heir.
 - 3.2. The reason may be that he was so stunned by Vashti's unprecedented actions—a wife/queen disobeying a command of her husband/king—that he actually did not know what to do.
 4. What was the purpose of the council?
 - 4.1. It was standard practice within the Persian court (as in almost every other royal court) to use a council of men close to the king who could provide guidance or at least offer suggestions. Herodotus, for example, speaks of various Persian monarchs consulting with their councils.⁹⁰
 - 4.2. The parenthetical comment which starts in the middle of verse 13 and includes verse 14 indicates that this was the king's procedure—i.e., when he wasn't sure what to do.
 5. Who made up his council?
 - 5.1. Wise men (or 'wise ones').
 - 5.1.1. The word 'wise' used here is the same word that appears throughout Proverbs related to wisdom.
 - 5.1.2. It is a common term used to refer to official advisors—e.g., of Egyptian Pharaohs (Gen 41:8; Ex 7:11) and Babylonian kings (Jer 50:35; Dan 2:48).
 - 5.2. Men who knew the times. What might this mean?
 - 5.2.1. There are two views on how to interpret this:
 - 5.2.1.1. These men were observant of cultural trends and customs and able to give good advice, like the men of Issachar (1 Chron 12:32)
 - 5.2.1.2. They were astrologers looking for guidance from the alignment of stars and planets (Est 3:7; Dan 2:27; Dan 5:15; Is 47:13; Jer 50:35-36).
 - 5.2.2. It may be that the men were both keen observers and superstitious. In this respect they are not much different from men advising leaders today who have degrees in economics or law but at the same time are influenced by the alignment of polls, politically correct lobby groups, and the latest theories of humanistic psychology; and cannot think independently.
 - 5.3. Men versed in law and judgement.
 - 5.3.1. They had been trained (Dan 1:3-4; Acts 7:22) to make decisions in accordance with the legal codes of the empire.
 - 5.3.2. The author mixes a Persian loanword (תָּבַר; 'order' or 'law') with a Semitic word (יָדָן; 'judgement'). The alliterative sounds of *dat* and *din* may add a literary feature to the narrative. However, it also may be a subtle jab by the author against the pettiness of the Persian monarch and his counsellors. It could be similar to saying something like

⁹⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 31; book 7, chapters 8, 234; book 8, chapter 101
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+1.1&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126

‘parliament dealt with this and that’, meaning that they had not dealt with anything of consequence.

5.4. Men next to him, who saw the king’s face.

5.4.1. These men had been granted the right to stand in his presence and to look him in the face. They did not need to avert their eyes in his presence as was required by other subjects. This practice was to engender an awe and reverence from the common people—after all, who could look into the face of a ‘god’ and live?

5.4.2. When one who had been permitted to face the king eye-to-eye lost favour or standing with the king, his face would be covered (Est 7.8).

5.5. The council of seven princes.

5.5.1. The men who were able to see the king’s face were seven princes.

5.5.2. When Darius seized the throne from the usurper Gaumata, he was assisted by six princes and elevated to the throne. It is possible that a seventh person was added to the six to replace himself, so that the council would still have seven members—seven being considered propitious to the Persians (Est 1.5; Est 2.9). The six men who assisted him in the coup may still have had positions at the time of Esther, or they may have been replaced in the 2-3 years from when he had become king to the time of the feast. Regardless, the council of seven members was a standing feature of the Persian court system, still in existence at the time of Artaxerxes (r. 465-425 BC), the grandson of Darius (Ezra 7.14).

5.5.3. In Persia there was no electoral representation, the government was absolute. Hence the seven men whose names are mentioned were appointed by the king, and his whim could remove them. So long as they were in favour they were accounted as privileged persons.

5.6. Princes of Persia and Media

5.6.1. These princes were drawn from satrapies within Persia and Media—i.e., from the loyal core of the empire and not from the potentially rebellious provinces.

5.6.2. It has been observed that the title, “princes of Persia and Media,” is not found in other writings (e.g., the inscriptions from Susa and Persepolis). So, this account in Esther adds to our understanding of how the Persian court system operated.

5.6.3. There were likely other counsellors who were not princes and who supported the king in lower offices. Haman may have been in a lower office at this time, and may have been promoted to the council (e.g., on the death of one of the council members), after the time of these events. He comes to prominence in the account about nine years later. Mordecai later became first minister (Est 8.2), replacing Haman, but he was not a prince of Persia and Media.

5.6.4. The names of the individuals, although seemingly irrelevant, are given to reinforce the truthfulness of the account—at the time the account was written some of the members of the council of seven may have been alive and able to vouch for its accuracy.

5.6.5.

6. What was to be the basis of their decision?

6.1. According to law.

6.2. Ahasuerus appeared to subject himself to a standard beyond his own arbitrary will. However, his action may be nothing more than a means of providing a formal sanction for whatever would be done to Vashti.

7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.13-15).

7.1. *Listed Rulers* – What else do we know about the seven men who are listed here?

7.1.1. We know nothing about these men, other than what we are told in this chapter (Est 1.16, 21). However, God knew every detail about them and their lives. God knew that they had cast their lot for human recognition and had suppressed the truth about his existence, glory, and law.

7.1.2. The inclusion of their names reminds us that every person who has lived, or ever will live,

is known to God and is accountable to him. The Toronto city councillors, and the members of the provincial and federal parliament, may be nothing more than passing names to us. But God has their names recorded in his books (Dan 7.10; Rev 20.12)—either destined for eternal life or for eternal death.

- 7.2. *Lex Rex* – Ahasuerus made a mockery of the rule of law. He was cynical, selfish, opportunistic and pragmatic. He used the law only when it suited his purposes. His standard operating practice would have been to make arbitrary decisions and to rule his subjects cruelly and remove their life if he chose—like Herod the ‘Great’ had the infants in Bethlehem killed and Herod Antipas had John the Baptist executed.
- 7.2.1. For centuries in the West there was a struggle between kings and parliaments and the people. Kings claimed that they were above the law and parliaments argued that kings were to be subject to the laws which they passed.
- 7.2.2. One of the Scottish Covenanter delegates to the Westminster Assembly, Samuel Rutherford, wrote a book entitled *Lex Rex* in which he defends the rule of law, limited government, constitutionalism, and the ‘two kingdoms’ theory of church-state relations. He argued against royal absolutism. After the restoration he was cited for high treason but died before he could be tried. His book was burned in what was the last official book-burning in England. His writings paved the way for the humanistic political theory of John Locke and to what eventually became the model for the US separation of powers and church and state.
- 7.2.3. Until recently in the West it was believed that no one is above the law and the law was to be applied consistently to everyone, regardless of his station or office. It has also been commonly believed that a key ingredient in freeing people from tyranny is the introduction of the rule of law.
- 7.2.4. In practice, however, the West has been drifting away from this principle and the edge of tyranny is beginning to reappear—with incomprehensible and inconsistent laws, administrations which make arbitrary decisions, courts which rule contrary to the governing constitutions, exceptions being made for the rich or influential, and favouritism shown to ‘politically’ correct interest groups (such as teachers’ unions).
- 7.2.5. Ultimately, the only way that a people can be truly free is if they live under the rule of God’s law.
- 7.3. *Leader Requirements* – The attributes of Ahasuerus’ inner council are listed. From a human perspective they seem to be reasonable—i.e., wise men who know the times and understand law and judgement.
- 7.3.1. God holds leaders to a higher standard. The qualifications for elders are specifically designed for rulers in a church congregation. Yet, they provide a good standard for what we should wish for in civil government leaders and administrators, since they are servants of God (Rom 13.4).
- 7.3.2. What does Jethro tell Moses should be the primary criteria for the selection of delegated judges? (Ex 18.21; Dt 1.13-18)
- 7.3.2.1. Men who fear God and are trustworthy, wise, understanding and respected; and who hate dishonest gain.
- 7.3.3. How do the Biblical qualifications for civic leadership (e.g., judges) compare with those for elders/deacons in Church government?
- 7.3.3.1. Capable men (experienced, skilled) [self-controlled (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.8), able to teach is a specific skill required of elders (1 Tim 3.2, 5; Titus 1.9), not a recent convert (1 Tim 3.6), manages own family well, children obey (1 Tim 3.4-5; Titus 1.6)].
- 7.3.3.2. Men who fear God and are upright and holy (Titus 1.8) and keep hold of the deep truths (Titus 1.9).
- 7.3.3.3. Trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain [not lovers of money (1 Tim 3.3); do not pursue dishonest gain (Titus 1.7)].

- 7.3.3.4. Wise and understanding (both in the worldly sense, but also in the spiritual sense) [love what is good (Titus 1.8); disciplined (Titus 1.8); temperate (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.7)].
- 7.3.3.5. Respected [not violent or quarrelsome, gentle (1 Tim 3.3; Titus 1.7); have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim 3.7); not overbearing (Titus 1.7); not quick tempered (Titus 1.7); above reproach, blameless (1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.6); respectable (1 Tim 3.2); not given to drunkenness (1 Tim 3.3; Titus 1.7)].
- 7.3.3.6. The Biblical requirements are essentially the same (although the specific skills might be somewhat different) for someone who is in a responsible position in the state as someone who is in a responsible position in the Church.
- 7.3.4. What are some possible implications of applying these Biblical qualifications?
 - 7.3.4.1. We won't accept the idea that a man's personal life (e.g., his divorces, adulterous affairs, sexual escapades, drug problems, family difficulties) have no bearing on his ability to perform in a public office. How a man administers his private moral life has a direct bearing on how he will administer his public affairs.
 - 7.3.4.2. We should take seriously the Biblical qualifications for civic office when we are voting for elected officials.
- 7.3.5. Does this mean that there should be a 'spiritual' test for those who are appointed to public office?
 - 7.3.5.1. This is extremely difficult to work out (essentially impractical and impossible) in a fallen world.⁹¹
 - 7.3.5.2. We cannot have reformed government without reformed hearts. Those who go by the name of 'Christian Reconstructionists' put too much emphasis on reformation of the state before society has been reformed through revival. A reformed state will be a natural outworking of a pervasive Christian influence in society.

Priority (Est 1.16-18)

- 1. Who was the spokesman for the group of counsellors?
 - 1.1. Memucan.
 - 1.2. Since he was the only one who spoke in the presence of the king, he must have been influential and respected.
 - 1.3. He may have been speaking his own opinion or may have been speaking on behalf of the group of seven and offering their agreed opinion—like a foreman of a jury. He may have been the nominated speaker because of his wisdom, previous examples, age, or governmental power.
 - 1.4. His name is mentioned last (14) which may be surprising if he were the nominal leader or most respected among the group of seven. However, the writer of the account may have placed his name last in the list because he was going to be a key actor in the following proceedings. It may be similar to how movie credits sometimes list the names of the cast and then mention last a well-known actor with words such as, "and", "with", "guest starring."
- 2. In what way did Memucan reply? What was the style (not the content) of his reply?
 - 2.1. His reply was designed to maintain or solicit the king's favour. He did not suggest to the king that the king might have done something wrong by asking his wife to disgrace herself in public. Rather, he stated that Vashti's refusal had consequences not only for the king but also for the whole empire, and therefore the king's anger was justified.
 - 2.2. We can infer that Memucan's answer was:
 - 2.2.1. Servile – His answer was designed to appeal to the king's vanity. The king could not be accused, directly, of doing wrong, even if his wrong actions had initiated the entire affair.

⁹¹ See: "Appendix F – Relationship Between Church and State (Considerations)," in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 2.2.2. Bigoted – His answer was designed to be in accord with the thinking of his all-male audience who pretended to be manly by treating women, and in particular their wives, with contempt rather than with love.
- 2.2.3. Reactionary – He suggested that if Vashti's refusal was not dealt with expeditiously, women throughout the empire would be tempted to rebel against their husbands, thus upsetting the status quo which endorsed the absolute and capricious rule of men over women.
- 2.2.4. Accusing – He subtly implied that the king who "reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces" couldn't control his own wife.
- 3. What was Memucan's legal opinion?
 - 3.1. He claimed that Vashti had done wrong against king and country (the officials and the people of all the provinces)—i.e., she was a traitor.
 - 3.2. Was he correct?
 - 3.2.1. No formal law existed which dealt with the situation, or the decree (Est 1.20) would not have been required.
 - 3.2.2. His argument was not based on moral principle or legal precedence, but on expediency—the need to control similar behaviour—considered rebellious—by other women.
 - 3.2.3. His conclusion about Vashti's disobedience is clearly overstated. He puts her action into the same class as the action of someone who attempted to assassinate the king. He is the male equivalent of a 'drama queen'—a 'crisis king'.
 - 3.3. He used a form of the 'slippery slope' argument—a person asserts that an event will inevitably follow from another but does not provide demonstrable proof for the inevitability of the proposed consequences.
- 4. What did Memucan predict would be the outcome of Vashti's behaviour?
 - 4.1. He said that Vashti's behaviour would serve as an example, which would cause trouble.
 - 4.1.1. It would become known to all women—the king would be the subject of gossip.
 - 4.1.2. It would cause women (in particular noble women) to show much contempt and wrath toward their husbands. The author of this book uses מַלְכָּא ('master', 'lord'), instead of אֲדֹנָי ('master', 'lord') showing his contempt for Persian attitudes toward marriage and women by calling husbands 'gods'.
 - 4.1.3. It would encourage women to disobey their husbands.
 - 4.1.4. It would cause chaos in the Persian Empire.
 - 4.2. Was his assessment correct?
 - 4.2.1. In spite of his overstatement of the situation, he understood human nature and his assessment was accurate. Every man in the council was at risk of losing control of his wife.
 - 4.2.2. Vashti was a beautiful woman (Est 1.11) who would have been envied and emulated by her peers. What she did would have been watched and copied by other women, who would have used the excuse for disobeying their husbands, "But Vashti disobeyed and the king did nothing about it!"
 - 4.3. He called for solidarity among the men, against the women. What may this indicate?
 - 4.3.1. Women in Persian society were treated as chattel and not as helpers fit for man (Gen 2.18). Middle Eastern cultures (pagan, Jewish, and Islamic) continued to treat women this way from the Persian era, and until the present. We have already noted that it is only within a Christian context that a proper relationship between men and women can develop—and most certainly not in our anti-God, pluralistic, 'modern' society full of anti-woman contradictions such as claiming 'rights':
 - 4.3.1.1. To engage in combat missions, but wanting the qualification standards lowered
 - 4.3.1.2. To participate on men's sports teams, but prohibiting men from being on women's teams

- 4.3.1.3. To abort on demand, but denying the child's and fathers' rights and denying someone a right to expose the physical and psychological damages associated with abortion.
 - 4.3.1.4. For a male to change his gender to 'female', but not for a feminist to speak against the idea that he is a 'female'.⁹²
 - 4.3.2. Persian society/culture was tenuously insecure, if an act of domestic disobedience could have caused such a major explosion. The situation was similar to what happens in the fictional *Hunger Games* series when President Snow visits Katniss Everdeen's house in the Victor's Village. He says, "In several of [the districts], however, people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same? ... What is to prevent, say, an uprising? ... Whatever problems anyone may have with the Capitol, believe me when I say that if it released its grip on the districts for even a short time, the entire system would collapse." Katniss responds, "It must be very fragile, if a handful of berries can bring it down."⁹³
 - 4.3.3. As we noted previously,⁹⁴ the book of Esther provides information about the Persian Empire which is not available from any other source. In this case, it provides insight into the weakness of Ahasuerus, who was considered to be a visible manifestation of the Zoroastrian angelic divinity, Mithra, and a demigod. The author of Esther is able to use the statement of a courtier to make the king and the Empire look foolish.
5. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.16-18).
- 5.1. *Counsellors* – Proverbs says, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." (Prov 11.14) The Persian monarchs understood the need to have access to the council of wise men. However, as with many of the proverbs, the guidance which they provide is not absolute. Rather, the guidance is often dependent on specific conditions being in place, such as a fear of God or a righteous life. What are some requisite conditions for a wise counsel?
 - 5.1.1. *Truthful* – The council must not be intimidated by a despotic king or tyrant, like Ahasuerus, and be free to speak truth without fear of reprisal—being executed or fired. Fear is often false, and Memucan valued his head more than truth.
 - 5.1.2. *Unflattering* – Memucan's suggestions were designed to flatter the king. Good counsel cannot be achieved if the counsellors are sycophants.
 - 5.1.3. *Just* – Good counsel does not take sides but deals with the situation fairly. Memucan absolved the king of all wrong doing and placed it all on Vashti, without determining if Vashti may have had a legitimate reason for her refusal. There is nothing wise about unjust counsel.
 - 5.1.4. *Reasonable* – Memucan's analysis is over the top and displays the influence of prevailing opinion rather than principle and fact. It is therefore harmful.Given these (minimum) conditions for good counsel, it will rarely be provided in situations where the one seeking counsel or the ones giving it are not supportive of these conditions. Thus, it is surprising, given the sinful nature of men—who are not by nature, truthful, unflattering, just, and reasonable—that any administration has good counsel. It is only because of God's providential governance and general grace that worldly administrations are able to function.
 - 5.2. *Constitutions* – The abuse of law displayed in the council's dealings with Vashti speaks to the importance of the rule of law. We noted in the previous section the importance of governing by law—ideally in accord with Biblically based constitutions, statute law, and common law

⁹² Germaine Greer: *Transgender women are 'not women'*; BBC 2015-10-24; www.bbc.com/news/uk-34625512

⁹³ Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2009), pp. 21-22.

⁹⁴ See sections entitled: *Place and Primacy*.

precedent. We see numerous examples today in which exceptions to law are made. For example, Human Rights Commissions which rule in favour of anti-Christian religions or wicked practices against Christian moral principles, or judges who make exceptions based on particular attributes of the accused (e.g., social status, income, skin colour).

- 5.3. *Copiers* – We see the importance of endorsed or sanctioned example. In Toronto, we had a situation where a mayor was involved with a drug scandal and was not prosecuted. Some people, rightly, said that he was not a good role model for the citizens, and in particular the youth, of the city. Memucan got one thing right, though overstated—it is important that we consider the impact of examples on others. We accept the principle that individuals in positions of authority or influence need to consider carefully how their ‘private’ behavior can have an impact on their public perception.

5.3.1. What are some factors which we need to consider with respect to the influence which exemplars can have on their copiers?

5.3.1.1. The influence of exemplars is contagious. We only need to consider how infants imitate their parents or other children, to see the truth in this. We can also observe it in the behavior of ‘tweens’ who imitate pop icons (such as Miley Cyrus or Justin Bieber).

5.3.1.2. The influence of exemplars is increased by the high position or profile of the person who is the exemplar. In this case, it was Vashti and the royal administrators. It is no different today. Consider the influence someone like Kate Middleton (the Duchess of Cambridge) can have on what women wear, how they style their hair, or plan their weddings.

5.3.1.3. The influence of exemplars can be subtle. In this case, Memucan understood how one example of unchecked behavior can have ripple effects. It is not different today. For example, if someone of influence uses crude language in public, it becomes more acceptable to flaunt the gross underbelly of society

5.3.1.4. The influence of exemplars can be felt widely. In this case, it was Empire-wide. In our situation, it is worldwide, with Internet-based media such as Twitter.

5.3.1.5. The influence of exemplars can be for good or evil. In this case, the suggestion of Memucan is that copiers will imitate Vashti’s, apparently, bad behavior. The Apostle Paul uses the word imitate (imitators) a number of times (1 Cor 4.15-17; 1 Cor 10.31-11.1; Eph 5.1-2; 1 Thess 1.5-10; 1 Thess 2.13-14; 2 Thess 3.6-12; see also, Heb 6.9-12; Heb 13.7-9) and encourages his readers to imitate him and other believers as they imitate Christ/God.

5.3.1.6. The true quality and value of exemplars cannot be determined by popular opinion, even though The behaviour of copiers is ruled by a herd mentality. For example, particular songs gain popularity, not because they are excellent or edifying, but because of the icon who sings them and the peer group that listens to them. People are generally ruled by passions for pleasure, prestige, property, or power; not by principle.

5.3.2. What are some examples of persons or positions which can have particular influence on copiers for bad or good?

5.3.2.1. Government officials

5.3.2.2. Medical professionals

5.3.2.3. Business leaders

5.3.2.4. Teachers

5.3.2.5. Pastors and elders

5.3.2.6. Parents

5.3.2.7. Celebrities in sports or entertainment.

In other words, anyone in a position of authority or with a public following.

5.3.3. What are some principles with respect to exemplars which we should apply?

- 5.3.3.1. Anyone in a position of being an exemplar should strive to be a good example and pray that he will be one.
- 5.3.3.2. We should be thankful for good exemplars who have led us to Christ and to proper behaviour.
- 5.3.3.3. We should desire and strive to follow the example only of godly exemplars.
- 5.3.3.4. We should also be thankful for the only perfect exemplar we have—Jesus Christ (1 Pt 2.21).
- 5.4. *Cohabitation* – This unjust demand placed by Ahasuerus on Vashti, Vashti's refusal to obey, and Ahasuerus' anger at Vashti's refusal, shows how dysfunctional their marriage relationship was. They could not have had an excellent marriage relationship when Ahasuerus married Vashti for political reasons and had a harem stocked with attractive young women. This reinforces the truth that marriage, founded on Biblical principles, is to be:
 - 5.4.1. A life-long physical, psychological, and spiritual relationship between one man and one woman (Gen 2.24; Mt 19.3-9).
 - 5.4.2. A covenant that creates new obligations that override already existing obligations to parents (Prov 2.17; Mal 2.14).
 - 5.4.3. Executed with husbands loving their wives and wives being subject to and respecting their husbands (Eph 5.22-23, 28, 33; Col 3.18-19; 1 Pt 3.1).

Punishment (Est 1.19, 21)

- 1. How did Memucan preface his proposal?
 - 1.1. He makes a suggestion without taking credit for it. He did not say, "I recommend ..." Rather, his approach is to make his suggestion so that the king can claim it as his own.
 - 1.2. It is a demonstration of obsequious pandering. Royal advisors had to be careful not to appear to be usurping the king's authority.
 - 1.3. The words 'if it pleases the king' (or essentially the same) occur ten times in the OT, seven in the book of Esther (Est 1.19; Est 3.9; Est 5.4, 8; Est 7.3; Est 8.5; Est 9.13.) and in Ezra 5.17 and Nehemiah 2.5, 7. What is notable about all of these occurrences?
 - 1.3.1. They are all in the context of the Persian monarchy. By the time of Darius, Persian monarchs had become absolute tyrants, and no one dared to suggest that his opinions were equal to the king's.
 - 1.3.2. Joseph, Moses and Daniel were not cowed by kings. Daniel was always courteous but he was also forthright and blunt (Dan 2.27-45; Dan 4.19-27; Dan 5.17-28; Dan 6.21-23).
- 2. What did Memucan propose?
 - 2.1. That the king issue a 'royal order' ('royal word') which would be added to the laws of the Persians and Medes.
 - 2.2. This seems to be an order for a specific situation rather than a broadly applicable standing law. It would be similar to the king declaring that a particular individual was to receive a reward, rather than a law about the size of a cubit or the amount to be collected in a poll tax.
 - 2.3. Why did Memucan suggest that the royal order should be encoded as part of the permanent law of the Persians and Medes?
 - 2.3.1. Edicts or laws codified in the law of the Persians and Medes, and sealed with the king's signet (Est 8.8), would remain permanently in force and could not be annulled (Dan 6.8, 15).
 - 2.3.1.1. Of course, this was merely a legal convention. No human law is really immutable. No human law has the power or place of God's immutable laws.
 - 2.3.1.2. The king did not really live by the 'rule of law' and in other circumstances would have changed laws at his whim.
 - 2.3.1.3. The king could have passed a law allowing laws to be annulled, and Ahasuerus suggests that Esther can find a creative way to get around the decree of Haman

- (Est 8.5-8), without actually annulling the law. This demonstrates that the laws of Persia and Media were not really absolute.
- 2.3.2. By suggesting that the royal order regarding Vashti be put into the permanent law of Persians and Medes, Memucan:
- 2.3.2.1. Got rid of a rival—the queen—and her influence over Ahasuerus.
 - 2.3.2.2. Ensured that Vashti could not be restored again to favour and later avenge her having been cast aside on him and the other counsellors.
 - 2.3.2.3. Created a threat against women who acted in an independent or rebellious manner.
3. What was the specific content which Memucan suggested be included in the king's royal order?
- 3.1. To depose Vashti, by demoting her, and removing her as queen.
 - 3.1.1. How does Memucan refer to Vashti here (Est 1.19) in comparison with how he had previously referred to her (Est 1.16, 17)?
 - 3.1.1.1. He drops her title 'queen'.
 - 3.1.2. Why?
 - 3.1.2.1. He subtly assumes that his proposal for her being deposed will be accepted.
 - 3.1.2.2. In other situations, referring to the queen by her personal name only would likely have been grounds for execution. But Memucan shows that he is confident that he has the king under his control.
 - 3.1.2.3. From this point on, Vashti's title is omitted from the account.
 - 3.2. To send away Vashti.
 - 3.2.1. Prohibit her from coming before the king, which would mean that she could no longer:
 - 3.2.1.1. Be with the king in his bedchamber.
 - 3.2.1.2. Appear at his side in an official capacity.
 - 3.2.2. What he suggests is equivalent to divorce.
 - 3.2.2.1. Vashti was to be replaced by another wife/queen.
 - 3.2.3. Memucan did not over-play his hand by suggesting that she be executed; probably because she was pregnant and carrying Ahasuerus' possible heir—she would later give birth to Xerxes. She probably lived the remainder of her life confined to the harem of the concubines among those concubines who had not delighted the king and would never be called into his presence again (Est 2.14).
 - 3.3. Appoint a replacement queen.
 - 3.3.1. The Hebrew word translated 'another' is 'female companion'.
 - 3.3.2. What may this imply about Memucan's qualifications for the replacement queen?
 - 3.3.2.1. The new queen would be drawn from the current harem or from among women of the same social class as Vashti—i.e., a princess.
 - 3.3.2.2. He may have had someone in mind—e.g., one of his relatives or someone over whom he had influence—that he would suggest at an opportune time.
 - 3.3.3. Why did he suggest that a replacement queen be appointed?
 - 3.3.3.1. A queen would be needed for appearing at social functions.
 - 3.3.3.2. A queen would be needed to produce an heir, in the event that Vashti did not have a son.
 - 3.3.3.3. A queen would be needed to keep the subjects under control. They would not take well to the idea of an empire without a queen.
 - 3.3.3.4. To make it difficult for Vashti to be recalled and resume influence over Ahasuerus.
 - 3.3.4. What qualification for the replacement queen does Memucan propose?
 - 3.3.4.1. The new queen should be better than Vashti.
 - 3.3.4.2. What might Memucan have had in mind when he said 'better'?
 - 3.3.4.2.1. Someone who was more pliant than Vashti and would obey even the

king's perverse dictates.

3.3.4.2.2. Someone who was from the 'right' Persian family, rather than being a Mede as Vashti was (as the daughter of Cyrus).

4. Why might Memucan have suggested such a severe response to Vashti's disobedience?
 - 4.1. Memucan may have had a personal grudge against Vashti, or she was hated by the counsellors.
 - 4.1.1. She may have been a proud woman—she was a princess, the daughter of Cyrus. There is no evidence that anyone raised a voice in defence of the queen, which may indicate that all the counsellors were happy to see her deposed.
 - 4.1.2. She may have personally affronted Memucan—for example, not inviting his wife to her feast or having caused him to be disgraced before his peers. It is unlikely that Memucan had any personal regard or affection for Vashti or he would have suggested a less severe punishment.
 - 4.2. Vashti may have had considerable influence over her vacillating husband, which disturbed the counsellors. Middle Eastern royal courtiers were invariably stirred by jealousy and particularly did not like female influence. Thus, since the king was in a rage, Memucan likely thought that he could use the king's anger as a means of destroying Vashti's influence.
 - 4.3. He knew that the king was enraged and believed that this advice would please the king (Est 1.21) and reinforce his own position as a 'wise' counsellor.
 - 4.4. He used Machiavellian subtlety to hide his real motives. He made it appear that he was interested in the welfare of the kingdom, whereas he was only concerned with advancing his own position.
5. What is a peculiar characteristic of this royal decree?
 - 5.1. It applies to a specific case or instance and not to a class.
6. Was the punishment decreed for Vashti fair?
 - 6.1. It is difficult to give a rational argument for saying that her punishment was fair—i.e., a punishment suitable for the 'crime'. Divorcing a wife and deposing a queen is extreme, and unfair, for an act of apparently justified disobedience.
 - 6.2. The Persian court did not consider the fairness or equity of law and punishment to be a required characteristic of their legal system. Persian punishments, even when they were not vindictive were severe and brutal.
 - 6.3. Even on a purely pragmatic basis this severe a punishment would have had little influence on compelling women to be obedient to their husbands in any situation. It certainly would not have encouraged women to respect their husbands out of love.
7. How did the king respond to Memucan's suggestion?
 - 7.1. Ahasuerus did not ask for options to consider. Rather he was capricious and took the first suggestion presented to him (Est 2.2-4; Est 3.8-11).
 - 7.2. He was pleased with the advice/suggestion ('word').
 - 7.2.1. He accepted the suggestion in a self-serving manner. He could not admit that he had done wrong in commanding Vashti to appear at the banquet, or he would appear foolish before his satraps (princes; Est 1.11), governors, military commanders, and counsellors. A severe punishment made it appear that Vashti's refusal was a serious offense, equivalent to a treasonous act.
 - 7.3. He did what Memucan suggested: divorced his wife, deposed her from her position as queen, and disgraced her through a published decree (Est 1.20, 22)
8. What ironies are exposed by this royal decree?
 - 8.1. Ahasuerus was a king with great power, yet he was disobeyed by his wife and led by the nose by his counsellors.

- 8.2. Ahasuerus couldn't control his wife with a decree, but decree is made which requires men to control their wives.
 - 8.3. Ahasuerus had authority over 127 provinces but had to make a proclamation that men should rule over their own households.
 - 8.4. Vashti was punished by being forbidden to do what she had refused to do—appear before the king.
 - 8.5. Memucan wanted someone 'far better than Vashti' as queen, who would be compliant to the king. Instead, someone truly far better was appointed—Esther—who would end up having more power than Vashti had had.
 - 8.6. Ahasuerus did not want to appear foolish in front of his guests and counsellors, so he exacted a severe punishment. Instead, he appears foolish, by not weighing options and delivering his own decision and by deferring to the first suggestion of a counsellor.
 - 8.7. Ahasuerus deprived himself of his object of pride—his beautiful wife (Est 1.11).
 - 8.8. Reference is made to the 'immutability' of the laws of Persians and Medes, which could not be repealed; but laws could be enacted by a drunken and enraged monarch, on a whim.
 - 8.9. By not rendering a decision himself, but deferring to his court for judgement, Ahasuerus would protect himself from an accusation of being cruel and unjust. Nevertheless, the real responsibility fell upon him.
 - 8.10. Ahasuerus was unable to prevent the great loss of a wife, of whom he had been so proud, whose merits he would so soon be compelled to recognise and miss (Est 2.1).
 - 8.11. One counsellor (Memucan) plotted his schemes, which became the instrument of God for overturning the schemes of another counsellor (Haman).
- The author of Esther is a gifted writer, who makes Ahasuerus look like a fool, without explicitly pointing out his folly.

- 9. What are some lessons that we can derive from this section? (Est 1.19, 21). Our lessons from this section all have to do with human laws, in particular their:
 - 9.1. *Enactment* – Human laws must legislate only what is consistent with God's law and moral requirements.⁹⁵
 - 9.1.1. Ahasuerus' royal decree is a direct contravention of God's law since divorce, except in the case of adultery (Mt 19.9) is wrong. Divorcing Vashti was not the right punishment, even if she had committed a 'crime'.
 - 9.1.2. Just laws are hard to find among sinful men.
 - 9.1.2.1. A tyrannical misuse of law has been the norm for the greatest part of human history. It will continue to be so in civil administrations which ignore God's principles of law and do not have a reverence for God.
 - 9.1.2.2. Legislators are more concerned when their vanity and honour are insulted than when God's honour (his person, name, laws, worship, and Church) are insulted.
 - 9.2. *Evenness* – God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10.35) and men should not be either (Jam 2.1). Therefore, laws must not favour particular parties or harm specific individuals. Laws should apply across all people consistently. Additional considerations:
 - 9.2.1. In our concept of law, we believe it is inappropriate to define laws that apply to specific individuals or circumstances and not to generic classes.
 - 9.2.2. What are other examples in the Bible where laws similar to this royal decree were defined to apply to specific individuals?
 - 9.2.2.1. At the instigation of his counsellors, Nebuchadnezzar passed a law targeting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3.1-30).
 - 9.2.2.2. At the instigation of his counsellors, Darius passed a law targeting Daniel (Dan 6.6-9).

⁹⁵ See, James R. Hughes, *Christian Libertarian Manifesto*, 2014-04-27; available at: www.EPCToronto.org

- 9.2.2.3. Totalitarian monarchs of ancient Middle East appear not to have considered the principle that laws should be broadly applied and fair and applied evenly.
- 9.2.3. What are examples of this kind of ‘law’ in North America?
 - 9.2.3.1. The ‘Walmart law’ in Washington DC targeting big box stores, requiring a ‘living wage’.⁹⁶ Walmart refused to open stores in Washington as long as the law was in place. Eventually it was overturned, and Walmart planned to create jobs in Washington. Similarly, unjust laws in Chicago, targeted Walmart. Instead, Walmart opened stores ‘across the street’ and shoppers and jobs exited Chicago.
 - 9.2.3.2. Affirmative action laws in the US, which give special consideration to particular racial or ethnic groups rather than treating all people as having equal rights.
 - 9.2.3.3. ‘Buffer zones’ around abortion facilities, such as that instituted in Canada in 1994, target the freedom of speech rights of Christians.⁹⁷
 - 9.2.3.4. “The Law Society of Upper Canada, which sets the eligibility standards for the Ontario bar, voted to pre-emptively disqualify future graduates of Trinity Western University’s Christian law school.”⁹⁸
- 9.3. *Enforceability* – Laws must be enforceable.
 - 9.3.1. The generalization of the law against Vashti was not possible. There was no means whereby a law stating, “all women will give honor to their husbands” (Est 1.20) could be enforced since it legislates positive action not against negative action.
 - 9.3.2. In general, what is required for laws to be enforceable?
 - 9.3.2.1. Laws enacted by the government to prohibit specific crimes must deal only with overt immoral behaviour such as blasphemy, theft, violence, adultery, murder, conducting commercial activities on Sunday, etc.; not with thoughts (e.g., ‘hate crimes’).
 - 9.3.2.2. It is not possible to enforce obedience to ‘positive’ laws. For example, we cannot force people to be good, do good, or to love one another. Also, laws which attempt to enforce compassion or achieve ‘positive’ outcomes (e.g., equal opportunity, equality of outcome) besides not being enforceable will always be subject to abuse.
 - 9.3.2.3. People can only be restrained from committing bad actions, and punished for them.
 - 9.3.2.4. Breaches must be detectable and evidence relatively easy to assemble (e.g., from eyewitnesses or clear circumstantial evidence such as the presence of DNA or fingerprints).
 - 9.3.2.5. There must be sufficient will and resources to enforce the laws. Subjective application of enforcement is an abuse.
- 9.4. *Execution* – Laws should be applied consistently, regardless of social class or office. Even the king is not above the law.
 - 9.4.1. If Vashti broke a law she should have been punished—she was not above the law, and her crime must be punished. However, there is no evidence that she broke a law. In fact, no law existed for her to break, since a *post hoc* royal decree had to be enacted.
 - 9.4.2. There is a tendency among the elite in any society to use law to their advantage or ignore it. They enact laws only to their advantage and at times believe that, and act as if, they are above the law
- 9.5. *Equity* – Penalties must be commensurate with the severity of the crimes with which they are

⁹⁶ Washington Post, “D.C. Council approves ‘living wage’ bill over Wal-Mart ultimatum”; 2013-07-10;
www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-approves-living-wage-bill-over-wal-mart-ultimatum/2013/07/10/724aab6e-e96f-11e2-a301-ea5a8116d211_story.html

⁹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_protection_of_access_to_abortion

⁹⁸ Jonathan Kay, “Maybe TWU’s critics should take a look at U.S. Christian law schools,” *National Post*, 2014-04-25;
fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2014/04/25/jonathan-kay-maybe-twus-critics-should-take-a-look-at-u-s-christian-law-schools/

associated. This is the principle of *lex talionis* (law of retribution), which is God’s standard for justice. It is summarized in the statement, “an eye for an eye” (Ex 21.23-25; Lev 24.17-22; Dt 19.21). Since this principle was to be applied to foreigners as well as Jews, it clearly was not a Jewish ceremonial law (although there are some ceremonial laws which have the same provision). In Matthew 5.38 Jesus endorses *lex talionis* by expounding on the underlying meaning of the command and warning against personal vindictiveness (Mt 7.2; also Jer 50.29; Ob 15; Hab 2.8).

What are some additional considerations for achieving equitable punishment of crime?

9.5.1. We accept the principle of “innocent until *proven* guilty” (the notion of presumption of innocence) as being consistent with Biblical jurisprudence (Ex 23.7; Num 5.14-31; Dt 17.6; Josh 20.3-5). This principle was not applied in Vashti’s case. There was no mention of a presumption of innocence, a trial, an examination of evidence, clear evidence of guilt, or careful consideration of what law she had broken.

9.5.2. If an error can be committed in legal judgement, a ‘type I error’—an innocent person is convicted of a crime when he is in fact not guilty—is more egregious than a ‘type II error’—a guilty person is declared not-guilty of the crime he is charged with, when in fact he did commit the crime. It is marginally better to let the guilty escape punishment than to punish the innocent. However, both are bad (Prov 17.15), and diligence needs to be applied to ensure that justice is administered fairly.

9.5.3. Penalties should encourage law keeping; but if a law is unenforceable, no penalty can encourage keeping of the law.

9.5.4. In general, penalties should be exacted for the sake of justice and, secondarily, to encourage the offender to behave differently in the future. Obvious exception to improving behaviour are punishments for capital crimes. The king’s order against Vashti gave no opportunity for her to repent or amend her behaviour in the future.

9.5.5. Penalties should not be instruments of personal vengeance. They should be administered consistently and impartially. The punishment of Vashti was the result of Ahasuerus’ wrath.

9.5.6. Penalties should not be applied retroactively after new laws are enacted. If something hasn’t been defined as a ‘crime’ in the past, then one cannot be held guilty of committing the crime in the past when a new law is enacted. For example, companies often change their policies (e.g., covering reception of gifts or claiming expenses) in light of current practice. However, they should not retroactively apply changes in law or policy. Consider these examples:

9.5.6.1. A charitable organization may allow a director to accept an honorarium as a personal reward, even when speaking on behalf of the organization. Or it may require that the honorarium be remitted to the general funds for the organization. However, if it changes its policy from the former to the latter, it should not demand repayment of the honoraria received.

9.5.6.2. Taxes should not be charged retroactively, if the interpretation of the tax law is changed as was done with the importation of iPods into Canada.⁹⁹

9.5.6.3. In 2013, some members of the Canadian Senate were required to repay claimed expenses *after* changes were made to the policy related to travel expenses.¹⁰⁰

9.6. *Example* – Can you think of legal systems which fail to meet the Biblical model for law and punishment? Islamic Sharia Law is one example. Consider the following specific examples from Sharia Law:

Islamic Sharia Law	Biblical Law
--------------------	--------------

⁹⁹ Mike Moffatt, “Canadian companies facing a flood of retroactive taxation”, *Canadian Business*, 2013-03-03; www.canadianbusiness.com/blogs-and-comment/canadian-companies-facing-a-flood-of-retroactive-taxation/

¹⁰⁰ “Pamela Wallin audit details set for public release”, *CBC News*, 2013-08-13; www.cbc.ca/news/politics/pamela-wallin-audit-details-set-for-public-release-1.1399834

Theft is punishable by amputation of the right hand.	Various provisions for restitution (e.g., Ex 22.1) but not mutilation.
Criticizing or denying any part of the Qur'an is punishable by death.	Denying the Qur'an cannot be a crime because the Qur'an is false. Denying the Bible as true is eternally punishable by God, not human courts.
Criticizing or denying Muhammad is a prophet is punishable by death	Denying that Jesus is Lord is punishable by eternal death (Jn 8.24), but not by a human court.
A Muslim who becomes a non-Muslim is punishable by death.	Apostasy from the true religion results in excommunication and exclusion from the sacraments, not physical death.
A non-Muslim who leads a Muslim away from Islam is punishable by death.	We are to lead people away from Islam (Mt 28.19-20). God will deal with those who lead others away from Christ, not human courts (Mt 18.6).
Testimonies of four male witnesses are required to prove rape against a woman.	The testimony of two or three witnesses to a crime is required (Dt 17.6).
A woman's testimony in court is permitted only in property cases, and it carries half the weight of a man's.	Muslims claim that historical Jewish and Christian interpretation of Biblical passages (e.g., Num 5.11-31; Dt 22.11-21; Num 30.4-9, 16) comes to a similar conclusion as Sharia. ¹⁰¹ In modern Western culture the witness of a woman (in civil or criminal cases) is considered to have the same weight as a man's. The NT teaches (indirectly) that a woman's testimony is of the same value as a man's (Mt 28.7, 10; Lk 24.9)
A female heir inherits half of what a male heir inherits.	A female may inherit the same as a male heir if there is no direct male heir (Num 27.8).
A woman cannot speak alone to a man who is not her husband or relative (i.e., father, brother, or grown son).	An unaccompanied woman can speak freely to a man who is not related to her (Jn 4.7-27; Mk 7.24-30).
A Muslim may marry four wives.	Marriage is only to be between one man and one woman (Gen 2.24).
A Muslim man may divorce a wife for multiple reasons, including apostasy.	A person may divorce a spouse only in the case of adultery (Mt 19.9; 1 Cor 7.13).
Meat to be eaten must come from animals that have been sacrificed to Allah (Halal).	Animal sacrifices are no longer to be performed (Is 1.11; Heb 10.1-18).
Muslims should engage in deception and lying to non-Muslims to advance Islam.	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex 20.16)

Publication (Est 1.20, 22)

1. What did Memucan propose should be done with the royal decree?
 - 1.1. It should be proclaimed everywhere throughout the empire.
 - 1.2. The proclamation was to be made available in the script and language of every province.
 - 1.2.1. The text of the royal decree would have required translation into probably over 100 different languages. There were 127 provinces in the empire (Est 1.1) and most would have had a unique language or multiple languages.
 - 1.2.2. The text of the royal decree was transcribed on clay tablets or papyrus paper—but not on parchment (limed, scraped calf, sheep, or goatskin dried under tension; not tanned) or vellum (a refined form of parchment, usually made from calfskin) as these were not available at the time, having been developed in Pergamon around 200 BC. The choice of clay or papyrus was likely determined by the script. It would have been simpler to

¹⁰¹ Bassam Zawadi, *The Testimony of Women In The Bible*; www.answering-christianity.com/bassam_zawadi/witnesses.htm; www.al-islam.org/women-islam-versus-women-judaeo-christian-tradition-myth-reality-sherif-muhammad-abdel-azeem/bearing

transcribe the cuneiform script on clay, but the Egyptian hieroglyphs or the Aramaic script could have been written with ink on papyrus.

- 1.3. The proclamation was to be distributed to all the provinces in the Empire.
 - 1.3.1. As we noted (in the lessons to the section titled, *Primacy*) the Persians had an efficient and rapid system for sending messages and formal communication throughout the empire.
2. What was to be proclaimed?
 - 2.1. The removal of Vashti as queen for disobedience.
 - 2.2. The plan to replace Vashti with a new queen.
 - 2.3. The law that every man was to be master in his own household and that (high and low) women were to honour their husbands. By this, Memucan thought it would be possible to prevent an empire-wide outbreak of female disobedience.
 - 2.4. Households were to “speak according to the language of his people”.
3. What may be the meaning of the phrase, “and speak according to the language of his people”?
 - 3.1. Some suggest that it should be interpreted as ‘speak what is appropriate to him’—i.e., the husband should speak/command his wife in a manner that was according to the custom of his people. Others suggest that it is not speaking of the contents of the decree but should be understood as stating that when the decree was written in a man’s own language it (the decree) would be in the language of his people. The NIV follows this idea by placing the phrase before the command, making the text say that the proclamation was to be given in the housemaster’s own language: “proclaiming in each people’s tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household”.
 - 3.2. However, it is likely that we are to understand that wives/concubines were commanded to learn the language of their husbands, otherwise they would be exerting authority over their husbands by expecting him to learn their languages. Thus, a household was to speak only the language of the husband/master, and wives and slaves who spoke different languages, because they were from different provinces or from outside the empire, were compelled to learn his language and only to speak it—thus demonstrating the authority of the husband/master of the household.
 - 3.3. This explanation is consistent with the historic context. Later (although still in the Persian period) the Jews would encounter the situation where men had married foreign women and their children did not speak their language, but only the mother’s (Neh 13.23-24).
 - 3.4. What might be indicated by publishing of the royal decree in all the languages of the empire and the statement that the housemaster’s language was to be used in the household?
 - 3.4.1. The Persian approach appears to have allowed people throughout the provinces to use their own language rather than being forced to learn a common language of the empire. This *may* indicate that the Persian government did not use a single official language when communicating with its people. Inscriptions on statues, walls, and pillars found in Susa are often written in two or three languages.
 - 3.4.2. While Old Persian may have been the official language, the empire was pragmatic and adapted to the local circumstances in order to run a diverse empire.
4. Why did such a major effort and expenditure go into publishing and disseminating this royal decree?
 - 4.1. It suggests that the counsellors felt that there was a widespread domestic problem in the empire—wives were out of control. Ironically, passing and disseminating such a royal decree would not rectify the situation, but would only make it worse, as wives would feel that men were demanding rather than earning their respect.
 - 4.2. It would not have been worth considering the publication of the royal decree if it had not been for the bruising of the king’s ego and his anger, which had to be mollified.
 - 4.3. Such a publication process appealed to the king’s vanity. It would emphasize the power of his autocratic rule.

- 4.4. It may have been part of Memucan's perverse ploy to remove Vashti's influence in the palace and to keep Ahasuerus from rescinding on her dismissal.
5. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 1.20, 22).
- 5.1. *Mandate* – This passage raises a question about where law-making authority ultimately lies. Who has a right to mandate laws? We have already considered (in the previous section) the characteristics of legitimate laws. However, a related question is *who* has the authority to make laws? We cannot examine this question in detail today, but we can conclude that God has delegated to certain men the authority to create lawful laws—i.e., laws which are consistent with his law. Those, outside of a family context, who have this delegated authority are civil magistrates.
- 5.1.1. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapter 23, 'of the Civil Magistrate') provides a good summary: "God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates, to be, under Him, over the people, for His own glory, and the public good; and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers." (Rom 13.1-4; 1 Pt 2.13-14) It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them." (Rom 13.1-7; 1 Tim 2.1-2; Titus 3.1; 1 Pt 2.13-14, 17)
- 5.1.2. This, however, does not address *how* individuals become lawful civil magistrates. In our context, this is accomplished by representatives being elected to an office or by being appointed by elected officials. However, in other situations civil magistrates have inherited authority or have seized power through force. In whatever way they became established they are to be considered as lawful authorities by the citizenry. Consider, for example, the obedience of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, two kings who seized power by force of arms.
- 5.2. *Morality* – An assessment of the royal decree proposed by Memucan encourages us to determine whether its content was valid. Laws should be focused on reinforcing moral behaviour (as defined by God).
- 5.2.1. Some people claim that 'you cannot legislate morality'. Even some professing Christians make this claim, for example: "First, we must recognize that the task of the state is not to legislate morality. The state may not define rules for virtuous living in society, and then insist, by legal means, that all live in accordance with those rules. This would be a most terrible form of tyranny. Instead, the task of the state is to administer public justice; an important difference and one upon which the work of CPJ [Citizens for Public Justice] is premised."¹⁰²
- 5.2.2. However, if the state doesn't legislate morality then what does it do? What are its laws to do, legislate immorality? What are its laws dealing with if not morality? What is a law against stealing legislating; morality or something else? There cannot be such a thing as an amoral law. Everything a government does has a moral implication. Governments by their very nature exist to legislate morality.
- 5.2.3. When people claim that 'you cannot legislate morality' they are really saying that they do not want to legislate anything that has the 'odor' of Christian morality. They are saying that they will not have God and God's laws over them. Any law that is based on anything other than what God has said, is acceptable.
- 5.2.4. The question is not whether or not they will legislate morality, the question is whose morality will it be, man's or God's?

¹⁰² Tim Schools, "Loving our Neighbours Politically", *Christian Week*, January 21, 1992.

5.2.5. In the lessons for the previous section we concluded that laws must:

- 5.2.5.1. Be consistent with God's law and moral requirements. That is, they must be derived from God's law and demonstrably derived from one or more of the Ten Commandments.
 - 5.2.5.2. Apply broadly to the population and not be targeted to particular individuals or circumstances.
 - 5.2.5.3. Be enforceable and consistently enforced, regardless of social class or office. No one is above the law.
 - 5.2.5.4. Have associated penalties which are commensurate with the severity of the crime.
- We can conclude that the royal decree proposed by Memucan and delivered by Ahasuerus was not a valid law as it failed to meet a number of the criteria for proper laws. For example, this royal decree could not possibly have encouraged women in the Persian Empire to honour their husbands as it is dealing with a matter of the secrets of the human heart. No one could have determined whether a wife was honouring her husband. To the contrary, the law would have made Ahasuerus and his counsellors into the butt of the jokes on the late-night talk shows in the inns throughout Persia.

5.2.6. We can add other criteria for making laws, derivable from the example of this royal decree. The laws must be:

- 5.2.6.1. Sensible and reasonable.
- 5.2.6.2. Not obviating personal responsibility and burdening people with petty regulations from a paternalistic overbearing government.
- 5.2.6.3. This royal decree was petty and an example of overburdening society with unreasonable laws. We can laugh at the comical situation in which a king would pass a law commanding that women honour their husbands. It is clearly overreach on the part of a paternalistic government. Yet we find many similar paternalistic laws today, such as:
 - 5.2.6.3.1. Outlawing 60w incandescent light bulbs and requiring gasoline to have a specific percentage of ethanol (additionally silly since ethanol producers could never meet the demand¹⁰³).
 - 5.2.6.3.2. Requiring restaurants in New York city to include salt warnings on their menus.¹⁰⁴ Not surprisingly the restaurateurs responded with a lawsuit.
 - 5.2.6.3.3. Another example, is provided by the following:

‘[T]here is nothing at all funny about the growing debate over so-called gender sensitive restrooms in public places across the country. Want to know how to bring a great nation to its knees? Want to know how to humiliate the United States of America? Take ever so seriously, then, this supposedly lofty discussion about whether we owe it to the “transgendered” folk among us (or others who are still just gender-confused) to spend vast sums so they can go relieve themselves without discomfort or embarrassment. ... Pity the people who are reduced to such a debate. Both those who are insisting on such “rights,” and ... officials who dignify such demands by investing even five minutes in such a discussion, should go hide themselves. It’s not the exposure of certain body parts or functions that’s so embarrassing. It’s the nakedness instead of some supposedly smart

¹⁰³ James Conca, “It’s Final -- Corn Ethanol Is Of No Use”, *Forbes*, 2014-04-20, www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2014/04/20/its-final-corn-ethanol-is-of-no-use/?fb_action_id=277355565775300&fb_action_types=news.publishes

¹⁰⁴ Barbara Goldberg, New York is first U.S. city with salt warning on restaurant menus, Reuters, 2015-11-30; news.yahoo.com/york-first-u-city-salt-warning-restaurant-menus-192616469--finance.html

people's minds.¹⁰⁵

5.2.6.3.4. It may seem strange that the Persian Empire would make a decree about the language which was to be spoken in the home. Yet, the language laws and the use of 'language police' in Quebec illustrate how pedantic governments can be about language—for example they required the town of St-Lazare to remove the word 'welcome' from under the French words '*vous accueillez*'. The town covered the English words with a black line. The town council later decided to remove the French words as well.

- 5.3. *Marriage* – Ironically, much of this Persian royal decree, in spite of it being unenforceable and paternalistic overreach, does present positive morality, consistent with God's law. It reinforces the Biblical position that the husband is the head of his household (by speaking about the use of his language in the home) and that women are to honour their husbands (Eph 5.22-23, 33; Col 3.18). The problem was how it was to be implemented—by force rather than by suasion. Husbands cannot force respect by law but need to earn it through love (Eph 5.23, 28-29, 33).
- 5.4. *Momentum* – We have reached a tension point in the story. If this were a TV show, text would now scroll onto the screen staying, "Can the Persian Empire survive without a queen? Who will be the next queen? Tune in next week to see what happens." The storyteller's art is well refined as he leaves us in suspense and anticipation while we wait for the story's momentum to carry us forward to the next episode. Ultimately, the storyteller is God, who has introduced Vashti as a passing character with some courage, but who is quickly dismissed from her position of authority, so that she can be replaced by a new queen of even greater courage. Likewise, God is sustaining the momentum of history and removing the petty kings of this world and replacing them with the new and greater King—Jesus, at whose knee all should bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2.9-11).

Proclaimed Designate (Est 2.1-18)

Proposal (Est 2.1-4)

1. When was the proposal made to obtain virgins from throughout the provinces?
 - 1.1. "After these things."
 - 1.2. We don't know how long after Vashti was deposed that the events in chapter 2 happened. However, we can obtain an approximate date. If Esther was declared queen in the seventh year of Ahasuerus' reign (Est 2.16), in 516 BC, then four years passed from the time Vashti was deposed until Esther became queen. Esther spent a year (Est 2.12) in the harem before being taken to Ahasuerus. It likely took six months to a year to gather virgins from throughout the 127 provinces. So, two to two-and-a-half years passed before this proposal was made.
 - 1.3. During that period, Darius left Susa to subdue a rebellion in Babylon. It was likely on his return to Susa that his counsellors made the proposal to obtain the virgins.
 - 1.4. Historians and commentators who (and translators, e.g., the NIV, which) believe that Ahasuerus was Xerxes say that it was during this period that Xerxes was away fighting the Greeks. However, this means that Xerxes was in Greece, not Susa, at the time the proposal was made to obtain virgins, since his reign began in 486 BC. The seventh year of his reign would have been 479 BC, the year Esther joined the harem would have been ~480 BC and the year of the proposal ~479 BC. The Battle of Salamis (in September, 480 BC) was won by the Greek fleet, after which Xerxes set up a winter camp in Thessaly. He then had to leave to put down unrest in the province of Babylon. Xerxes was nowhere near Susa at the time of the proposal to obtain a fresh supply of virgins for the harem. Of course, it is possible that the proposal was made in Greece. However, the flow of the narrative in chapter 2 gives the impression that Ahasuerus was in Susa at the time

¹⁰⁵ Joel Beltz, "A little common sense", *World*, 2014-05-17, www.worldmag.com/2014/05/a_little_common_sense

of the proposal.

2. What change occurred that precipitated the next sequence of events in the palace as Susa?
 - 2.1. The king's anger abated?
 - 2.1.1. The king had been away from Susa for a while, probably more than a year, in Babylon, and the victory there had caused him to feel elated and assuaged his anger.
 - 2.2. He remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what he had decreed against her.
 - 2.2.1. It may have been that on his return to Susa, after subduing the rebellion in Babylon, that Darius was informed that his ex-wife Vashti (Amestris) had given birth to a son (Xerxes). It may have been this announcement which caused him to remember Vashti.
 - 2.2.2. It is possible that the king began to regret deposing Vashti. So, to protect their own interests, his counsellors quickly reminded him that the law couldn't be changed (Est 1.19; Dan 4.14; Dan 6.12) and presented a proposal to ensure that Vashti would not return.
3. What were the specifics of the counsellor's proposal?
 - 3.1. To find beautiful young virgins, from throughout the kingdom.
 - 3.1.1. These virgins were to be pleasant (lovely) to look at ("good of appearance") to have the same attribute which Vashti was to have displayed at the banquet (Est 1.11), to take the king's mind off of Vashti's beauty. No consideration was to be given to their character, morals, intelligence, or political affiliations—only to their physical appearance (compare 1 Pt 3.3-4).
 - 3.1.2. New women were constantly being added to the harems of the kings in the ANE, to replace older women (e.g., beyond childbearing age or who had lost their beauty), to strengthen the commitment of noble families within the empire, and to create alliances with nearby independent kingdoms.
 - 3.1.3. The suggestion to gather a large number of beautiful young women at one time, from all levels of society, in order to select one for a wife and queen, was probably unprecedented. Society in the ancient Middle East was hierarchical and rarely would kings, princes, or nobles marry outside of their caste. Although the idea of searching for a *concubine* in this manner, may not have been unprecedented (compare, 1 Ki 1.2-3).
 - 3.1.4. While we might envision that this was similar to a beauty pageant, it was not really equivalent. These young women would have been pulled (some unwillingly) from their families and communities, to live in a foreign environment among people who spoke a different language. Many of them would have visited the king only once and then would have been confined to the palace quarters for the rest of their lives—never having children or another husband. However, they would have been cared for in luxury for the rest of their lives, so they would not have considered it too great a hardship.
 - 3.2. They were to be added to the royal harem.
 - 3.2.1. The translation 'harem' is not literal. The Hebrew text says 'house of the women' (see, KJV). Initially the virgins would not have been part of the harem. They would join the harem only after they had been called to spend a night with the king (Est 2.14).
 - 3.2.2. The gathered women were housed in separate sets of apartments in a separate building from the wives and concubines of the harem. In a reconstruction of the palace at Susa, based on extensive excavations, it is possible to identify the probable identification of parts of the palace complex where the virgins and wives would have lived—one of the apartments would have been Esther's once she became a wife.
 - 3.3. To have the young women given beauty treatments.
 - 3.3.1. Some interpreters (based on the KJV translation) suggest that the beauty treatments were a form of ritual cleansing, to make them fit to appear before the king as a divinity. However, based on 2.12, that interpretation seems to be contrived.
 - 3.3.2. The use of 'cosmetics' appears to focus on making their skin and hair beautiful. This

treatment, along with a controlled diet (Est 2.9) to keep the young women at a regulated weight, would have resulted in their natural beauty being enhanced.

- 3.4. One of the young women, the one who pleased the king the most, was to be appointed queen instead of Vashti.

3.4.1. This would be a significant departure from the usual procedure of taking a queen from one of the families of the nobles, or from another branch of the royal family. In some instances, kings in the ANE married their sisters so that the queen would be of royal blood.

3.4.2. Ahasuerus' counsellors contrived to entertain him with a variety of beautiful concubines to divert his mind from the possibility of granting Vashti renewed royal favour.

4. Who made the proposals?

4.1. Unnamed “young men”—“the king’s young men”. Other translations have “servants who attended” or “attendants who served”. The ESV is the only widely used translation which translates the Hebrew literally. Ahasuerus was about 35 years old (Darius was born c 550 BC) when the proposal was made, so he might have been surrounded by counsellors who were, comparatively, young men. These might have been some of the men who helped him seize power from the usurper Gaumata in 522 BC.

4.2. However, sometimes a literal word-for-word translation can obscure the meaning of the text. This is particularly the case when Hebrew idioms are used or when the text is abbreviated, as in Proverbs. The Hebrew word (נָעָר) usually refers to a boy (Gen 21.12) or young man (Ex 24.5; Num 11.27), but can also be translated as ‘servant’ (Judges 7.10; 1 Ki 18.43).

4.3. It is probably best to understand this passage as stating that the king’s counsellors gave him advice—probably the same ones who had consulted with Memucan before he advised the king to depose Vashti (Est 1.14) and who were now ensuring that their interests (e.g., one from their families could become queen) were protected and to prevent Vashti from retaliating against them for having her pushed her aside.

5. Who was to take charge of the young women?

5.1. Hegai, the king’s eunuch. In the Hebrew, his name is spelled differently here than later in Esther (Est 2.8, 15).

5.1.1. We encountered eunuchs being used in the service of the king previously (Est 1.10-12), since only eunuchs could carry a message into the royal harem. Other men serving the king could not be trusted among the women.

5.1.2. In general eunuchs were castrated males. However, it may be that the term was also used in a more general sense as ‘officer’ since the same word is used to describe Potiphar who had a wife (Gen 39.1, 7).

5.1.3. However, in this instance, undoubtedly Hegai was a full eunuch who had been castrated as a child slave and had not experienced normal male hormonal changes as he matured, which left him with an effeminate appearance (e.g., no facial hair) and voice (high pitched).

5.2. Why is he referred to as ‘the’ king’s eunuch?

5.2.1. His duties were probably very specific—to be in charge of the virgins who had not yet joined the wives of the harem.

5.2.2. In this capacity he would have been in a position of great trust. For example, not letting any other males enter the chambers of the virgins.

6. What was Ahasuerus’ response to the suggestion?

6.1. It pleased him.

6.1.1. Why would he have been pleased with the suggestion?

6.1.1.1. Having a playground with the most beautiful women in the kingdom at his

- disposal pleased his vanity and lust.
- 6.1.1.2. The idea that daughters from throughout the kingdom could be wrenched from their families at his whim, reinforced his belief that his authority was absolute.
 - 6.1.1.3. Darius was about 36 years old at the time this proposal was made. The thought of having many of the most beautiful young women of the empire assembled to his harem, would have lifted his middle-aged spirits.
 - 6.1.1.4. The concept often stated in the advertising world is true: ‘sex sells’.
- 6.2. He did what was suggested.
- 6.2.1. The brevity of the Hebrew—“he did thus”—gives the impression that he liked the suggestion so much that he acted quickly.
 - 6.2.2. He made a decree to have the virgins brought to the palace.
 - 6.2.3. His immediate agreement makes it appear that he could be easily influenced by the advice of others. The writer of this account makes Ahasuerus seem temperamental and weak, just by recounting history. The Jews reading the account must have had a good chuckle in private.
- 6.3. Some critics claim that a Persian king accepting such a proposal seems preposterous. They claim that he wouldn’t chose a queen in such an irrational manner, and certainly not a non-Persian. However, Ahasuerus was a slave to his passions—letting his anger get out of hand, and letting his lust and ego guide his decision to bring beauties into his harem. The account is consistent with the arbitrariness seen so often in absolute monarchs throughout the ages. Nothing in the account has been shown by any extra-Biblical accounts to be improbable.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.1-4).
- 7.1. *Selfishness* – This passage illustrates the seductive danger of placing absolute power in the hands of mortals. As Lord Acton said in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”
 - 7.1.1. The abuse of human authority is driven by a selfish desire to satisfy lust or greed. The king caused much suffering among his people to satisfy his personal lusts—for revenge on Vashti and to compensate for her departure. Examples of a similar misuse of authority for selfish ends continues everywhere today, although it may be less overt and direct in countries where a vestige of Christianity can still be found.
 - 7.1.2. When authority and power are not tempered by Biblical wisdom they can only lead to autocracy and tyranny. Consider fascism and communism as modern examples which replaced hereditary kings with similar evils. We must not think that democracies are any better. The ‘will of the people’ or judicial activists can be as tyrannical as the will of oligarchs when it is based on selfish striving for rights and entitlements. No form of government, *per se*, is better than any other. We are not to put our faith and hope in any form of government but in God’s providential governance over all governors and governments.
 - 7.1.3. Selfish pleasure-seeking is the motive of much conduct today—“if it feels right, do it!”
 - 7.1.4. Only the Gospel, which is based on self-sacrifice, can overcome human selfishness.
 - 7.2. *Sovereignty* – God uses the lusts and sins of men for his own eternal purposes. Ahasuerus, surrounded by sycophants who catered to his vanity and lusts, was not a likely candidate for a just rule. Yet, God overruled in the palace of Persia and brought the counsel of the wise to nothing and advanced Esther from an obscure background to work his purposes of saving his covenant people.
 - 7.3. *Slavery* – The kings (and men in general) of the ANE treated women as mere ‘things’ to be enslaved to the whims and passions of men. The young women brought to the palace were trained to be pleasure instruments of the king. Yet, the king and the palace counsellors likely thought that they were bestowing an honour on the young women. Islam, the stepchild of Persian polity, continues to treat women in the same way. This identifies a difference between all false

religions and Christianity. Only under Christian governments would such treatment of women be abhorrent. In spite of women's empowerment movements, only Christianity can really treat women fairly—as image bearers of God and as potential coheirs of and everlasting life with Christ.

Procurement (Est 2.5-8)

1. Who is introduced at this point?
 - 1.1. Mordecai and Hadassah (Esther), two Jews living in the Persian city of Susa.
 - 1.2. The narrative is interrupted at this point to introduce (in verses 5-7) these actors who will be two of the principal characters in the remainder of story. The search for eligible virgins for the king's harem will be continued in verse 8.
 - 1.3. Some have questioned the historicity of the book of Esther because apparently no other records have been found which mention any of the characters in the book—including Ahasuerus.
 - 1.3.1. As a result, some have attempted to find the origin of the book in Babylonian mythology. For example, they suggest that Mordecai is the god Marduk and Esther the goddess Ishtar.¹⁰⁶ However, some Jews at this period gave their children Babylonian or Persian names, and Esther's name may have been given to her after she entered the palace compound.
 - 1.3.2. Others claim that the book is an historical novella, which, it is claimed, were common during both the Persian and Hellenistic period.
 - 1.3.3. Some believe that there may be a reference to Mordecai (as Marduka) in the records of the time. "Another document from either the end of Darius I's reign or the first part of Xerxes' reign mentions a Marduka who served as an accountant on a tour of inspection from Susa. This could have been the Mordecai of our narrative, since the phrase "sat at the king's Gate" is mentioned several times in regard to Mordecai. Persian officials were required to remain at the gate of the royal palace according to Herodotus."¹⁰⁷ However, it has been questioned whether this document speaks of a tour from Susa.¹⁰⁸
 - 1.3.4. Since we accept the Biblical account as an accurate statement of history, it does not concern us if there is not extra-Biblical reference to Mordecai or Esther. When such references corroborate the Bible we are thankful for them as they consistently demonstrate that what the Bible says is accurate. However, when the extra-Biblical record is silent about a character or event this definitely does not mean that the Bible is mistaken.
2. What are we told about Mordecai?
 - 2.1. He was a Jew.
 - 2.1.1. The Hebrew has *yehudi*, meaning a Judean, or a person from Judea.
 - 2.1.2. The words Judea and Jew are derived from Judah, the son of Jacob.
 - 2.1.3. This does not mean (as we will see below) that he was from the tribe of Judah. The term 'Judah' took on a generalized meaning after the reign of Solomon, for people from the southern kingdom; whereas those from the northern kingdom were generally referred to as Israel. During the postexilic period the territory was referred to as Judea a part of the province of Palestine.
 - 2.2. His name was Mordecai.
 - 2.2.1. There is debate about the source of his name. Some say that it is almost certainly connected with Marduk or Merodach, the Babylonian and Assyrian god. They argue that he was given this name by Jewish parents living under the Babylonian captivity—e.g., to

¹⁰⁶ Adam Silverstein, "The Book of Esther and the Enuma Elish," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol 69, Iss. 02; 2006; pp 209-223.

¹⁰⁷ M. Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), Logos electronic ed., Vol. 10, p. 284).

¹⁰⁸ David J. A. Clines, "The Quest for the Historical Mordecai," *Vetus Testamentum*, 41 (1991), pp. 129-36;
www.academia.edu/2454296/The_Quest_for_the_Historical_Mordecai

honour a Babylonian friend or master. This view appears to be based on the idea that the book of Esther is derived from a Babylonian myth with Mordecai representing the god Marduk and Esther the goddess Ishtar. However, the idea that his name is Babylonian or Assyrian relies on the assumption that it was not Mordecai who was taken into captivity, but one of his ancestors, and he was born in Persia. Others say that the derivation of his name from a Babylonian god is “extremely improbable”.

2.2.2. The same name appears in another context (Ezra 2.2 and Nehemiah 7.7). There is a Mordecai mentioned as one of the returnees to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. The ESV cross-references for Ezra 2.2 link the Mordecai in that passage with the one identified in Esther.

2.2.2.1. Whether it is one individual cannot be known for certain. Two people often have the same name—although Mordecai may not be a common name.

2.2.2.2. If the Mordecai of Ezra 2.2 returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, then he went to Jerusalem sometime between 538 and 520 BC. The events of Esther take place in Susa from 520-510 BC. Mordecai could have gone to Jerusalem, and then returned from Jerusalem to care for Hadassah, his cousin, when her parents died, or to resume duties in Susa, e.g., as a court administrator (Est 1.19).

2.2.2.3. If two different men are named Mordecai, the devotion of both to God’s cause seems to argue against the use of a Babylonian name. Simply because words sound similar does not mean that they have a common origin. In English we have homonyms which are of completely different origins and meanings. However, if someone considered only the consonants he might argue that they are words having the same origin. For example, beach/beechn, leak/leek, and maize/maze.

2.3. He was a Benjaminite.

2.3.1. Even though he was from Judea, he was of the tribe of Benjamin. The small territory allotted to the tribe of Benjamin was adjacent to the larger territory allotted to Judah. After the split of the kingdom into two (the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom), the tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to God and aligned with Judah. This is ironic. Given that Saul had been from Benjamin and David from Judah, we might have expected Saul’s tribe to have revolted against David’s.

2.3.2. The names of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather are mentioned: Jair, Shimei, and Kish.

2.3.2.1. Some suggest that his father was Jair, but that Shimei and Kish were more distant renowned ancestors (translating יָרֵא as ‘descendent’): Shimei, a Benjaminite and relative of Saul, who cursed David (2 Sam 16.5) and Kish, the father of Saul (1 Sam 9.1). This would make the Shimei from the time of David Saul’s brother—although the Bible does not state this.

2.3.2.2. However, ‘Kish’ and ‘Shimei’ may have been common names in Benjamin, due to their being part of Benjaminite history from over 500 years before the time of Esther.

2.4. He had been carried away as a captive by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, with Jeconiah king of Judah.

2.4.1. Who had been carried away? The word “who” may have either Kish (the direct) or Mordecai (indirect, but subject of the narrative) as its logical antecedent.

2.4.2. If it is Mordecai, who was carried away as a baby, then Ahasuerus cannot be Xerxes (486-465 BC), since Jeconiah was taken captive in 597 BC, and that would make Mordecai at least 124 years old when he was promoted to vizier (Est 8.1-2) in Ahasuerus’ 13th year (473 BC). However, if he was promoted by Darius I (522-486 BC), he would have been 88 years old; a more realistic age for an elder sitting at the king’s gate (Est 2.19).

2.4.3. If it is Kish, then clearly the Kish named here is not the father of Saul. If it is Kish, the great-grandfather of Mordecai, who was taken captive in 597 BC, then his great-grandson

- was appointed vizier in Ahasuerus' 13th year in 509 BC (Darius I).
- 2.4.4. The 'he' in verse 7 indicates that the subject under consideration is Mordecai, not Kish who is under consideration. Regardless, in either case (with Mordecai or Kish being carried away in the captivity), nothing about the historicity of Esther is compromised.
- 2.5. He was of an influential Jewish family.
- 2.5.1. Since the family of Mordecai had been deported to Babylon with King Jeconiah in 597 BC this indicates that he was from a family that had influence and wealth (2 Ki 24.14-16).
- 2.5.2. Thus the reference to his sitting at king's gate—i.e., as an administrator or advisor—is not surprising (Est 2.19).
- 2.6. He was bringing up his first cousin, Hadassah.
- 2.6.1. She was likely considerably younger than himself.
- 2.6.2. He "took her as his own daughter" which may mean he formally adopted her or that he became her guardian and treated her as if she were his own child. In either case there was a tight familial bond between the two, which:
- 2.6.2.1. becomes a key factor in their close communication later in the account; and
- 2.6.2.2. portrays Mordecai as a kind and benevolent person, particularly if he returned from Jerusalem to care for her.
- 2.6.3. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew as, 'as a wife'. If Hadassah was Mordecai's wife she would *not* have been taken to the palace harem for the virgins (Est 2.2). The Septuagint's translation appears to be an error caused by interpreting 'daughter' (בַּת) as a contraction of 'house' (בֵּית) and a euphemism for 'wife'.
3. What are we told about Esther?
- 3.1. Her Jewish birth name was Hadassah ('myrtle') and her Persian name was Esther ('star').
- 3.1.1. We are not told whether her Persian name was given to her by her parents, by Mordecai to hide her Jewish origins (Est 2.10), or when she entered the house of the king's virgins.
- 3.2. She was a young woman. No age is given.
- 3.3. She was an orphan who had no living parents.
- 3.4. She was the first cousin of Mordecai, who was likely considerably older than her.
- 3.5. She was under the care of Mordecai, who took her as his own daughter.
- 3.6. She had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at.
- 3.6.1. Beauty was the descriptive attribute applied to Vashti (Est 1.11) and was to be the primary criterion for selecting the women for the harem from throughout the empire (Est 2.2, 3).
- 3.6.2. Other women in the Bible described as being 'lovely to look at' (טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה; "good of appearance") are Rebecca (Gen 24.16 and 26.7) and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11.2); and the woman of the Song of Solomon is described as 'beautiful' (Est 1.15, 16).
- 3.6.3. Beauty is a gift from God, which can be admired without resorting to lust.
- 3.7. She is only introduced at this point:
- 3.7.1. We are not told anything about her personality. However, we will learn more about her as we progress through our study of the book.
- 3.7.2. We have not yet heard her speak.
- 3.7.3. It is similar to how early scenes in a movie may show the main characters in action without providing any commentary on them or giving them spoken lines. The author is building suspense in his narrative.
4. Why were Mordecai and Hadassah living in Susa?
- 4.1. The decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and Judah had been issued about 20 years before this time. Faithful Jews were expected to return.
- 4.2. It is possible the Mordecai had returned to Judah (if he is the Mordecai of Ezra 2.2) and had come back to Susa (as Nehemiah did) because he was in service to the king or because Hadassah had been left as an orphan. The Jewish *Targum Sheni* ("Second Targum"), an Aramaic

translation and elaboration of the book of Esther, states: ‘For the sake of this Esther, Mordecai went into exile. He said: “I will rather go into exile and educate Esther than remain in the land of Israel.”’¹⁰⁹

- 4.3. Even if Mordecai had not been one of the returnees with Zerubbabel, he may have had a valid reason for staying in Susa. Like Daniel he may have had an administrative position in the Empire which allowed him to gain important intelligence which could be of value to the Jews.
- 4.4. Esther was probably too young and dependent to have considered making the journey on her own—she probably wasn’t alive when the exiles returned with Zerubbabel.
5. What happened to Esther?
 - 5.1. She was taken, along with many other young women, into the king’s palace.
 - 5.1.1. The text tells us that many young women were gathered from Susa.
 - 5.1.2. With the addition of many from the 127 provinces, there probably would have been many hundreds of virgins brought into the harem.
 - 5.1.3. Josephus gives the number as 400.¹¹⁰
 - 5.2. She was placed in the custody of the eunuch Hegai (whom we encountered in Est 2.3).
 - 5.3. She would have been put into the house of the virgins, eventually to become part of the harem of the wives and concubines of the king.
 - 5.4. We are not told whether she or Mordecai resisted her being taken into custody. The *Targum Sheni* on Esther (an Aramaic translation and elaboration, dated from after the time of Christ) states: ‘[W]hen Mordecai heard that virgins were forcibly demanded, he took Esther and withdrew her from the royal messengers, that they should not carry her away. He hid her in a summer-house, that they should not see her. The daughters of the heathen used to dance and show their beauty through the windows when the royal messengers passed by, therefore the messengers brought many virgins from the provinces. And the messengers knew Esther, and when they saw that she was not among these virgins, they said one to another: ‘In vain have we exerted ourselves to bring virgins from the provinces, when we have in our province a virgin who surpasses in beauty all those whom we have brought.’ And when search was made for Esther and she was not found, they made it known to the king. When the king heard it, he issued an order that every virgin who shall conceal herself from the royal messengers, shall be punished with death. Mordecai, hearing this order, was afraid, and he conducted his uncle’s daughter to the market, and so Esther was brought by Hega, the keeper of the women, unto the king.”¹¹¹ We don’t know if the compiler of the Targum had access to extra-Biblical historical writings which are no longer available, or if this account is a novelization of the Biblical story. The Hebrew word translated “was taken” does not give the idea of force or necessarily imply that she was conscripted against her will.
 - 5.5. We are given no indication of what Esther thought about becoming a concubine of the king and potentially becoming a wife and even the new queen. It may be that in the context of Persian society, and Middle Eastern culture in general, that girls of marriageable age, particularly if they had any social status, assumed that they would be taken away from their families and assigned to husbands. So, although parents would have been sad to see their daughters taken, there may not have been great distress over this program. Also, because many young men were killed in battle, there was likely an imbalance between the genders and young women were happy to have any prospect of marriage (even when being part of a harem) and raising children. Finally, it may not have been as distasteful as we might think to be part of the royal harem. It is true that the

¹⁰⁹ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 301; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAAIAAJ

¹¹⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* (translated by William Whiston), book 11, chapter 6; www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-11.htm

¹¹¹ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 300; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAAIAAJ

concubines were isolated from men, but they would have lived in relative luxury compared to other women of their day.

6. Did Esther break the moral law by becoming part of the royal harem?
 - 6.1. Esther did not commit adultery.
 - 6.2. Even if we were to charge Ahasuerus with adultery, it was not sinful for Esther to be married to him, since she did not commit adultery by breaking the bonds of marriage.
 - 6.2.1. Hosea was instructed to marry a prostitute (Est 1.2). Even after she had been unfaithful to him, he was instructed to take her back even though she was an adulterer, because she was lawfully his wife (Est 3.1, 2).
 - 6.2.2. Jesus comments in Mt 5.32 relate to *divorce*, not to adultery.
 - 6.3. However, even Ahasuerus cannot be charged with adultery with respect to his harem, as each woman was lawfully a wife or concubine, in the same way as Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, David, and Solomon had multiple wives.
 - 6.3.1. In the OT economy God tolerated polygamy (Dt 21.15-17). Although we are not given the reason for this, we can surmise possible reasons:
 - 6.3.1.1. Possibly, a high incidence of male mortality due to war, and thus a shortage of men for women to marry. However, women often died in childbirth which may have evened out the sexes.
 - 6.3.1.2. So as not to leave women without a means of financial support or to continue a family line, as in a levirate marriage (Dt 25.5-6).
 - 6.3.1.3. The passions of men cannot be restrained, so polygamy provided a legal framework for managing them.
 - 6.3.2. Jesus, echoing Genesis 2.24 and Malachi 2.14-16, makes it clear that polygamous marriage is not the *ideal* that God intended. He reminded the Jews of his day that marriage is to be a life-long relationship between one man and one woman (Mt 19.3-8).
 - 6.4. Contrary to what many commentators and preachers suggest, Esther did not commit a sexual sin. A lesson cannot be derived from the book of Esther with respect to God's forgiving even adulterers—which of course he will do it there is true repentance.
 - 6.5. The bigger issue may have been that Esther, as a Jewess, married a Gentile and Zoroastrian worshipper of the god Mithra.
 - 6.5.1. Jews were prohibited from marrying people from pagan nations (Ex 34.11-16; Dt 7.1-4). Although the specific prohibition related to the nations in Canaan, both Ezra and Nehemiah appear to have applied the prohibition to Gentiles in general (Ezra 9-10; Neh 10.30; Neh 13.23-30)—for example, Egyptians are mentioned in Ezra 9.1.
 - 6.5.2. Although the young women were not kidnapped, it would have been suicide to have refused to become part of Ahasuerus' harem—his wishes and commands could not be opposed. If what Esther did was sinful, we can excuse her because her choice was either death or marrying a pagan. This is quite different from Christian young people *choosing* to marry an unbeliever.
 - 6.5.3. We may have to put some blame on the state of the Jews, and particularly Persian Jews, who had drifted from strict obedience to God's laws and, generally, did not consider intermarriage to be a problem. Esther would, at this point, have been a creature of her culture. However, Mordecai should have known better and removed Esther from Persia. God, in his providence, had a greater plan for Esther—which does not justify disobedience.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.5-8).
 - 7.1. *Providence's Power* – God superintended the plans and wiles of men by bringing Esther into the palace, where she would eventually become queen. Had a counsellor suggested to Ahasuerus that he select a queen from among the common folk rather than from among the noble women,

his suggestion would have been rejected as foolishness. Yet God so arranged matters so that the impossible became possible. As we noted in our opening study (*Purpose*), the book of Esther teaches that:

- 7.1.1. While kings may issue decrees, God overrules and accomplishes his purposes. “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.” (Prov 21.1)
- 7.1.2. Human decisions and actions are secondary causes by which God continually fulfills his purposes. Causation (ultimate and proximate) rests with both God and man (Gen 50.19, 20; Ex 8.32 with 9.12; Acts 2.23; Acts 4.27, 28). God does not force people to act in a particular way. They act volitionally and responsibly to fulfill his eternal decrees. The Bible never attempts to explain how this can be possible. It may appear to be a contradiction. However, even though there is an antinomy it is not illogical. There is no logical contradiction between God’s providence and mankind’s responsibility. There is only confusion and doubt resulting from our finite minds being unable to grasp the possibility of the two coexisting.
- 7.1.3. Decisions made today in government councils and business boardrooms are equally superintended by God. We may never see God’s hand overruling, but we can be assured that he is working all things as he wills and for his glorious purposes.
- 7.2. *Providence’s Preparation* – We find in this account that God placed Mordecai and Esther in places where he needed them so that they would be of use to him later. God prepared his plan, in the depths of eternity past, long before it would be realized. He planned that Esther would be orphaned and cared for by her cousin, who would later become vizier; and he planned that she would be beautiful so that she would be taken into the harem and later become queen. Working back, God planned that a baby would be born during the days of Nebuchadnezzar, named Mordecai, taken captive, and end up living in Susa, etc. God’s providential plan has been prepared in every detail.
- 7.3. *Providence’s Protection* – God displays his love for his covenant people even when they are not living in obedience to him—i.e., living in Susa when they should have been in Jerusalem and Judea.
 - 7.3.1. The adoption (whether formal or informal) of Esther by Mordecai was worked out by God to protect her. She was given a home and trained in obedience and faith in God.
 - 7.3.2. Similarly, God protects his adopted people. We owe our eternal position and privileges to being his adopted sons and daughters (Rom 8.15, 23).

Prophet

1. Who wrote the book of Esther?
 - 1.1. The book is not attributed to an author, and as such is an anonymous work.
 - 1.2. Various suggestions have been made, including Ezra, unspecified ‘men of the great synagogue’, the high priest Joiakim, and Mordecai. The Jewish Church had no accepted tradition about the authorship of the book.
 - 1.3. Some place its authorship later in Jewish history (e.g., at the time of the Maccabees, in the 2nd century BC). However, evidence suggests it was written during the Persian period. What are some examples?
 - 1.3.1. The Hebrew used in the book is similar to that used in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah and not similar to that used during the Hellenistic period; for example, it includes Persian words but no Greek words.
 - 1.3.2. Some of the details (we will consider them in a moment) could only have been known to Esther and Mordecai. Thus, the writer had to be at least a contemporary, who received his information from Mordecai or Esther.
 - 1.3.3. There is no mention of, or allusion to, Judea or Jerusalem which suggests that the author is from the diaspora in Persia and not a Jew living in Judea.
 - 1.3.4. The details given about life and customs in Susa would not have been known among western

Jews in the 2nd century BC.

- 1.3.5. The author had access to the chronicles of the Persian kings (Est 6.1; Est 10.2), and was evidently a Jew who was involved in affairs of state in the Persian Empire.
- 1.4. Some suggest that it was written by a younger contemporary of Mordecai who had observed his career. Mordecai's character and actions are praised many times in the account (Est 2.7, 22; Est 3.2; Est 4.13-14, 17; Est 7.9; Est 8.2, 15; Est 9.3-4, 29; Est 10.2-3), and it is thought unlikely that he would have praised himself.
 - 1.4.1. It is possible that Ezra could have been a young man around 510 BC when Mordecai was an old man, and could have obtained the information necessary to write the account. Ezra was present at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem in 444 BC (Neh 8.1). If he had been 20 years old in 510 BC, he would have been 86 years old in 444 BC.
 - 1.4.2. It is unlikely that Nehemiah overlapped with Mordecai, as he was younger than Ezra.
 - 1.4.3. Also, it is unlikely that Ezra or Nehemiah would have composed the book without making some comment about Esther's marriage to a pagan (Ezra 9-10; Neh 10.10; Neh 13.23-30).
- 1.5. The account appears to have been written by an eyewitness of the events, with intimate knowledge of the details (e.g., Est 9.7) or by someone who had immediate access to the eyewitnesses.
2. What evidence suggests that Mordecai may have been the author of the book of Esther?
 - 2.1. Mordecai speaks as a prophet of God (Est 4.13-14) and (eventually) acts as a spiritual leader of God's people (Est 9.20-23).
 - 2.2. Mordecai was an educated man—he was from Jewish nobility (Est 2.6) and served in the Persian civil service (Est 2.19).
 - 2.3. There are a number of specific details in the book which would have been known only to Esther and Mordecai. What are some examples?
 - 2.3.1. Mordecai's genealogy (Est 2.5)
 - 2.3.2. Esther's messages to Mordecai and Mordecai's to her through Hathach (Est 4.5-16)
 - 2.3.3. The particulars of the events at the banquets given by Esther for Ahasuerus and Haman (Est 5.6-8; Est 7.2-8).
 - 2.3.4. The names of others sitting at the palace gate (Est 2.21).
 - 2.4. In addition:
 - 2.4.1. Mordecai is credited with chronicling the events leading to the institution of Purim (Est 9.20), so it is valid to extrapolate to his authorship of the entire book.
 - 2.4.2. Mordecai is named over fifty-five times in the book and in about 20% of the verses—slightly more than Esther is mentioned.
 - 2.5. Some suggest that 10.3 sounds like boasting, and unfitting for Mordecai, if he was the author of the book. However, these statements are factual, and similar to what Nehemiah states about himself (Neh 13.14, 22, 31). Also, the final verse could have been added as a eulogy (e.g., by Ezra) after the death of Mordecai.
3. What are some lessons which we can derive from this consideration?
 - 3.1. *Doubters* – Many OT scholars and commentators are unwilling to believe that the books of the Bible were written during, or immediately after, the period they record.
 - 3.1.1. For example, many (most) claim that Genesis 1-6 could not have been written before the flood, or even by Moses. Instead, they attribute it to Jewish authors at a much later date. Similarly, they claim that Daniel (particularly because of the prophecies in Daniel 11.1-45) had to have been written in the 2nd century BC or later, and not by Daniel in the 6th century BC.
 - 3.1.2. While they make these claims, they ignore the obvious, and reject what the Bible says about itself and the extra-Biblical evidence which supports dates of composition during the lives of contemporaries of the events which are recorded.
 - 3.1.3. We can reject the hypotheses of the doubters who claim late dates for the composition of

OT and NT books, and confidently assert that the books of the Bible were written at the time (or shortly after) the events recorded occurred.

- 3.2. *Details* – The details provided in the book of Esther support the claim that the book was written by a person who lived at the time the events occurred.

3.2.1. The Bible has never had any of its statements falsified.

3.2.2. In every domain in which the Bible speaks (providence, history, science, psychology, morality, soteriology) it is reliable. We can confidently assert that God's word is true (Prov 30.5) and all men are liars (Ps 116.11), and that since "The Bible tells me so, I believe it!"

Preparation (Est 2.9-11)

1. Whose favour did Esther win?
 - 1.1. She won the favour of Hegai, the king's eunuch (Est 2.3) who was in charge of the virgins—the women who had not yet joined the wives of the harem.
 - 1.1.1. The word 'favour' ('kindness' in the KJV) is from the same word in Hebrew which is used to speak of God's covenant love. It speaks of more than just a casual politeness; rather of a commitment to do what is best for a person.
 - 1.1.2. The word 'won' is used rather than 'found'. Esther applied a deliberate strategy of winning Hegai's favour.
 - 1.2. The Hebrew has, "was good in his eyes", which is translated as 'pleased him' in all of the commonly used English translations. This expression is unique in the Bible to the Book of Esther (compare Est 2.15, 17; Est 5.2)
 - 1.3. What was it that pleased him?
 - 1.3.1. It seems that what pleased him was what was good in his eyes, or *to* his eyes.
 - 1.3.2. It was Esther's appearance. Her beauty was notable even to a eunuch who was surrounded by hundreds of beauties—which to him were almost like chattel or 'cattle'.
 - 1.3.3. Her beauty (Est 2.7) appears to have excelled even among a cast of beautiful women (Est 2.2). Her beauty was natural, without the enhancement of makeup, as she had not yet had access to the beauty treatments she would receive over the next year.
 - 1.4. Why was it important that she won Hegai's favour?
 - 1.4.1. She would be singled out for special attention and get the best treatment so that she would make the best impression on the king.
 - 1.4.2. She would eventually be able to stand in the place of Vashti, who was known for her beauty (Est 1.11).
 - 1.4.3. God was working out his plan so that Esther would catch the eye of the king and be able to have influence over him.
2. What did Hegai provide for Esther?
 - 2.1. *Cosmetics* – Other translations have: "beauty treatments" or "beauty preparations". The word is used only in this chapter in the Bible. The KJV's translates it as "things for purification". This translation has led some interpreters to conclude that Esther participated in a form of pagan religious ablution. However, the immediate context of its use (see verse 12), makes it clear that the treatments were related to the practices of cosmetology.
 - 2.1.1. Archaeological discoveries in the Middle East and historical records indicate that some of the following may have been used in Persia for beauty treatments:
 - 2.1.1.1. A white powder (white lead or an organic mixture including chickpeas, turmeric, sandalwood and milk) for making the skin appear lighter;
 - 2.1.1.2. A rouge powder (from red ochre, hydrated iron oxide) for highlighting the cheeks;
 - 2.1.1.3. Black eye liner (lead sulfide) and colours (including gold dust) used on eyelids;
 - 2.1.1.4. Henna for colouring hair and hands;
 - 2.1.1.5. A yellow powder (yellow starch) for lightening hair colour;
 - 2.1.1.6. A material for making *khaal*, the permanent blue-green beauty spots on eyebrows

- or chin;
- 2.1.1.7. Olive, sesame, and almond oils for softening the skin, making it shine, and carrying perfumes (2 Sam 14.2; Prov 27.9; Song 1.3; Amos 6.6);
- 2.1.1.8. Perfumes based on myrrh and other spices (Est 2.12).
- 2.1.2. The image we might have is of an exaggerated appearance of someone like Jezebel, who painted her eyes and adorned her head (2 Ki 9.30), an entertainer in a bar, a *maiko* or *geisha* in Japan, a courtier in the 18th century French court, or an Indian woman preparing for her wedding. The appreciation of cosmetic adornment, as distinct from natural beauty, is largely culturally determined—what is considered tasteful and attractive in one generation and culture will differ from that in others. However, the use of makeup and cosmetics, mostly by women, has been a universal practice for various reasons: to look prettier or younger, to correct imperfections (perceived or actual), to express an identity, or to attract attention.
- 2.2. *Food portion* – What might this food portion have been?
 - 2.2.1. The NIV has ‘special food’. The NKJV has ‘allowance’ and the KJV has ‘things as belonged to her’.
 - 2.2.2. The Hebrew word basically means ‘portion’, without stating a portion of what. It is used as a portion of a sacrifice (1 Sam 1.4, 5)—likely of the part which could be eaten rather than burned. When the word is used in Nehemiah (Neh 8.10, 12), it is used in the context of supplying food portions. The ESV and NIV supply the word ‘food’. This is inferred, but makes sense within the context.
 - 2.2.3. The food portion would likely have been based on a diet which would have contributed to health and appearance.
- 2.3. *Seven maids* – It may have been that each of the virgin concubines was assigned seven female attendants or maids to take care of her wardrobe, bathing, cosmetic treatments, and dressing. However, it may be that Hegai was showing preferential treatment to Esther by supplying her with seven maids, as he did by giving her the best place in the harem.
 - 2.3.1. The maids belonged to king’s palace, which implies that they were not common slaves. They may have been hostages taken from subject noble families or girls whose families supplied them as maids in the hope that their daughters would receive favours and advancement by becoming concubines.
- 2.4. *The best place in the harem* – The preferential treatment Esther received would have included being given the most attractive apartment within the harem sector of the citadel complex in Susa.
- 2.5. What are we told about how Hegai provided these things to Esther?
 - 2.5.1. He did it quickly. The Hebrew word usually appears in the context of being frightened, although it also is used for being hasty. So, we are to understand that Hegai went out of his way to work with and for Esther
- 2.6. Why did he show such favour and attention to Esther?
 - 2.6.1. Esther was strikingly beautiful.
 - 2.6.2. She displayed a grace and modesty which set her apart from the other young women.
 - 2.6.3. She displayed deferential compliance when commanded to join the harem.
 - 2.6.4. He may have sensed (the Holy Spirit stirring him) that something greater was going on and that Esther was destined for greatness. It is similar to the sense managers often have when hiring employees. Some candidates stand out as having high potential.
 - 2.6.5. He wouldn’t have been able to gain anything directly from risking his position by showing favouritism to Esther. However, if he thought that Esther might later become the queen, it would have been to his advantage to have been her faithful servant.
 - 2.6.6. He was able to show that he had a degree of authority. He could have taken a strict policy that every young woman was to be treated identically. However, in spite of the possibility that showing favouritism might engender rivalry among the virgin concubines, he felt that providing a different treatment for Esther was worth the risk.
 - 2.6.7. Ultimately, God was controlling circumstances (as he does *all* circumstances) to work out

his purposes. Esther would become queen.

3. What food did Esther eat?
 - 3.1. We are not told what food Esther was provided. However, many commentators assume that she did not abide by the Jewish kosher dietary restrictions. They suggest that she was not faithful, as was Daniel when he refused to eat ceremonially unclean food.
 - 3.2. How might we explain the situation, if Esther ate non-kosher food?
 - 3.2.1. Some suggest that because she was living in Persian Susa and passing herself off as a Persian (by hiding her Jewish identity) she consumed non-kosher foods to maintain her false identity.
 - 3.3. However, there is another way to approach this.
 - 3.3.1. Kosher restrictions, as we know them today, go beyond the requirements documented by Moses. For example, today for a meat product to be considered kosher it has to be prepared separate from any potential ‘contamination’ with a milk-based product (e.g., cheese). However, this is an added restriction not given by God, and is based on a speculative interpretation of the Law (Ex 23.19; Ex 34.26; Dt 14.21). Similarly, the traditional idea that the kosher way of slaughtering an animal requires that the throat be slit and the blood immediately drained from the animal, creates a restriction that is not given in Scripture. The restriction given in Scripture is only that blood (as a separate food item) was not to be consumed (Gen 9.4; Dt 12.23-25)—there is always some blood left in muscle meat, even with ritually slaughtered animals which have their throats slashed and the bodies are hung up to drain. Also, it is likely that the Persians slaughtered their animals by slitting their throats. They did not apply intermediate stunning or use guns as slaughterhouses do today. They likely drained the blood for religious rituals involving animal sacrifices—although animal sacrifices were less prevalent in Zoroastrianism than in the Babylonian pagan rituals.¹¹² So, it is unlikely that Esther would have been forced to eat blood.
 - 3.3.2. In addition, since Esther was shown favouritism by Hegai, she would have only had to ask for her meat portions to be beef, mutton, chevon, or venison and she would have been accommodated. She would not have had to reveal that she couldn’t eat pork (Lev 11.1-47; Dt 14.3-20), she could simply say something like, “I prefer beef.”
 - 3.3.3. Daniel’s reason for not eating the king’s meat was different. The food and wine he was offered was likely consecrated to idols, and eating and drinking would have been to participate in, or viewed as endorsing, a pagan religious ritual. The meat served at the king’s table would have been dedicated to a false god through sacrifice, and the wine would have been declared sacred through a libation of pouring. Sharing in the meal would have been sharing in the sacrifice and libation and honouring the idol (Ex 34.15; 1 Cor 10.20, 21). There is no indication that the general provision of food for the Persian royal harem was drawn from ritually sacrificed animals.
 - 3.4. Esther did not have to break any of God’s law to live in the Persian court. She is only condemned if one accepts the Jewish traditions as binding. However, as Jesus points out, these traditions are human requirements and not God’s (Mt 5.21-48).
4. What did Mordecai do while Esther was in the harem of the virgins?
 - 4.1. He walked in front of the court of the harem.
 - 4.2. He obviously had access to the palace since he could walk near the court of the harem, and may have been an official in the royal palace (Est 2.19).
 - 4.3. What was his purpose for walking in front of the court of the harem?
 - 4.3.1. To learn how Esther fared and what happened to her.
 - 4.3.2. This indicates that he had a fatherly concern for his adopted daughter.

¹¹² *Sacrifice in Zoroastrianism*; www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sacrifice-i

4.4. How would he have obtained this information?

4.4.1. Esther may not have been able to communicate directly with Mordecai as she would have been confined to the rooms for the virgins. Mordecai would have had to send messages via one of the eunuchs (Est 4.5).

5. What secret did Esther keep?

5.1. She had not revealed her national origin (her people or kindred). Why?

5.1.1. Because Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.

5.1.1.1. She was obedient to her adopted father, Mordecai.

5.1.1.2. She obeyed him because she loved and respected him.

5.1.1.3. In contrast to Ahasuerus, whose command was disobeyed (Est 1.12), Mordecai was able to rule his household.

5.1.2. Mordecai may have sensed a rising anti-Jewish sentiment within the empire and feared for Esther's safety. This anti-Jewish sentiment may have been growing because the Persian kings used wise Jewish advisors (e.g., Daniel and Nehemiah) who were putting the pagan advisors to shame.

5.1.3. The king would have been expected to seek a new queen from among the nobility of Persia or from one on the loyal subject kingdoms. So, it is unlikely that Mordecai or Esther had any pretensions that she might become queen. However, since Esther probably would not have had an opportunity to become queen if her nationality had been disclosed, God superintended to ensure that her national identity was concealed until the appropriate time—when it was needed to stop the Jewish genocide.

5.1.4. God was providentially preparing for the downfall of Haman. He did not know that Esther was a Jewess, and the revelation of her ethnic background about five years later came as a shock to him (Est 7.4-6). God is always ten steps ahead of his enemies.

5.2. What was one way in which she hid her Jewish identity, besides not talking about it?

5.2.1. She used a Persian name (Esther) rather than a Jewish name (Hadassah). We are not told whether her Persian name was given to her by her parents, by Mordecai to hide her Jewish origins (Est 2.10), or when she entered the house of the king's virgins.

5.3. Did Esther lie by hiding her national origin?

5.3.1. Mordecai did not ask her to deny her national origin or to tell a lie to conceal it.

5.3.2. She had been born and raised in Susa, undoubtedly spoke Persian, and probably appeared to be no different from a typical Persian female—Jewish males were probably more easily identified by their clothes or hair, but Jewish females probably wore essentially the same kind of clothing as Persian women. She did not have to say or do anything to keep her identity a secret.

5.3.3. We are not required by God to speak all the truth at all times but are required not to speak an untruth at any time. For example, a person being a dual citizen of the US and Canada can enter the US with a US passport and Canada with a Canadian passport. There is no requirement, when entering either country, that the other national identity be revealed.

5.4. What would seem to have made it difficult for Esther to keep her nationality a secret?

5.4.1. Since Mordecai was spending his time in front of the court of the harem and enquiring about Esther, it is surprising that Mordecai's attention to her did not draw attention to her nationality. Anyone with a modicum of reasoning ability might have been able to make a connection between his Jewishness and hers, unless Mordecai's Jewish nationality was also not evident—e.g., he dressed and spoke like a Persian, groomed his beard (if he had one, since he may have been a eunuch) in the Persian style, and did not wear a distinctive head covering. Mordecai may have also disguised his nationality (Est 3.4).

5.4.2. It may be that her nationality was not as well-guarded a secret as Mordecai at first wished it to be, but that she had already gained favour (Est 2.9) among the eunuchs by the time it was discovered, and they ignored it.

6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.9-11).
- 6.1. *Appearance* – What is a popular quip about beauty? “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” The point being that beauty is primarily subjective.
- 6.1.1. However, God declares, through the writer of Esther, that Esther was beautiful (Est 2.7) and that her natural beauty stood out among the many beauties brought to the palace, and won her the favour of Hegai—‘pleased him’ or was ‘good to his eyes’ (Est 2.9). Later her beauty would win her the favour of all who saw her (Est 2.15), including the king (Est 2.17).
- 6.1.2. Since God says that Esther was beautiful, this is an objective statement of fact. Therefore, rather than beauty being subjective, it is, to a large extent, objective across cultures. The elements of beauty come from God and are applied to feminine beauty with attributes such as:
- 6.1.2.1. *The Golden Ratio* – two quantities are related in the golden ratio if their ratio is the same as the ratio of their sum to the larger of the two quantities ($a = 1.618$). For example, this ratio is found repeated in faces which are considered by the majority of people to be beautiful, such as in the ratio of: nose flair to bottom of lips to bottom of chin, or centre of the pupils to bridge of nose to centre of nostrils.¹¹³
- a b
 $a + b$
 $a + b$ is to a as a is to b
- 6.1.2.2. *Averageness* – Facial features, in which the feminine face has population-typical (i.e., average) features on all counts.
- 6.1.2.3. *Dimensions* – Well-balanced body proportions in a woman based on three equilateral triangles circumscribing the upper body (from the shoulders) to the middle of the back, to the knees to the bottom of the feet; arms outstretched which are equivalent to the person’s height.
- 6.1.2.4. *Balanced BMI* – Mass (kg)/height (m)² should equal about 21 (a woman who is 5’ 4” [1.63m] would weigh about 121lbs [62.6kg]).
- 6.1.2.5. *Complexion* – Smooth skin with natural colouration (e.g., not a pasty appearance).
- 6.1.2.6. *Hair* – long flowing, silky appearance (Song 4.1).
- 6.1.3. Similarly, there are objective standards for beauty in the arts—e.g., in drawing, painting, music, architecture, etc. As culture deviates from God’s standards we see ugliness and chaos overwhelm the arts.
- 6.2. *Adornment* – Since there is an objective standard for beauty (with variations around a mean), and God is the one who gives the gift of beauty, what does this tell us about attempts to make one’s self appear to be more beautiful? In other words, is it wrong to use beauty treatments such as makeup?
- 6.2.1. We are told that Esther underwent beauty treatments for a year (Est 2.12) and that she used cosmetics (Est 2.9). The account of her situation does not give an endorsement, nor does it give a prohibition, on the use of cosmetics and beauty treatments. The use of them is stated as an historical fact without an indication of whether the practice was right or wrong. However, we can address the question in more detail.
- 6.2.2. There are some Christian denominations which condemn the use of makeup entirely. They make statements such as: “Since the primary effect of makeup is to highlight sex appeal, we reject makeup as immodest.”
- 6.2.3. Without question, the character, and inner grooming, of a woman is her most important attribute (Prov 31.30; 1 Tim 2.9-10; 1 Pt 3.3-4), and the Bible speaks disparagingly of

¹¹³ Gary Meisner, *The Human Face and the Golden Ratio*, 2012-05-31; www.goldennumber.net/face/

adornments (Jer 4.30; Is 3.18-24; Ezk 23.40).

6.2.4. Do these verses condemn outright the use of cosmetics and makeup?

6.2.5. With questions such as this type we have to consider, the:

6.2.5.1. *Morality* – Is the use of cosmetics or makeup intrinsically a moral issue, in the same class as adultery or theft? Their use likely falls into the area of indifference—things that are not moral or immoral in themselves but can be used rightly or wrongly.

6.2.5.2. *Motive* – Is the reason for using cosmetics to make a statement of rebellion against God or culturally accepted norms (e.g. Goth, men wearing eyeliner) or to titillate and increase ‘sex appeal’?

6.2.5.3. *Mean* – Is the use of cosmetics or makeup extreme or subtle? Does it fit within current culturally accepted norms? It should probably fall near the mean, not at one extreme or the other. For example, Amish girls say that they wear simple clothes and don’t use makeup so that they don’t attract attention to themselves. However, their significant deviation from the cultural mean tends to draw attention to them.

6.2.5.4. *Measure* – Is the use of cosmetics being treated differently from other things? For example, the use of alcohol. The Bible makes negative comments about the use of alcohol (Gen 9.21; Prov 20.1; Prov 23.30; Is 5.11; Is 28.7; Is 56.12; Hos 4.11; Eph 5.18; 1 Tim 3.3), yet also speaks about its use by Jesus and Apostles (Lk 22.17; Jn 2.9; 1 Tim 5.23). From a different perspective, the use of clothing can be abused (e.g., fancy, expensive, or to make a rebellious statement) yet that doesn’t mean that it is wrong to use clothing.

6.3. *Allegiance* – Was Esther ashamed of being known as a member of God’s covenant community? In modern terms, was Esther afraid of being known as a Christian? Does she set a bad example by hiding her light under a bushel?

6.3.1. We are not to be ashamed of being Christians (Mk 8.38; Rom 1.16; 2 Tim 1.8), and we are not to hide our light (Mt 5.16).

6.3.2. However, being willing to confess allegiance to Christ does not mean that we have to speak about our allegiance in every situation. A person who is riding the subway to work and goes up to each person and tells him or her that he is a Christian, will be considered obnoxious and not effective in presenting the Gospel. Peter says that we are always to be prepared to give an answer about our faith, with gentleness and respect (1 Pt 3.15-16), not to push in where we are not asked.

6.3.3. Esther did not have to broadcast that she was a Jewess. However, when the time came that she needed to declare her allegiance to God, she did, even at a threat to her life (Est 4.15-16).

6.4. *Artifice* – Was Esther lying when she hid her national origin?

6.4.1. What is truth telling? Must we tell the whole truth all the time?

6.4.2. We are not to lie (Eph 4.25).

6.4.3. However, it appears to be proper under certain circumstances to conceal the whole truth (1 Sam 16.2-3). God does not reveal all things to man (Dt 29.29). He often hides the truth from unbelievers. But he is not a liar when they misinterpret the truth that he does reveal.

6.4.4. Concealment is not the same as affirming an untruth. In fact, in some situations it is a good thing not to reveal truth (Prov 11.13.).

6.4.5. It also appears that evasive action is not a lie or even deception.

6.4.5.1. Elisha gave the enemy’s army the wrong direction (2 Kings 6.19). None of the facts were incorrect in Elisha’s statement. The misunderstanding on the part of the hearer did not constitute a lie on the part of the speaker. For example, answering the question of a police detective trying to identify a perpetrator of a murder, “Were you at home when this happened?” with “No.” when you were not; is very different from answering the question “Do you know who did this?” with “No”, when you know.

- 6.4.5.2. Joshua (Josh 8.3-29) did not lie when he feigned an action that was not his intent. It was not his problem that the action of the Israelites was misunderstood.
- 6.4.5.3. Jesus did not lie when he acted as if he was going farther (Luke 24.28).
- 6.4.5.4. Likewise, Esther did not lie to anyone. If her peers thought she was a Persian, then it was based on their assumptions and not on her statement.
- 6.4.6. “The biblical ethic is built upon fine distinctions. At the point of divergence the difference between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, is not a chasm but a razor’s edge.” (John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, pg. 141).

Process (Est 2.12-14)

1. How long did the beautification process require?
 - 1.1. Twelve months; with six months for oil of myrrh treatments and six months for treatments with spices and ointments.
 - 1.1.1. Myrrh is a resin, and derived oil, processed from the dried sap of a thorny tree species in the ME and North Africa. Its aroma was considered to be sensuous (Ps 45.8; Prov 7.17); the sesquiterpene compounds in myrrh stimulate a part of the brain that controls emotions.
 - 1.1.2. Myrrh also has a cleansing and preservative function (Jn 19.39). It is use for softening skin and was used by the Egyptians in the mummification process.¹¹⁴
 - 1.1.3. It was one of the ingredients prescribed for the holy anointing oil (Ex 30.23-25).
 - 1.2. The purpose of these treatments was to make a young woman’s skin soft and to saturate her hair and skin with semi-permanent fragrances.
 - 1.2.1. This statement about the beautification regime likely mentions only part of the process applied to the young women. They undoubtedly had to participate in regular baths, extensive hair brushing, hair plucking, lightening of skin colour, wardrobe fittings, classes in decorum and etiquette, and the consumption of a prescribed diet (Est 2.9).
 - 1.2.2. The program might have similarities to the physical aspects of the preparation contestants in Miss USA or Miss World might go through.
 - 1.3. What does the word ‘regulations’ mean in this context?
 - 1.3.1. We considered the use of the word (תקן) translated here as ‘regulation’, when we studied 1.8. We noted that the word in the Hebrew text appears 18 times elsewhere in Esther and is also translated in the ESV as ‘order’ (Est 1.8), ‘law’ (Est 1.19), ‘decree’ (Est 3.15), and ‘edict’ (Est 8.17). When used in this verse it likely means something like ‘palace regulation’, ‘harem regulation’, ‘harem practice’. The text is not suggesting that this was a formal law for how women in Persia were to beautify themselves.
 - 1.4. Why are told about this twelve-month period of beauty treatments?
 - 1.4.1. We are informed of this process to emphasize the extravagance of the Persian court—as was the case with the account of Ahasuerus’ party (Est 1.3-8).
 - 1.4.2. The extravagance included the use of (disposable) women for the king’s desires and pleasure. Many had to embellish their bodies for a year to spend a single night with the king.
2. What happened at the end of the twelve-month beautification process?
 - 2.1. Each young woman spent one night with the king. Persian monarchs had their wives and concubines visit them in rotation.¹¹⁵ According to historical accounts, Darius III had 360 concubines with him¹¹⁶ when he travelled with his army.
 - 2.2. Alexander the Great continued this ‘tradition’: “In addition to all this, he added concubines to his

¹¹⁴ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 2, chapter 86, para. 5;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D86%3Asection%3D5

¹¹⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 69, para. 6;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D69%3Asection%3D6

¹¹⁶ Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Life of Alexander the Great* (III. 3.24), penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Curtius/3*.html

retinue in the manner of Darius, in number not less than the days of the year and outstanding in beauty as selected from all the women of Asia. Each night these paraded around the couch of the king so that he might select the one with whom he would lie that night. Alexander, as a matter of fact, employed these customs rather sparingly and kept for the most part to his accustomed routine, not wishing to offend the Macedonians.”¹¹⁷

- 2.3. Ahasuerus may have followed the same practice and had available a different young woman for each night for a year. Possibly the origin of the Persian monarchs having a different young woman each night is recorded in Esther (Est 2.2-4).
- 2.4. Ahasuerus would have become bored with this process. He would not have been able to remember the names of the young women, and they would have become nothing more than a blur of bodies passing through his bedchamber.
- 2.5. Why are we told about this practice in the king’s bedchamber?
 - 2.5.1. To reinforce, again, the wanton extravagance and indulgence of the Persian king. From a human perspective he was his own authority and his lusts untameable. God would bring him in line through the influence of Esther.
 - 2.5.2. To set the stage for Esther. She stands out as being remarkable. The king would notice her and distinguish her from the stream of bodies passing through his bedchamber. Also, it creates a point of tension for later in the account when Esther has to tell Mordecai that she had not been called into the king’s presence for thirty days (Est 4.11).
3. What provision was made for a young woman entering the king’s bedchamber?
 - 3.1. Some interpreters suggest that each young woman could take something with her from the harem of the virgins which she could keep after her night with the king, when she would be consigned to the harem of the concubines.
 - 3.2. However, most interpreters conclude that each young woman could select anything she wished to take with her *into* the king’s bedchamber.
 - 3.3. The purpose was to take something which, in her estimation, would please the king by heightening his sensual experience, make her stand out from the others, and make her attractive to the king. There would have been a limited inventory of things which she could have taken with her—for example, she might have been able to select an item of clothing, a piece of jewelry, a fan, a piece of fruit or a dessert, a goblet of premium wine, a bouquet of flowers, or incense to burn.
 - 3.4. Even the most beautiful of the many beautiful women would have had to try hard to stand out in the presence of the spoiled and sensual king. She would have had to select something which would make her probably single meeting with the king memorable. How the night went would determine her future—becoming queen and having a life of luxury or being consigned to the harem like a cow in a large herd.
 - 3.5. Reference is made to this practice of letting the young women make the selection of what to take with her, to set up a contrast for Esther’s later deference to Hegai’s advice.
4. What happened after a young woman spent a night with the king?
 - 4.1. Unless she stood out from the crowd and was selected as queen she would be consigned to the harem of the concubines.
 - 4.2. It appears that there were three grades among the wives/concubines of the Persian king. The queen was in the first grade. The king’s auxiliary wives, e.g., from marriage alliances with noble families (from whom a new queen would normally have been selected), were in the first harem. The second harem was composed of the king’s concubines. The concubines had no legal standing as wives and might never appear again in the presence of the king. Many would live a life of loneliness, idleness, childlessness, and virtual widowhood.
 - 4.3. The concubines were treated as mistresses or slaves. Although they lived in relative luxury they

¹¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* (XVII.77), penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/17D*.html

could be used by the king however he wished—e.g., called to entertain guests or given as gifts to visiting dignitaries.

5. What determined if a concubine would later gain access to the king's bedchamber?
 - 5.1. Only if she was called by name.
 - 5.2. If the king was processing 365 virgins, it is unlikely that he remembered many of their names. They would have generally appeared similar to one another, and the king likely was very self-centred and not very interested in learning the name of his companion for a one-night stand.
 - 5.3. Reference is made to this practice of the king calling a wife or concubine by name to foreshadow Esther's dangerous situation when she has to visit the king without an invitation to plead for the lives of her people (Est 4.11).
6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.12-14).
 - 6.1. *Patience vs Chaffing* – How did Esther behave when put into difficult circumstances?
 - 6.1.1. She was essentially a slave—and a sex-slave at that. Yet,
 - 6.1.1.1. She was obedient. She did not start a union (the Sisterhood of Harem Rights for Enslaved Workers—SHREW) to demand harem rights or go on strike.
 - 6.1.1.2. She was patient. She trusted that God was working all things for her good (Rom 8.28) and his glory.
 - 6.1.1.3. She displayed a spirit of Christian contentment. She was thankful for what she had (1 Tim 6.7-8) and not anxious about tomorrow (Mt 6.34).
 - 6.1.2. She is a prime example of how Christians should respond to adversity imposed by wicked men, where there is no legitimate and clear means of changing our circumstances.
 - 6.1.3. The constraints imposed on her (i.e., the regulations for the women) show how difficult it was for her to take principled action (Est 4.11) when the time came (i.e., to obey God rather than man (Acts 5.29)).
 - 6.2. *Paganism vs Christianity* – The harems of the Persian monarchs illustrate the profound difference between pagan amorality (actually immorality; Rom 1.18-22, 28-32) and Christian morality, particularly in the realm of sexual relations. Pagan religions often include perverse sexual practices—e.g., fertility rites with prostitutes or endorsing polygamy. Many also treat women as sub-human or second-class humans and chattel. Biblical Christianity:
 - 6.2.1. Recognizes (in principle and mostly in practice) that men and women are both created in the image of God.
 - 6.2.2. Declares marriage is to be between one man and one woman (Gen 2.22b, 24; Mt 19.4-5); with sexual relations confined to that relationship (Ex 20.14; Lev 18.20; Mt 5.27; Acts 15.20; Rom 1.29; Rom 13.9; Heb 13.4).
 - 6.2.3. Teaches that women/wives are to be honoured and not treated as sex objects (Prov 31.10-31; Eph 5.22-33).
 - 6.2.3.1. Are beauty pageants legitimate? Should Christian girls participate in them?
 - 6.2.3.2. Beauty pageants include elements which are similar to the beautifying process of the Persian harem and treating women as sex objects—displaying near naked bodies for no other reason than to have them looked at; and they undervalue character, intelligence, and personality.
 - 6.2.3.3. Christians should probably avoid them.¹¹⁸ However, attacking them is fruitless in society where there are far deeper practices which are destroying any moral foundation of society that still exists, and which need to be addressed—abortion, endorsement of homosexual practices, destruction of marriage, and a lack of any constraints on fornication.

¹¹⁸ For an alternate view, consider: Mandy E. McMichael, "Pageant Preachers," *Christianity Today*, 2009-06-17; www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/juneweb-only/124-32.0.html?paging=off

- 6.2.4.Requires that husbands not deprive their wives of intimacy in the bedchamber (1 Cor 7.5).
- 6.2.5.Has a moral basis for exposing the harem system as inhumane in contrast with the Christian home.

We see a continuation of the Persian attitude toward women in Islam to varying degrees (depending on the country and the nature of the Islamic faction in control)—e.g., polygamy, easy divorce of wives, ‘honour killings’ of daughters who are raped or commit fornication, forced female circumcision, allowing men to rape non-Muslim women with no censure, limiting women’s rights (e.g., to attend school or drive), etc.

- 6.2.6.It is ironic that liberal media and politicians speak of toleration of Islam, when it is so oppressive of women. The reason is that liberals like the anti-Christian position of Islam.
- 6.2.7.Unless God intervenes and destroys Islam, Islam is going to unleash forces of destruction which will cause liberals to rue the day they advocated its presence in the West.
- 6.3. *Pleasures vs Chastity* – The example of Ahasuerus illustrates the fact that the wickedness of man is great, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually (Gen 6.5).
 - 6.3.1.In this case, one person, Ahasuerus, abused power and used the lives of many other people to satisfy his personal lusts. Even today, those who have no fear of God and have the opportunity, satisfy their desires without limit—for example, it has been reported that Kim Jong-Un has a 'Pleasure Squad' of teenage girls who follow him around.¹¹⁹
 - 6.3.2.Men with less autocratic power, but who are limited by no moral principles or the fear of God put no boundaries on satisfying their sensuous pleasures. Examples include:
 - 6.3.2.1. Spending more than \$.5M for a bottle of whisky.¹²⁰
 - 6.3.2.2. Men who father many children by many women, who collect welfare.¹²¹
- 6.4. *Providence vs Chance* – God’s purpose for telling us about practices in the Persian harem is not to titillate our imaginations but to teach us that nothing happens by chance and that God is providentially governing all events, to work out his great plan of redemption.
 - 6.4.1.In this case, the act of redemption will save the Jews living throughout the Empire from Haman’s wickedly destructive scheme—thus preserving the line leading to the Messiah.
 - 6.4.2.The placement of Esther to facilitate the preservation of the Jews in 510 BC is an example of the work God does while preserving his people throughout history as he builds his eternal Church.

Presentation (Est 2.15-18)

- 1. What did Esther take with her when she went to the king’s bedchamber?
 - 1.1. We are not told what she took with her. Some believe that she took a single rose.
 - 1.2. Whatever she did take was what Hegai had advised her to take.
 - 1.3. What does Esther’s deferring to Hegai’s advice indicate? It indicates that:
 - 1.3.1.She was humble and modest. She did not rely on her own opinion as to what would please Ahasuerus. This was not a sign of her being shrewd but of deference to Hegai whom she believed knew what was best and would please Ahasuerus.
 - 1.3.2.She did not have an ambition to be queen or a lust for power. She was focused on being virtuous and chaste.
 - 1.3.3.She put no trust in external adornment, but rather in the adornment of her heart (1 Pt 3.1-6). While the other young women may have asked for many things (‘whatever she desired’; Est 2.13) to try to make an impression on the king, Esther asked for nothing

¹¹⁹ Simon Tomlinson, "Kim Jong Un and his 'pleasure squad' of teenage virgins," *MailOnline*, 2016-04-29; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3565120/Kim-Jong-pleasure-squad-teenage-virgins-tyrant-forces-troupe-schoolgirls-life-servitude-North-Korea-s-elite.html

¹²⁰ Bronte Lord, "The world's most expensive whisky," *CNN Money*, 2014-01-21; money.cnn.com/2014/01/21/news/economy/whisky-auction/

¹²¹ Lydia Warren, "Tennessee's deadbeat dads," *Mail Online*, 2012-06-14; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2159476/Tennessees-deadbeat-dads-The-men-81-children-46-different-women--theyre-paying-child-support-them.html

beyond what Hegai had appointed for her.

- 1.3.4. Whatever Hegai advised her to take with her, was likely different from what the other women had taken, or it would not have been mentioned by the writer. Thus, the difference resides primarily in its simplicity—e.g., not expensive jewels or fancy clothing.

1.4. Why would Esther's approach have proven successful?

1.4.1. Her natural beauty needed little enhancement or adornment.

1.4.2. The simplicity of her approach would have stood out as being different. The other young women would have been ornamented with expensive items. Esther's rejection of these trappings would have surprised Ahasuerus.

1.4.3. What Ahasuerus needed/wanted was a wife, not just a woman—he had plenty of the latter.

1.4.4. In many situations going with the simple is better. For example:

1.4.4.1. A carefully assembled one-page resume, with clear evidence of work experience, stands out from long resumes padded with exhausting detail and trendy words.

1.4.4.2. A condominium apartment decorated with clean simplicity has greater appeal than a cluttered one. For example, when staging an apartment for sale, ensure that the scale of the furniture fits the space, use neutral colours, don't be trendy, etc.

1.4.4.3. Too many options in a brand confuses people and reduces overall sales. For example, General Mills reduced the number of flavour options for Hamburger Helper, and sold more, rather than less, product.

1.4.4.4. Elaborate speeches (sermons) nested many levels deep do not have as lasting impression as simple messages with directed action.

1.4.4.5. Engineers are encouraged to apply the KISS formula to their designs for anything, from bridges to websites. A simple, uncluttered, uncomplicated, design works best.

1.4.4.6. Pictures of meeting of world leaders usually shows them wearing dark suits and red ties (the males). They do not want to stand out as being oddities.

1.5. What was the result of her decision to defer to Hegai's advice?

1.5.1. She won favour in the eyes of all who saw her—i.e., who saw how she would enter the king's bedchamber or, in general, her deferential behaviour continued to impress everyone with whom she dealt.

2. What does the statement 'when the turn came for Esther ...' tell us?

2.1. We are not told what her position was in the queue of young woman from the harem of the virgins who were being sent into Ahasuerus' bedchamber. However, she was apparently not the first one.

2.2. It is likely that Hegai was looking out for her and knew that the first young women sent in would not be selected, as the king would want to sample others. However, she would not be the last either, as the king might have been expected to get bored and make a selection before he had seen all the young women. Hegai may have been strategic in selecting the day when Esther would be sent in, so that the king would be attentive to her.

3. Why does the account remind us of Esther's family connections?

3.1. To honour Mordecai, who had raised Esther, in order to set the stage for his appearance as the one who foiled an attempted assassination (Est 2.19-23).

3.2. To emphasize the role of covenantal families in raising God fearing, obedient children (Prov 22.6). Esther was humble and obedient because she had been raised by Mordecai, an honest, God-honouring man.

3.3. To remind us that Esther was a real person subjected to the experiences of a harem and lustful king. It is at the moment of what would appear to be her greatest trial, thus far, that we are reminded that this is not a fairy tale—a noble prince on a white horse is not going to rush in and rescue her—but an account of the nitty-gritty, dirty details of life.

4. What are we told about the time of year in which Esther was presented to the king?
 - 4.1. It was in the tenth month, i.e., mid-December to mid-January. It would likely have been a cold and wet day and Ahasuerus may have been a bit desultory. This could have been considered a disadvantage for Esther as the king may have had less interest in sensual matters. However, Esther blew into Ahasuerus' bedchamber like a gentle summer breeze that brought with it the radiant sunshine of her personality.
5. What was the king's reaction on meeting Esther?
 - 5.1. He loved her.
 - 5.1.1. The phrase 'the king loved Esther' probably does not mean that Ahasuerus exhibited an unselfish benevolence toward Esther. The NIV's translation, 'was attracted to her', may give a better sense of the meaning.
 - 5.1.2. Kings in the position of Ahasuerus probably did not have much experience with true love. They were raised by servants and did not experience much parental love. They were pampered and indulged in their selfishness and knew little of loving another person with no expectation of recompense. Their enjoyment of sensual pleasure was obtained through force and not through a reciprocal love.
 - 5.1.3. The emotion of unselfish love was probably foreign to Ahasuerus. However, something happened to him that night that stirred a different feeling in him that had not arisen when he was with the previous women.
 - 5.2. How extreme was Ahasuerus' love for Esther?
 - 5.2.1. His love for her was more than anything he had encountered with any other woman in his harem, since the removal of Vashti. It is possible that the author is informing us that his passions were so inflamed on meeting Esther that he could not contain them—he became so smitten and infatuated with her that he would have given anything to possess her. However, that may be a misunderstanding. Ahasuerus did not covet Esther, he owned her as a slave; and since she was sitting in front of him and his wish was her command, he did not have to give up anything to possess her.
 - 5.2.2. There is a hint in the text (17) that seems to indicate that something more than inflamed lust was motivating Ahasuerus' love.
 - 5.2.2.1. The use of 'more than' tells us that he had *loved* other women. However, that is obvious. He 'loved' many in the sensual sense of finding their physical appearance attractive or by 'making love' to them. Thus, the 'more than' may be indicating a different *kind* of love.
 - 5.2.2.2. Esther won grace and favor in his sight. Ahasuerus became fascinated by Esther. He had never met anyone like her. It is possible that his erotic 'love' (lust) changed into something closer to a friendly or neighborly interest in her—he had to put aside his selfishness for a moment as his curiosity was piqued and he had to learn more about her.
 - 5.3. What is surprising about this reaction on the part of Ahasuerus?
 - 5.3.1. Because of the preparation rituals required for all the young women in the harem of the virgins, they would have all looked essentially the same and all would have smelled nice. They would have all been a blur of bodies to Ahasuerus, and he could probably not have distinguished one from another in the light of day.
 - 5.3.2. It was based on a single night's encounter. There is no indication that he sent her into the harem and eventually called her back by name (Est 2.14). It is surprising that he could have learned enough about her in one night that he would love her more than any other woman—particularly when much of the night would not normally have included opportunities for intelligent discussion about world affairs or Esther's interests.
 - 5.4. How can we account for Ahasuerus's reaction?
 - 5.4.1. There was something that differentiated Esther from all the other young women, and it

wasn't the appearance of her body—even though she was beautiful (Est 2.7). Her beauty got her into the harem of the virgins, but she was one of many beautiful women in the harem.

5.4.2. Esther must have had an incredible personality. This is implied by earlier statements (Est 2.9, 15) and by that fact that “she won grace and favour” in the king’s sight. Esther had the kind of personality that lights up a room and that becomes the centre of attention without being selfish and saying ‘look at me’. She had a force of will, determination, and virtuous integrity which stood out from the rest of the pampered virgins in the harem, and yet she was modest and unassuming. She did not attempt to attract people to her through sensuous actions (e.g., winks), poses (e.g., tilting her head), or glances (e.g., looking slightly over her shoulder). She was unaffected and natural in her speech and actions. We can often sense quickly if someone is real or fake—for example, we can discern when we see two men wearing silk suits which one is the creative entrepreneur going to a board meeting and which one is the shady used car salesman; or we can tell, between two men wearing cowboy gear, who is the real rancher and who is the urban *wan'abe*. Similarly, we can distinguish a genuine smile from a forced and faked one. And, we can see the sparkle of real enthusiasm in the eyes of a passionate person.

5.4.3. While she was beautiful and well groomed and appareled, what differentiated her was the adornment of her heart (1 Pt 3.1-6).

5.5. Since the creation of Eve, until the time of Ahasuerus, there may have been no lovelier a woman than Esther.

6. What honours were bestowed upon Esther by the king?

6.1. He placed a royal crown on her head.

6.1.1. We noted (Est 1.11) that the word (כִּתְרָה) used here is probably better translated as ‘headdress’, as in the ESV’s alternate reading. Persian queens did not wear crowns of precious metals set with large precious stones like those worn by Western monarchs. It was probably more like a shawl, possibly with a veil, with a series of delicate strings of pearls or jewels.

6.2. He made her his queen.

6.2.1. He married her, and she became his primary wife, rather than leaving her as a concubine (sex-slave) in the harem, in spite of her being a commoner and not being from a family of the Persian nobility.

6.3. He gave a wedding/coronation banquet in her honour.

6.3.1. Feasts were standard fare among royalty to commemorate momentous occasions such as victories in war, birthdays, and weddings; or to fete individuals. The use of dinners and parties for similar purposes continues in our day.

6.3.2. It banquet was called ‘Esther’s feast’. It was called this because it was intended to give her praise, or in years following was remembered as the feast given to honour her.

6.3.3. The account establishes a contrast between Vashti, who refused to appear at Ahasuerus’ banquet wearing her royal headdress, and Esther who appeared at the banquet dressed as queen. The contrast shows that Esther was obedient where Vashti was not.

6.4. He granted a (temporary) remission of taxes.

6.4.1. Some commentators argue that the word (הַנָּחָה), used here, means a ‘causing to rest’ (related to the word נָח, to which the name Noah is related), and thus that he proclaimed a holiday from work. However, the Septuagint (ἀφεσις; ‘forgiveness’) supports the rendering ‘remission of taxes’.

6.4.2. The remission of taxes may have been of those currently overdue or of those immediately pending. He would not have released the provinces from all future taxes (compare 10.1 or the royal treasury would have become quickly depleted).

6.5. He gave gifts.

- 6.5.1. What gifts might he have given?
 - 6.5.1.1. An important form of gift in those days would have been robes or other items of clothing (Judges 14.12-14; 2 Ki 5.22), or possibly money or jewels. Coins had been invented at least 100 years before the time of Ahasuerus, in Lydia (in modern Turkey). Giving money at weddings has been an ongoing tradition. For example, invitations to Chinese weddings often include gifts of money, throwing coins or bills at weddings is still a tradition in some cultures, and in some cultures the bride or groom give monetary gifts.
- 6.5.2. In what manner did he give the gifts?
 - 6.5.2.1. The ESV has 'royal generosity', The NIV has 'royal liberality', the NASB has 'according to the king's bounty', the NKJV has 'generosity of the king'; and the KJV has 'state of the king'.
 - 6.5.2.2. The Hebrew reads 'as/by hand of the king'. Thus, none of the translations are literal, and all provide an 'interpretive' meaning. The meaning seems to be that he gave gifts 'in a kingly or royal manner'.
 - 6.5.2.3. What might be a 'kingly manner' of dispensing gifts?
 - 6.5.2.3.1. Giving large or valuable gifts.
 - 6.5.2.3.2. We might construe this to mean that he did it generously, but it could also mean that he did it in a showy manner. This would be more consistent with what we have so far discerned about Ahasuerus and immature behaviour.
- 6.6. Why did he release the provinces from paying taxes and give gifts? Possibly:
 - 6.6.1. To provide a means of sharing his joy at finding a new queen with his people.
 - 6.6.2. To impress the nation with his status as their king and with his newfound 'wealth' in his new, beautiful queen.
 - 6.6.3. To give the impression that he was a benevolent father to his nation.
- 7. How long had Ahasuerus been without a queen?
 - 7.1. The time between Vashti's refusal (the third year of his reign; Est 1.3 [520-519 BC]) and Esther's coronation (the seventh year of his reign [516 BC]) was 3-4 years.
 - 7.2. Most modern commentators explain this gap as the period which included the Greek campaign of Xerxes I (483-479 BC). However, it fits equally well (and probably better¹²²) with the Babylonian campaign of Darius I (519 BC) as Darius would have left for Babylon shortly after he deposed Vashti, and would have returned to Susa and been in the city at the time the suggestion was made to add beautiful virgins to the harem. For example, if the suggestion was made to Ahasuerus in 518 BC, and it took 6 months to collect the virgins, followed by a year of beauty preparations, and some time (e.g., 6 months) before Esther's strategically placed turn came to visit Ahasuerus, a total of two years would have passed. Thus, Esther would have been declared queen in 516 BC.
 - 7.3. What might be the significance of the month in which Esther was taken to Ahasuerus being named in the account?
 - 7.3.1. We already noted that it was in the period mid-December to mid-January when Esther was taken to Ahasuerus. This may have been a strategic move on the part of Hegai to give Esther maximum advantage (i.e., about half way through the pool of new virgins) and in a dreary part of the year so that Esther's beauty and personality would stand out.
 - 7.3.2. However, the use of the Hebrew name for the month, Tebeth (Tevet), may be important. While it is the only mention of the name of that month in the Bible, it indicates that the author of Esther was a (devout) Jew since he used a Jewish name for the month rather than a Persian name, even while in the midst of Persia. Thus, the account was not a Persian story that was adapted by later Jews. We noted previously that the author was most likely

¹²² See the earlier section, *Potentate*, for the analysis of which Persian king is called Ahasuerus in Esther.

Mordecai.

8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.15-18).
 - 8.1. *Be honest* – Esther appears to have had simple tastes and did not go to extravagant lengths to make herself appear to be something or someone which she was not. Esther, by nature, wasn't like some women who need to carry a second suitcase when they travel for their hair dressing devices, cosmetics, perfumes, and jewelry; or like women who believe that it is necessary to undergo cosmetic surgery to 'enhance' features of their appearance (e.g., with implants, Botox injections, rhinoplasty, or lip augmentation). Simple tastes are to be preferred because they are less expensive, are evidence of an uncluttered life, and allow a person to focus on what really should be his or her differentiating attributes, such as spiritual maturity, character, personality, and accomplishments (1 Pt 3.1-6).
 - 8.2. *Be humble* – Esther was popular with all who knew her because she was not conceited or opinionated. She was humble (1 Pt 5.5), cooperative (Phil 2.1-5) and willing to take advice (Prov 9.9; Prov 13.18) from her mentors (Mordecai and Hegai).
 - 8.3. *Be holy* – Esther placed obedience to God and man above her own wishes and desires.
 - 8.4. *Be hopeful* – Esther trusted God. She believed that whatever circumstances befell her, God would work all things for his glory and her good (Rom 8.28). Her example (an orphan and sex-slave from a despised people group is elevated to a throne in the most power kingdom on earth), along with the example of others such as Joseph and Daniel, teaches us to trust God and believe that he disposes all things in a glorious manner. Even when it may seem that events are out of control or that things are not unfolding for our welfare, God still rules and will work all things according to his eternal plan, for his glory and our good.

Providential Discovery (Est 2.19-23)

Patriarch (Est 2.19-20)

1. What event is referenced?
 - 1.1. A second gathering of the virgins.
 - 1.2. What could this mean?
 - 1.2.1. Options suggested include: 1) a parade of the remaining virgins from the pool who were assembled at the time Esther was taken to the palace, with the intention of displaying Esther's beauty to them and indicating why they would not be selected; 2) gathering the remaining virgins (in the custody of Hegai) and moving them into the permanent harem (in the custody of Shaashgaz), since one from that pool of virgins had been selected as queen; 3) a gathering of additional virgins into the harem of the virgins—possibly some of the advisors to the king had hoped to replace Esther because she had gained influence with the king and was not from the nobility..
 - 1.2.2. There is no article ('the') in the Hebrew—i.e., the text reads "in to be gathered, virgins". So, the reference is probably not to the virgins already in the palace. Therefore, it does not refer to the virgins remaining in the pool gathered at the time Esther was taken into the harem (Est 2.8). It probably is a reference to an additional gathering of virgins after the one which brought Esther to the palace.
 - 1.2.3. If it is a second gathering of virgins to increase the supply of harem virgins, it indicates that Ahasuerus had no intention of having only one wife, even though he had a new queen. A large harem was a sign of power and wealth for kings in the ancient world (1 Ki 11.2).¹²³
 - 1.3. Why is this mentioned?
 - 1.3.1. It refers to an event generally known to the Persians and Jews living in Susa, and provides a date reference for the events which are referred to in verses 21-23.

¹²³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harem

- 1.3.2. It also gives the writer another subtle opportunity to remind the readers of the debauched nature of the Persian court.
2. Where was Mordecai, and what does this tell us about him?
 - 2.1. Sitting at the king's gate.
 - 2.1.1. The king's gate would have been a building, rather than just an entry portal.
 - 2.1.2. The term likely refers to a place where official court business was carried out. In the ancient Middle East law cases and legal transactions were settled at the gates (Gen 19.1; Gen 23.10; Josh 20.4; Ruth 4.1; 2 Sam 15.2; Ps 127.5).
 - 2.1.3. Sitting at the king's gate would have been administrators responsible for collecting taxes, translating and publishing edicts, recording commercial transactions (e.g., the sale of land), and providing judgements on simple cases.
 - 2.1.4. The term 'king's gate' is used often in Esther (Est 2.19, 21; Est 3.2, 3; Est 4.2, 6; Est 5.9, 13; Est 6.10, 12), and only one other place in the OT. It implies a place of importance in Susa and the Persian court.
 - 2.2. What may be implied by his sitting at the king's gate?
 - 2.2.1. It probably means that Mordecai had an official role (although not in a senior capacity as he was not yet known to the king; Est 8.1) associated with the Persian administration. He may have been a clerk or low-level administrator.
 - 2.3. There are different opinions on how he came to be at the king's gate:
 - 2.3.1. He was promoted to an advisory role when Esther became queen. However, it would have been likely that her Jewish identity would have been known (Est 5.13), since Mordecai could have dressed or groomed himself in a different style from the Persians and would have observed Jewish practices such as Sabbath observance.
 - 2.3.2. He was already acting in an advisory role before Esther became queen, and thus had access to the palace (Est 2.11), which would not be available to non-officials.
 - 2.4. Was Mordecai a eunuch, serving in the Persian court?
 - 2.4.1. It is possible that Daniel, Nehemiah, and Mordecai were eunuchs (2 Kings 20.18).¹²⁴
 - 2.4.2. It is likely that Mordecai was a eunuch since he was able to pass near the harem (Est 2.11), and those guarding at the king's gate were eunuchs (Est 2.21). Also, no mention is made of his having a family, other than Esther, whom he had adopted.
 - 2.5. We can conclude that Mordecai was likely serving in the administration of the Persian king. We can also see the writer building suspense. A low-level court administrator with no influence is going to act heroically and eventually become the second most powerful person in the land—"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1.27).
3. What secret did Esther continue to keep?
 - 3.1. Even after becoming queen she did not reveal her ethnic or national origin; in particular not to her husband Ahasuerus.
 - 3.2. As we noted previously, some of her closest confidants may have known, or surmised, something about her origin because of her communication with Mordecai (Est 2.11, 22; Est 4.4-16). However, Mordecai may have also disguised his nationality (Est 3.4).
 - 3.3. Why are we told this?
 - 3.3.1. To reinforce the fact that Esther's character had not changed after having been crowned queen in the most powerful nation on earth. She continued to be obedient and humble to her adopted father, Mordecai.

¹²⁴ James E Miller, *Eunuchs and Genealogies*, 2010; othersheep.org/JMiller_Raw_Material_2010_Chapter_14.pdf; see also Bruce L. Gerig, Eunuchs in the OT, Part 2 – Castration in Ancient Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, 2010; epistle.us/hbarticles/eunuchs2.html

- 3.3.2. To set the stage, through a repetition, for the surprise revelation of her origin when she accuses Haman of plotting to destroy her people.
4. Why did Esther continue to obey Mordecai?
- 4.1. She was obedient (Ex 20.12; Eph 6.1; Col 3.20). Mordecai had forbidden her to make known her kindred or people, and had not lifted the prohibition; so she continued to obey, as had been her habit.
 - 4.2. Esther continued to show deferential regard to her father, by adoption. She continued to be the dutiful daughter she had been while being raised in his home. The power, pleasures and profligacy of the palace did not corrupt her.
 - 4.3. She likely realized that her position as queen was tenuous. Vashti had been deposed on a whim, and she could be deposed equally easily if Ahasuerus became displeased with her. Revealing her ancestral origin might have raised an issue as the Jews were disliked by many—as evidenced by Haman’s attitude and the ease with which his plan was accepted by Ahasuerus.
 - 4.4. Was it wrong for her to have kept this secret from her husband?
 - 4.4.1. She was not being dishonest. We already considered the question of whether Esther lied by hiding her national origin (Est 2.9-11) and concluded that we are not required by God to speak all the truth at all times, but are required not to speak an untruth at any time.
 - 4.4.2. If Ahasuerus had asked her about her origin, then she would have been obligated to tell the truth. However, if someone makes a false assumption, we are not obligated to correct it. Regardless, Ahasuerus was so full of his own self-importance that he had no interest in inquiring into Esther’s background.
5. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.19-20).
- 5.1. *Selfless Simplicity* – Accounts of actors, athletes, musicians, politicians, or business leaders who let their positions or popularity get the better of them are endless. It is rare, and notable, when someone in a ‘high’ position is recognized for being a nice person, easy to work with, and caring of others.
 - 5.1.1. For example:
 - 5.1.1.1. Many young Disney stars appear to lead wholesome lives until they reach their late teens and then they display obnoxious behaviours (e.g., Britney and Jamie Lynn Spears, Miley Cyrus, and Lindsay Lohan). Similarly, a number of actors and actresses have been reported notoriously difficult to work with (e.g., Val Kilmer, Mike Meyers, Christian Bale, Julia Roberts, and Jennifer Lopez) because they use bad language, throw temper tantrums, argue with the director, demean members of the crew, or make ridiculous demands.
 - 5.1.1.2. Many athletes have egos larger than their shoe sizes or biceps (e.g., Kobe Bryant, Cristiano Ronaldo, LeBron James, Dennis Rodman, Alex Rodriguez, and Terrell Owens).
 - 5.1.1.3. Many politicians believe that they are above the law (e.g., Barack Obama; Hillary Clinton, Dan Walker and Otto Kerner [governors of Illinois who served jail terms], Richard Nixon, Rod Blagojevich, and George Ryan,).
 - 5.1.1.4. We could multiply the examples of corporate executives and union bosses (and, sadly, even church leaders) who rise through the ranks and when they reach the top look with contempt on those who are in positions which they once held. They demand perks and favours which they withhold from their underlings.
 - 5.1.2. We have already considered Esther’s example of simplicity and humility. However, it is good to remind ourselves that Christians are to be humble regardless of the positions of authority which they may have (Phil 2.1-5; 1 Pt 5.5).
 - 5.2. *Steadfast Submission* – Esther sets an example of the relationship between a child and his parents. The command, “Honor your father and your mother ...” (Ex 20.12), does not have a time limit on

it. It does not say, ‘honour them until you turn 19’ or ‘honour them until you get married’.

5.2.1. Honouring parents includes obeying them, even as adult children. For example, if a father tells a 30-year-old son that he should not gamble in Las Vegas, he should listen to his father’s command—he has no legitimate reason for disobeying his father. The retort, “I am an adult now and can make my own decisions.” is not legitimate.

5.2.2. However, the obedience of children to parents has limits:

5.2.2.1. Parents are not to require anything of their children that is sinful. A child (particularly an adult child) should follow Peter’s example, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5.29)

5.2.2.2. Parents are to respect the marriage relationship of their children. Adult children who are married have a mutual obligation to their spouses which supersedes that of the obligation to parents (Gen 2.24). For example, if a father told a married daughter to invest her money in a particular pension fund and her husband told her to invest in a different pension fund, she should respect her husband’s wishes (and reasons) over her father’s.

5.3. *Secular Service* – Chapter 23 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is dedicated to the topic of the magistrate, and says in paragraph 2, “It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth ...”

5.3.1. Mordecai (Est 2.18, 21; Est 10.3) and Esther had positions in the Persian government and served God faithfully in their offices. What are other exemplars, given in the Bible, of people serving God while serving in pagan governments?

5.3.1.1. Joseph in Egypt looked out for the interests of his family (Gen 50.19-21). In this instance it was through revealing dreams that Joseph was raised to a position of authority in the pagan government. Pharaoh called Joseph Zaphenath-paneah (Gen 41.45), possibly from the Egyptian for ‘the god speaks and he lives’ or, as suggested by one of the Targums (an Aramaic translation of the OT) a word play meaning ‘revealer of secrets’.

5.3.1.2. Daniel served in high positions in the Babylonian and Persian courts. He did not compromise his beliefs for advancement, faced trials such as being thrown into a lions’ den, and was highly respected for being a man of principle.

5.3.1.3. Ezra appears to have been a scribe known to Artaxerxes (Ezra 7.6) and was thus able to ask for permission to lead back a delegation of captive Jews to Jerusalem and restore the regular teaching of the law and the Temple services.

5.3.1.4. Nehemiah, wine steward to Artaxerxes, was permitted in 445 BC to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and provide for the welfare of the dispersed returned exiles.

5.3.1.5. Some serving in Caesar’s household were believers who Paul endorsed (Phil 4.22).

5.3.1.6. A topic for a lifetime of research would be to identify ‘Mordecais’ and ‘Daniels’ who God has raised up in governments throughout history (e.g., Abraham Kuyper, Margaret Thatcher, George W Bush, and Steven Harper).

5.3.2. Besides noting that (some) Christians are called to serve in high positions of government we should consider that Mordecai and Esther remained faithful to God while executing their secular service. They did not compromise Biblical principles for personal advancement or recognition, but used the authority of their government positions to advance God’s purposes.

Prevention (Est 2.21-23)

1. In which days did the assassination plot occur?

1.1. During the days when virgins were gathered a second time into the king’s harem (Est 2.19).

1.2. We don’t know the date, but it was sometime between 516 BC when Esther was declared queen

and 511 BC when Haman issued his decree against the Jews (see, the section titled *Period*).

2. What did Bigthan and Teresh do?
 - 2.1. They plotted to assassinate Ahasuerus.
 - 2.2. Bigthan, or Bigthana (Est 6.2), may have been the person named Bigtha (Est 1.10) who was among the seven closest advisors to the king. Ironically, his name appears to be the Persian equivalent of the ‘gift of God’.
 - 2.3. What role did Bigthan and Teresh have?
 - 2.3.1. They are referred to as two of the eunuchs of the king who were responsible for guarding the threshold. This may mean that their primary role was to guard the bedchamber of the king—i.e., they were bodyguards of the king.
 - 2.3.2. The term ‘eunuch’ was used to refer to the (castrated) state of servants but also to their position as servants.
 - 2.3.3. Eunuchs were not only used to guard the harem—because they could be trusted among the women—but were also assigned other positions of trust such as guarding the king or as food or wine tasters. The belief among ancient kings was that eunuchs were less likely to plot against them since they could not have children and found dynasties of their own.
 - 2.3.4. An irony (and there are many in Esther) in this assassination attempt is that these men were in a position of high trust which gave them access to the king and made it more likely that their plot against the king would be successful.
 - 2.4. What may have been the reason they plotted to assassinate the king?
 - 2.4.1. We are not told the reason. However, some conjectures which make sense within the context have been suggested as possible motives, such as: political ambition, personal enrichment, anger or malice, revenge, or envy.
 - 2.4.2. It is possible that the primary motive related to the appointment of Esther as queen. These bodyguards/advisors may have been supporters of (or related to) Vashti who had been deposed. They may have objected angrily to Esther’s appointment since she was not from a noble family and determined to ‘punish’ the king—it would have then been easy to get rid of Esther.
 - 2.5. Assassination plots have been a constant concern of despots (and even of popularly elected officials) throughout history. Xerxes, the son of Darius I (Ahasuerus), was assassinated and other tyrants and despots have been the target of assassins for millennia.¹²⁵
 - 2.6. The word *assassin* is derived from an Arabic word *hashshashin* or *hashishin*, which appears to have been associated with a group of Persians (Iranians) during the Middle Ages who were responsible for the deaths of various Arab and Persian targets. The association of the cult of assassins with the Persians seems appropriate given that Bigthan and Teresh, Persians, plotted to assassinate Ahasuerus, another Persian.
3. What did Mordecai do when he found out about the plot?
 - 3.1. Mordecai reported the assassination attempt to Esther—likely through one of her maids or harem eunuchs—who in turn reported it to the king and gave credit for the information to Mordecai.
 - 3.2. We are not told how Mordecai discovered the plot. However, it is not difficult to believe that the plotters were overheard by Mordecai, who sat at the king’s gate, or that he was informed by one of his acquaintances (e.g., another eunuch) who overheard the plotting of the would-be assassins. The plotters may have even been boasting to their associates about what they planned to do. Alternatively, Mordecai may have been observant and noticed strange behaviour, which awoke suspicions that he followed up.
4. Why did Mordecai report the plot?

¹²⁵ List of assassinations: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_assassinations

Reasons might include:

- 4.1. He was a loyal subject of the king.
 - 4.2. He wanted to avoid the societal chaos that would be part of a coup (Jer 29.7).
 - 4.3. He may have been protecting his own job. He might have been replaced (or even killed) under a new regime, particularly if he was seen as being loyal to Ahasuerus.
 - 4.4. He wanted to protect Esther. If there had been a coup, the harem and children of Ahasuerus would likely have been executed.
 - 4.5. God was fulfilling his plans to protect the Jews by providing a means he would use later to humiliate Haman.
5. What did the king do when he heard about the plot?
- 5.1. He investigated the matter and then punished the plotters with death.
 - 5.1.1. He did not condemn them on mere hearsay or suspicion.
 - 5.1.2. If Bigthan and Teresh had been overheard by others there would have been a number of witnesses to their plot.
 - 5.2. He had the discovery of the attempted assassination recorded in the chronicles.
 - 5.2.1. Historiographers followed the Persian kings to record their actions and decrees in the chronicles. The records from these chronicles form the basis of many of the inscriptions found on walls and pillars of palaces and in the records of Herodotus, Tacitus, and other Greek historians.
 - 5.2.2. The chronicles were retained in the national archives, similar to how the records of US presidents are retained in libraries built to commemorate their terms in office.
 - 5.2.3. This particular account of the assassination attempt and its discoverer was recorded in the king's presence. This would have added an element of authority to the record, as the king supervised how it was recorded.
6. What did the king not do?
- 6.1. He did not recognize or reward Mordecai for reporting the plot. This oversight is probably a surprise, considering that ancient monarchs often lavished rewards on those who were faithful to them.
 - 6.2. Why did he neglect this common courtesy?
 - 6.2.1. We are not told.
 - 6.2.2. Ultimately, the reason is that God was providentially preparing a number of years in advance, so that when the king had a sleepless night he would become aware of his oversight (Est 6.3).
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 2.21-23).
- 7.1. *Retribution* – Evil intentions and evil acts are known to God, if not immediately to men.
 - 7.1.1. God knows the inner workings of the heart of man (Ps 44.21; Jer 17.10; Acts 1.24; Acts 15.8; Heb 4.13).
 - 7.1.1.1. He will permit men to carry out their evil plans only as far as he has planned, in order to fulfill his greater purposes (Rom 8.28).
 - 7.1.1.2. He often defeats evil intentions before they can be carried into action. In this case, the plot of the assassins became known to other men and was stopped. Similarly, when men plotted to take Paul's life his young nephew heard about it and reported it (Acts 23.16-17). We hear often of plots which are reported by insiders, snitches or whistleblowers, or are foiled through human error or stupidity. For example, in 2013 a plot by two Al Qaeda-backed terrorists to blow up a Canadian train was revealed and prevented.¹²⁶ In another case, an ISIS instructor of suicide bombers blew up himself and his class of 21 students.¹²⁷ We will probably be

¹²⁶ www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-23/canada-thwarts-al-qaeda-plot-to-blow-up-train/4644970

¹²⁷ www.jihadwatch.org/2014/08/islamic-state-jihad-suicide-bombing-teacher-accidentally-blows-up-his-own-class

- surprised to discover how often plots have failed.
- 7.1.1.3. Why is it that plots to do evil often fail?
 - 7.1.1.3.1. Because of sin, men make mistakes and plans have weak points.
 - 7.1.1.3.2. Because of sin, partners in crime cannot get along and betray one another.
 - 7.1.1.3.3. Because God controls and limits the extent of evil that he will permit men to perpetrate.
 - 7.1.2. Nothing escapes from the watchful eye of God. He knows the covert sins and overt sins of all men and will bring all men to account for all of their sins (Num 32.23; Rom 2.16; 2 Cor 5.10).
 - 7.1.2.1. Not all sins are revealed and punished in this life. But all sins will be revealed and punished by God—if they are not covered over by the blood of Christ (Ps 103.8-13).
 - 7.2. *Responsibility* – It is a Christian’s responsibility to support the civil magistrate, even if he is evil.
 - 7.2.1. We noted in the previous section that a number of godly men served in pagan governments—including Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah as well as Esther and Mordecai. They provide a model and establish a standard for Christian involvement in pagan governments.
 - 7.2.2. How can all citizens fulfill their responsibility to the civil magistrate?
 - 7.2.2.1. *Supplicate for his welfare*. Pray for those in authority over you (Ezra 6.10; 1 Tim 2.1-2).
 - 7.2.2.2. *Submit to his will*. Obey the civil magistrate (Rom 13.1-7), as long as the submission does not require you to do something that is contrary to God’s law. Paul wrote from within the context of the rule of an evil emperor and Mordecai, a Jew, supported the Persian king.
 - 7.2.2.3. *Serve him wholeheartedly*. It is not right for a Christian to grudgingly serve within a pagan government or society. He has to work for the welfare of the people within his jurisdiction. For example, it would not be proper for a senior civil servant in the Wynne or Obama administrations to do as little as possible because he did not want his good work to reflect positively on the foolish or wicked elected officials. Similarly, all citizens should be respectful of those placed in authority over them—even if they are enemies of God and unbelievers (Mt 5.44). About a century earlier Jeremiah told the exiles in Babylon to seek the welfare of their places of exile (Jer 29.4-7). Similarly, Daniel displayed a sincere concern for the wicked king he served (Dan 4.19).
 - 7.3. *Reporting* – When is it necessary to report evil?
 - 7.3.1. Mordecai reported the assassination plot and prevented it.
 - 7.3.2. It is incumbent upon all citizens to report wicked and unlawful actions when they see or hear of them.
 - 7.3.3. How far are we to go in applying this principle?
 - 7.3.3.1. Clearly, if someone’s life or property are at stake, we are to report the action. For example, if we see an attempted murder or robbery in progress, we should call 911, and if (a big IF) we are reasonably able to stop the action we should. For example, when I was walking through the park at the end of our street, a group of young teens was trying to break the window of an earth digger that was parked in the GO parking lot that was being re-paved. I told them I was calling 911 and they scattered, and I gave their description to the dispatcher.
 - 7.3.3.2. However, are we to report the licence plate of every person we see speeding or failing to come to a complete stop at a stop sign? Or, are we to report every breach of a municipal bylaw? As an example, when we were repaving our driveway our neighbour complained that the removal of the curbstones was going to cause

erosion to his driveway. As a result, we were informed by a bylaw enforcement officer that we needed a permit to pave our driveway. It turns out that everyone is supposed to have a permit to pave a driveway in Toronto; however, the bylaw is not enforced unless someone complains. Not only that, but all retaining walls and landscaping (other than grass) must be at least 50cm from the sidewalk. Should I, as some have been doing,¹²⁸ file complaints against every person in my neighbourhood who is breaking the law? Or, to take it a bit further, should I report an illegal (i.e., without a permit) renovation being undertaken by a neighbour? How do I make the right judgement call?

7.3.4. The following are *possible* guidelines which may help to answer the question:

- 7.3.4.1. *Is the law legitimate?* Some laws are not valid because they contravene God's law. In a case such as this we have no obligation to report an infraction. For example, if a bakery refuses to decorate a cake for a homosexual wedding, I have no obligation to report that bakery. However, we must be careful with how we apply this guideline. Just because we don't like laws does not make it legitimate for us to disobey them. For example, we may object to a minimum-wage law on the principle that it is bad economic policy. However, that does not mean that we should break the law ourselves or ignore a retail establishment's flagrant flouting of the law.
- 7.3.4.2. *What is my motivation?* Is it righteous or vindictive? After the person reported our driveway re-paving I saw many infractions of the bylaws in our neighbourhood and thought about calling to complain. However, my motivation would have been wrong.
- 7.3.4.3. *Could any harm possibly come to someone or his property from the action?* For example, if I see teens painting graffiti on a store, the property owner will have a cost to repaint the wall and I should report it. In contrast, a well-manicured hedge along a sidewalk that is not set back 50cms from the sidewalk cannot cause harm to anyone. However, a tall hedge on a corner lot may block sight lines to oncoming traffic.
- 7.3.4.4. *Is it practical?* In principle, we should report all infractions of legitimate laws to the proper authorities. However, practical common-sense limits need to be applied or we could spend all of our waking hours filing complaints.
- 7.3.4.5. *Will enforcement be possible?* For example, would the police follow up on my reporting speeding infractions—even if I had a video record of the speeders? Or would bylaw enforcement officers have enough manpower to follow up on dog owners who did not pick up after their dogs in the nearby park, even if I had a video record of their leaving the excrement? I suspect, that there would never be enough manpower to address these kinds of infractions.

7.4. *Rewards* – Mordecai received no recognition at the time he reported the assassination plot—although he did later (Est 6.1-11). However, Mordecai did not report the plot with the expectation of receiving a reward. We are to do right and not expect recognition or reward.

7.4.1. We should be assured, however, that God recognizes when we have done what is right and will reward his saved people accordingly (Mt 25.21; 2 Tim 4.7-8)—whether in this.

Protagonist [Act II] (Est 3.1-7.10)

Plot Devised (Est 3.1-15)

¹²⁸ "Decades-old hedge target of suspected 'vexatious' complainer", *The Toronto Star*, 2014-07-19; www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/07/19/decadesold_hedge_target_of_suspected_vexatious_complainer.html

Promotion (Est 3.1-2a)

1. Who is introduced at this point?
 - 1.1. Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha.
 - 1.1.1. There is debate and speculation about the meaning of his name.
 - 1.2. What are we told about his ancestry?
 - 1.2.1. He was the son of Hammedatha, or son of *the Madatha* (the ‘h’ sound may be the article ‘the’), which may mean ‘given by the moon’.
 - 1.2.2. He was an Agagite. There is debate about what this means.
 - 1.2.2.1. Some understand that he was from a province in Persia called Agag, and argue that it was unlikely that a descendent of someone from Palestine would hold high office in the Persian Empire—however, Jews such as Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mordecai all held such high offices.
 - 1.2.2.2. Most commentators conclude that he was a descendent of Agag—or an Agag, the Amalekite royal title, rather than a personal name, like Pharaoh was for the Egyptians. Agag was the king of the Amalekites at the time of Israel’s king Saul (1 Sam 15.8, 33). Haman may have been a descendant of the particular Agag mentioned in 1 Samuel, a descendent of the royal house of the Amalekites—and a subject king with a throne (Est 3.1)—or an Agagite in nature. It has been suggested that the vowel points in Agag’s name were added by later Jews (the Masoretes) to suggest the connection of Haman with the Amalekites. However, Jews prior to the time of the Masoretes (5th to 10th century AD) appear to have held the view that Haman was an Amalekite and a direct descendent of Agag, or of the royal house of the Amalekites.
 - 1.2.3. If there was a connection between Haman and the Amalekites, then this may be part of the explanation for the intense hatred Haman had for the Jews (Est 3.8-9):
 - 1.2.3.1. The Amalekites, from the grandson of Esau (Gen 36.12, 16), had been bitter enemies of the Jews from the time of their 40 years in the desert (Ex 17.8-13) and were to be destroyed by the Israelites (Ex 17.14, 16; Dt 25.17-19).
 - 1.2.3.2. Saul was commanded to destroy all of the Amalekites, but he spared Agag and Samuel had to kill Agag (1 Sam 15.2-34). Some of the Amalekites escaped (1 Chron 4.43) and likely harboured an enduring animosity against Israel. Both Saul and Mordecai were Benjaminites (Est 2.5). So, there could have been a particular animosity between Benjaminites and Amalekites which was flamed into an intense hatred 600 years later when Haman discovered that Mordecai was a Jew (Est 3.4, 6) of Benjaminite background.
 - 1.2.3.3. Understanding Haman’s ancestry reinforces the antagonism which developed between him and Mordecai and gives a hint of his pending doom, since the Amalekites were to be overshadowed by the king of the Jews, per the prophecy of Balaam (Num 24.7).
- 1.3. What are the character traits of Haman, as indicated by the Book of Esther?
 - 1.3.1. All that we know about Haman is from the book of Esther. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.
 - 1.3.2. Haman had a fiery temper (Est 3.5; Est 5.9), was vengeful (Est 3.6), superstitious (Est 3.7), conniving (Est 3.7-8), a giver of bribes (Est 3.9), genocidal (Est 3.9, 13), proud and boastful (Est 5.11-12), vindictive (Est 5.14), vain (Est 6.6), wicked (Est 7.6), and a wimp (Est 7.8). Nothing good is mentioned about him. Everything recorded about him is what God despises in sinful human nature (Prov 6.16-19). He was both wicked and dangerous because of his high position.
 - 1.3.3. Haman became the prototype for all people who wanted to destroy the Jews—God’s OT covenant people—and who want to destroy Christians—God’s NT covenant people. Esther

was read each year in the synagogues by the Jews during the feast of Purim, and when his name was read, the congregation would stamp their feet and exclaim, “May his name be blotted out!”.

2. What did Ahasuerus do for Haman?
 - 2.1. He promoted him to the highest administrative position below himself. He made him his grand vizier—in modern terms equivalent to a prime minister, chancellor, or secretary of state.
 - 2.2. His throne (or chair) was set above that of all the other officials.
 - 2.2.1. His seat in the royal judgement hall would have been lower than the king’s, but higher than that of all other officials.
 - 2.2.2. The fact that he had a throne indicates that that he was allowed to sit in the king’s presence and was not required to stand with bowed head or fall prostrate. His having a throne indicates his position of authority.
 - 2.2.3. Jesus refers to the practice of preferential seating when he rebukes the Pharisees and scribes for wanting the best seats in the synagogues and at feasts (Mt 23.6; Lk 20.46).
 - 2.3. His duties would have included administering the empire (e.g., publishing decrees, collecting taxes, and overseeing large-scale public works such as the highway system). Ahasuerus was dependent on his administrative staff because he was indulgent in the pursuit of luxury, subject to vacillation and whims, and responsible for a massive empire.
 - 2.4. How might Haman have achieved his promotion?
 - 2.4.1. He may have had noble lineage (e.g., being descended from an Amalekite king, of a subject people).
 - 2.4.2. He may have had some native talents in administration.
 - 2.4.3. However, from what we considered about his character, we can justly infer he maneuvered the king into promoting him through the use of flattery, subtle smear campaigns against his peers, bribery, and threats.
 - 2.4.4. Since Ahasuerus appears to have been weak and gullible Haman’s ascent to the highest level was easy to achieve.
 - 2.5. What does the promotion of Haman tell us about the character of Esther?
 - 2.5.1. Esther had not attempted to obtain preferential treatment for Mordecai or her friends. Nor had she attempted to interfere in the promotion of Haman. This indicates, indirectly, that she was the opposite of those who connive to obtain power. She continued to be humble, submissive, and obedient, even though she was the queen of the most powerful empire on earth.
 - 2.5.2. Some might accuse her of being weak because she did not take action to stop the promotion of Haman—if she even knew the extent of his character flaws. However, she probably had no solid evidence about Haman’s wickedness until he began his campaign against the Jews.
3. Approximately how much time passed from when Esther was declared queen to the promotion of Haman? (Est 2.16 and 3.7)
 - 3.1. Esther was made queen in 516 BC and Haman casts his lots 511 BC. If we assume that it required only a few weeks for Haman to become upset at Mordecai’s refusal to bow to him, then it is likely that about four years had passed. During these four years, things may have appeared to be peaceful. However, God had a great trial in store which his people would have to face from Satan and his human cohorts—the enemies of the Jews.
4. What irony is evident when we contrast verses 2.23 and 3.1?
 - 4.1. A good man, who served the king and not himself, was ignored and a wicked man, who had only his own ambitions in mind, was promoted.
 - 4.2. Mordecai’s meritorious action, although it had been recorded, had not been rewarded. Instead honour had been conferred on a man who likely had done nothing which was selfless and

- contributed to the safety of the king or the empire.
- 4.3. This might lead someone to ask, why does the way of the wicked prosper? (Ps 73.3; Jer 12.1). However, as we are taught in Scripture, God’s timing is not our timing. If we are patient, we will see that a man skilled in his work will serve before kings (Prov 22.29).
 5. What did Ahasuerus require all this other counsellors and servants to do?
 - 5.1. He commanded that they bow down and pay homage to Haman.
 - 5.2. No reason is given for this command. It would have seemed to have been unnecessary as it was a common practice among the Persians that “the humbler bows and does obeisance to the other”.¹²⁹ It could be that this command was necessary because Haman had been promoted over the heads of others who were more deserving and had had a higher status.
 - 5.3. What does this command tell us?
 - 5.3.1. Haman received ‘respect’ only because of the king’s command.
 - 5.3.2. This appears to indicate that he had not earned or natural respect from his peers.
 - 5.3.3. Jealousy would have been rampant among the servants of Ahasuerus who were forced to give obeisance to someone whom they did not respect.
 6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 3.1-2a).
 - 6.1. *Exercising Care* – Leaders must exercise care when selecting whom they promote and to whom they give authority. They need to know their character well. Haman was an unscrupulous and bloodthirsty ingrate. As Matthew Henry states: “Darlings are not always worthies.” Paul tells Timothy not to ordain a novice as a congregational elder “lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3.6). The same applies in the political and business arenas. In addition, an atmosphere of suspicion usually clouds sudden and unwarranted promotions. If jealousy is to be minimized, those who are promoted must have earned respect from their fellows—through high quality work, brilliant insights, and diligence.
 - 6.2. *Enduring Conflict* – The conflict between Haman’s tribe (the Amalekites) and Mordecai’s (the Israelites) is an instance of the enduring conflict between heathenism and the true religion, between the spiritual descendants of Jacob/Israel and those of Esau (the grandfather of Amalek). We see it exhibited today in the persecution of Christians by Islamic terrorists (e.g., IS in Iraq and Syria). If Haman’s father’s name means *the Madatha* (‘given by the moon’) then we see the influence of moon worship (Haman was clearly influenced by astrology; Est 3.7). The people of the crescent moon (Muslims) continue to attack God’s covenant people. When things seem peaceful, it is often a lull before a storm. Matters had been quiet in Susa for four years, then Haman was promoted and a man of sin was revealed. He was following in the footsteps of his spiritual father, Satan, who is the ‘man of sin’—given authority for a time and ruthlessly persecuting God’s children. But his end came suddenly as he was condemned to an everlasting hell.
 - 6.3. *Entrusting Confidence* – The psalmist tells us not to be envious at the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 37.1; Ps 73.3, 17). They have their prosperity now, but their end is nigh (Ps 37.2; Ps 73.18-20). We should not be discouraged when we see power concentrated in wicked hands. It will not be for long. God will bring their wicked ways into judgement, deliver his people, and raise up righteous replacements—if not in every case in the temporal realm, certainly and absolutely in the eternal realm.

Provocation (Est 3.2b-6)

1. What did Mordecai refuse to do?
 - 1.1. To bow down or pay homage to Haman.
 - 1.2. He did not refuse out of spite or stubbornness, but because he was a Jew (Est 3.4). We will consider

¹²⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 1, chapter 134;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D134%3Asection%3D1

- his possible motive in a moment.
- 1.3. He made it difficult for Haman to enjoy his new status as second in command in the empire. As we will see, Haman's offended pride gets the better of him and leads to his destruction (Prov 16.18).
 2. What information did Mordecai provide the king's servants?
 - 2.1. He informed them that he was a Jew.
 - 2.2. Why did he do this when he had told Esther not to the same (Est 2.10, 20)?
 - 2.2.1. He could not lie and the servants were seeking an explanation for his refusal to bow down before Haman.
 - 2.2.2. Thus, he gave them the reason for his civil disobedience.
 - 2.2.3. Mordecai explained that his action was not capricious or prideful but based on a principle.
 - 2.3. What indicates that this action was taken with serious deliberation?
 - 2.3.1. He had told Esther not to reveal her national identity and as a man of principle he would not do the exact thing unless he had a valid reason.
 - 2.3.2. He knew that this information could put Esther at risk and that he put his own life in danger.
 - 2.3.3. Nevertheless, he had to do what he believed was right.
 3. How did the king's servants deal with Mordecai's disobedience?
 - 3.1. They first asked Mordecai why he did not obey the king's command, and did not assume a reason or make accusations against him.
 - 3.2. For a number of days they attempted to persuade him to bow down to Haman. What might this attempt to persuade him indicate?
 - 3.2.1. They did not threaten him or suggest that they would tell the king.
 - 3.2.2. This seems to indicate that they were not interested in how Haman felt about the offense—he was probably not particularly liked by them—but were concerned for Mordecai's own welfare and safety.
 - 3.3. They eventually told Haman why Mordecai was acting the way he did. What was their motivation for doing this? There may have been a number of possible motives mixed together.
 - 3.3.1. The text tells us that they wanted to see if Mordecai's words would stand. This may mean that they wanted to see how sincere Mordecai was in his profession of being a Jew to see if he would wilt under pressure from Haman.
 - 3.3.2. They may not have wanted to be accused of being complicit in Mordecai's actions by not reporting it.
 - 3.3.3. They may have had an exaggerated zeal for seeing the command of the king obeyed. Men have a tendency to view human laws as more important than God's law. For example, they view killing a coyote or calling homosexuality a sin to be more grievous than murder of the unborn through abortion.
 - 3.3.4. They may have been itching to see a fight, since evil delights in evil.
 4. Why did Mordecai refuse to bow before Haman?
 - 4.1. The reason he gave was that he was a Jew. What was it about being a Jew that prohibited him from bowing before Haman?
 - 4.2. Before we answer that question, we need to consider some other questions for context.
 - 4.2.1. Was it wrong for Mordecai to bow to any man?
 - 4.2.1.1. Many commentators say that the reason Mordecai would not bow before Haman was that the Persians viewed their royalty as deities. Mordecai therefore viewed bowing before Haman as an endorsement of an idolatrous practice. For example, they make statements such as, "[A]s a Jew he could not show that honour to man

- which was due to God alone.”¹³⁰ However, even if the Persians held that their kings were divine, they did not view administrators such as the king’s viziers or first ministers as divine.
- 4.2.1.2. Also, OT Jews did not consider it a violation of the Second Commandment to bow before a person in authority. For example, Abraham bowed down to the Hittites (Gen 23.7, 12), Jacob bowed before Esau (Gen 33.3), Joseph’s brothers bowed before him when they thought that he was the Egyptian first minister (Gen 42.6), David bowed before Saul (1 Sam 24.8), and Jews bowed to their kings and others in authority positions (Gen 48.12; 2 Sam 14.4; 2 Sam 18.28; 1 Ki 1.16).
 - 4.2.2. Would Mordecai have bowed before Ahasuerus?
 - 4.2.2.1. If Mordecai did not want to be seen to endorse idolatry, then he could not have bowed before Ahasuerus. However, it is unlikely that he held the view that it was wrong to bow before the king. The king likely passed through the gate at least once during the time Mordecai was serving there and if he had not bowed he would have been discovered. So, he hadn’t objected to bowing to Ahasuerus, even though Ahasuerus would have been considered to be a god by some.
 - 4.2.2.2. Other God-honouring Jews (Daniel before him) and Ezra and Nehemiah (after him) served in pagan courts and do not appear to have been troubled by the custom of bowing before pagan kings.
 - 4.2.3. Could Mordecai have respected the office of Haman, even if he did not respect the man?
 - 4.2.3.1. We could argue that he could have taken this position. For example, Paul calls Ananias, the high priest, a whitewashed wall. But when informed that he is the high priest he admits that his words had been misapplied (Acts 23.3-5).
 - 4.2.3.2. However, it may be that Mordecai believed that Haman was so unworthy of the position that he could not honour him by bowing, and believed that it was necessary to engage in an act of civil disobedience.
 - 4.3. The probable reason Mordecai would not bow before Haman was because Haman was an Amalekite (as we noted when we studied 3.1).
 - 4.3.1. God had required the destruction of the Amalekites (Dt 25.17-18; Ex 17.14, 16). It is possible that Mordecai viewed showing homage to an explicit, and God-cursed, enemy of the Jews to be abhorrent. It would have been the equivalent of President Obama bowing to the self-declared caliph of the Islamic State, an avowed enemy of the US.
 - 4.3.2. Mordecai’s controversy with Haman was not a personal quarrel with a proud and difficult man. It was Mordecai’s declaration that he was on God’s side in the national struggle between the Jews and the Amalekites. Mordecai did not want to make the same mistake his ancestor King Saul had made in being too lenient with God’s enemies (1 Sam 15.1-35). Because Saul compromised with the Amalekites, he lost his crown; but because Mordecai opposed them, he eventually gained a crown (Est 8.15).
 - 4.3.3. If this is the reason, and it seems likely, then it reinforces the conclusion that Haman was a descendent of the Amalekites and probably of their royal line.
 - 4.4. Regardless of the actual reason, we can exclude disloyalty to King Ahasuerus and his commands as the cause. He has already demonstrated his loyalty by serving in the king’s gate and by reporting the assassination conspiracy, and would later demonstrate his loyalty by serving as the vizier or first minister, in Haman’s place (Est 8.2).
 - 5. What was Haman’s reaction to Mordecai’s unwillingness to bow before him?
 - 5.1. He was filled with fury (the Hebrew word can be translated as ‘anger’ or ‘heat’).
 - 5.2. What did he not do?
 - 5.2.1. He did not immediately respond to his anger and punish Mordecai. As second in command

¹³⁰ C. F. Keil, & F. Delitzsch (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 213). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- in Persia, he could have had Mordecai thrown into a dungeon or even executed and no one would have stood to defend Mordecai.
- 5.3. Why did Haman withhold immediate action against Mordecai?
- 5.3.1. Striking out at Mordecai would have implied that he had been insulted in a significant manner. Haman did not want the insult to be recognized as having had any impact on him—he wanted to appear to be above petty insults. He wanted to find a more subtle way of getting even. Thus, when he discovered that Mordecai was a Jew he determined that he would destroy all the Jews in Ahasuerus' kingdom.
- 5.4. Why did he want to destroy all the Jews?
- 5.4.1. He harboured a longstanding (~585-year) grudge against the Jews (and Benjaminites in particular; as Mordecai was) who, under Saul and Samuel, had almost wiped out his people.
- 5.4.2. He was offended by the fact that devote Jews lived under different laws, even while living within the empire (Est 3.8). Haman considered Mordecai to be a representative of a religious persuasion which he considered subversive and unsupportive of the Persian theocracy.
- 5.4.3. He was excessively proud, and his pride would not be satisfied by taking revenge on one minor functionary. His pride and anger compelled him to demonstrate the extent of his power through something much bigger—an act of genocide.
- 5.4.4. Just as the Amalekites wanted to stop the Jews from possessing Palestine (Ex 17.8-16), so Haman, the Amalekite, wished to do the same thing by annihilating the Jews.
6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 3.2b-6).
- 6.1. *Duty* – It is the duty of men to give honour to civil magistrates where it is due (Rom 13.7). The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapter 23, 'of the Civil Magistrate') provides a good summary of our duty: "It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them." (Rom 13.1-7; 1 Tim 2.1-2; Titus 3.1; 1 Pt 2.13-14, 17)
- 6.2. *Declaration* – There comes a time when we need to declare that we are Christians—the equivalent of what Mordecai did when he told the king's counsellor that he was a Jew. What does the profession involve?
- 6.2.1. It must be done when silence would be a sin, and then it must be a clear and plain profession of faith.
- 6.2.2. It must be done in a manner which is gentle and considerate, with no ostentation or element of pride (Jam 3.13; 1 Pt 3.15-16).
- 6.2.3. It must be consistent and steadfast (Heb 10.23).
- 6.2.4. It must be done without shame or embarrassment (Rom 1.16).
- 6.2.5. It must be more than a verbal profession of our alignment to Christ. It must be accompanied by open obedience to God's laws and displayed through good works (Jam 2.20), even if there will be consequences from those who hate Christ and Christians.
- 6.3. *Disobedience* – When is it right to disobey the civil magistrate's command?
- 6.3.1. Only when obedience would require us to go against God's commands (Acts 4.19; Acts 5.29).
- 6.3.1.1. It is a serious matter to disobey the law. So we must be able to demonstrate clearly from the word of God that to follow the civil magistrate's command would be a breach of God's law.
- 6.3.1.2. The reasons for our civil disobedience must be Biblically based; not based on a whim, what we perceive to be a 'direct word from God', or personal animosity.
- 6.3.2. Sometimes we will be placed in a situation where we need to be courageous, stand on principle, and not think too much about the possible consequences.
- 6.3.2.1. For example, we need to have faith that if we do what is right according to God's

- law (for example, refusing to work or undertake work-related travel on the Lord's Day, or refusing to photograph a ceremony purporting to be a wedding between two avowed homosexuals) God will protect and provide for us.
- 6.3.2.2. Mordecai took his stand in spite of what could have been the consequences (dismissal, imprisonment, or execution).
 - 6.3.2.3. He was like the Hebrew midwives who refused to perform abortions or infanticide (Ex 1.15-22); like Daniel and his three companions who refused to eat the king's food which had been sacrificed to idols, refused to bow to the image at Dura, and continued steadfast in prayer to God after it had been decreed unlawful (Dan 1.8-16; Dan 3.8-28; Dan 6.10); and like Martin Luther who declared at the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me. Amen."
- 6.4. *Depravity* – We see in Haman the extent to which human depravity is willing to go. Sin escalates from offended pride, to anger, to overt hatred, and to murder.
- 6.4.1. A number of commentators refer to Haman as being anti-Semitic. However, they misuse the word. If Haman was an Amalekite he was a Shemite—Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen 36.12, 16). People today use the term in a contradictory manner. For example, on one hand they claim that Arab Muslims are descended from Ishmael (the son of Abraham), and are therefore Shemites; and at the same time they claim that Muslims are anti-Semitic. Haman was not anti-Semitic. He was anti-Jew (from Judah, the son of Jacob). He was against the God of the Jews and his laws (Est 3.8). He was against God's covenant and his covenant people and their belief in the coming Messiah. In other words, he was anti-Christian.
 - 6.4.2. Without God's restraining general grace, all men would be Hamans and would take action to destroy Christians. Islamic movements (such as the Islamic State [IS] in Iraq and Syria) are but an example of the hatred which exists in man's heart against Christ and Christians and the extent they are willing to go (e.g., genocide) to eradicate evidence of Christianity.
 - 6.4.3. The depravity of man is first excessively proud, then vengeful, unjust and unmerciful, and then, if not checked by God, wantonly destructive.

Pur (Est 3.7)

- 1. What did Haman do, before taking action against Mordecai and the Jews?
 - 1.1. He had lots cast to determine a propitious day for carrying out the destruction of the Jews.
 - 1.2. Who is the 'they' referred to in this verse?
 - 1.2.1. The Hebrew does not have 'they'. We could translate the Hebrew as 'lots were cast'.
 - 1.2.2. However, Haman would likely not have cast the lots himself but would have obtained the services of astrologers (Chaldeans, Magi) to seek their guidance. He may have had some among his personal household staff (Est 6.13).
 - 1.3. What form did the casting of lots take?
 - 1.3.1. The word *pur* is found only in Esther in the Bible, which does not tell us the form of omen seeking that was used. Some claim that the word comes from an Old Persian word meaning 'piece', whereas others claim that it is a loanword from Akkadian or Assyrian, in which it means 'lot' or 'stone'.
 - 1.3.2. In the ancient Middle East, lots were cast using clay or carved dice but also natural stones and other objects (e.g., amulets). Cubic dice (or die) may have been used by the astrologers in Haman's day. A small clay cube of the Assyrian minister Iahali, the grand vizier of Shalmaneser III (traditionally dated from 859-824 BC), bears the inscription, "In his year assigned to him by lot (*purisu*) may the harvest of the land of Assyria prosper and thrive, in front of the gods Assur and Adad may his lot be placed."¹³¹ An alternative may have been a different shaped object. A quadrangular prism (1cm square on the face and 4.5cm long) was

¹³¹ Ada Taggar-Cohen. *The Casting of Lots among the Hittites in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*; undated, but posted in 2004 and updated in 2007; www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/2002%2029/TaggerCohen29.pdf

found in the ruins of Susa which had the numbers one, two, five and six engraved on its sides.¹³²

2. What was Haman's purpose in casting lots?
 - 2.1. He wanted to find a 'lucky' day on which to undertake his plan against the Jews.
 - 2.1.1. He thought that such a grand initiative required a propitious day.
 - 2.1.2. He met with the astrologers privately, before approaching Ahasuerus because he wanted to ensure that the gods were on his side and that his plans would succeed.
 - 2.2. It was common practice in the ancient Middle East to cast lots before making important decisions. This is attested by Scripture (Num 22.7; Ezk 21.21), archeological discoveries, thousands of omen inscriptions and texts, and extra-Biblical historical accounts (e.g., Herodotus¹³³).
 - 2.2.1. The superstitious belief that fate controlled events (of men and the gods) was part of the pantheistic worldview of the ancient Middle East.
 - 2.2.2. This fatalistic worldview was organized around the zodiac and astrological signs. The position and alignment of celestial objects was believed to control the lives of the inhabitants of earth.
 - 2.2.3. His belief was that the gods (or fate) would 'bless' his evil intentions. Ironically, if he turned to the gods for their 'blessing' he missed the fact that the gods were also believed to be subjected to fate.
3. For what period did they cast the lot?
 - 3.1. Some interpreters conclude that they cast the lot for almost an entire year—i.e., casting lots each morning or evening. They thus conclude that Haman had great patience waiting for his sign.
 - 3.2. However, the words "day after day; and month after month" do not refer to the time they took casting the lots, but rather to the time covered by the casting of the lots. They cast the lots to determine which day within a month would be propitious and then which month (over the next year) should be chosen.
 - 3.3. What are the particular dates mentioned?
 - 3.3.1. The casting of the lots was conducted in the first month (Nisan; April-May) of the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus. The date selected for the pogrom was almost a year later, on the thirteenth day (Est 3.13; Est 8.12; Est 9.1) of the twelfth month (Adar; February-March).
 - 3.3.2. Although it is not stated, it is surmised by many that Haman cast lots on the first day of the first month, i.e., on their New Year's Day. Apparently ancient kings would plan events for the next year by casting lots on New Year's Day because they believed that their gods also planned the fates of men for the next year on that day.
 - 3.3.3. Could there be any significance to the identified month and day?
 - 3.3.3.1. The zodiac in its basic model was known to the Persians at the time of Darius I.¹³⁴
 - 3.3.3.2. In the zodiac, the first month is symbolized by the ram. The ram was the symbol of Persia (Dan 8.3-4). The zodiacal sign of the twelfth month is the fish. In astrology, the 13th day would also have significance.
 - 3.3.3.3. The number 13 was associated with murder and death from ancient times (and continues to be; for example, in Tarot cards). The Persians also associated it with the god Tishtrya/Tir (identified during the Achaemenid period with the star Sirius),¹³⁵ and it may also have been associated with a snake or dragon, as it was in Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah).

¹³² M. Dieulafoy, "The Book of Esther and the Palace of Ahasuerus," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 46 No. 184 (1889): 626-653; www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bsac/1889_626_dieulafoy.pdf

¹³³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 128, para. 1;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D128%3Asection%3D1

¹³⁴ www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zodiac; members.westnet.com.au/gary-david-thompson/page9a.html

¹³⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tishtrya

- 3.3.3.4. It is possible that God was sending a message to the superstitious Haman, “You may think that fate rules and that the ram is all powerful, but a greater kingdom of life is coming which will be symbolized by the sign of the fish”. Similarly, “The signs you interpret as a portent of death for those you hate, are a warning of your own pending death.” God is not shy about declaring that he rules over the pagan gods, as he showed by sending the plagues in Egypt as a direct challenge to the pagan deities of Egypt, and by having the Israelites cross the Jordan at peak flooding to confound the pagan deity Baal (the god of the storms).
- 3.4. How long would Haman have to wait to carry out the annihilation of the Jews?
- 3.4.1. For almost an entire year.
- 3.4.2. This must have irritated Haman. He would have had to go by Mordecai every day and see his continual refusal to bow before him. Undoubtedly Haman would have preferred to act immediately. However, Haman was so steeped in the Persian belief in fate that he could not go against the casting of the lots. Regardless of the dictates of fate, he probably relished the idea of making the Jews squirm for a year as he planned their demise.
- 3.4.3. God’s overruling providence guided the casting of the lots (Prov 16.33) so that the Jews had time to respond to their planned destruction. As it turned out, the Jews did not have to flee from the empire as refugees and leave behind their possessions and property. Rather, God would intervene through the strategic placement of Esther in the palace.
4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this verse? (Est 3.7).
- 4.1. *Pantheism* – Christianity identifies God as transcendent, the eternally self-existent creator of the universe. Pantheism (in various forms) includes its god(s) within or as part of the universe or as the essence of the universe (i.e., the universe is god or god is the universe). Pantheism may be polytheistic, monotheistic, or atheistic (rejecting a personal god but viewing the universe as eternal and thus as the source or cause of all life). Modern forms of pantheism include Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, and materialistic naturalism.
- 4.1.1. Adherents of pantheism are fatalistic and hold to the belief that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable. There is not a concept similar to the Biblical teaching about God’s providence and human responsibility.
- 4.1.2. Because pantheists are fatalistic they are also highly superstitious. For example, modern pantheists believe that a person’s fate is the result of his karma. When men deny the true and only God, they fall into superstition.
- 4.1.3. A traditional dictionary definition of superstition is, “belief or way of behaving that is based on fear of the unknown and faith in magic or luck, belief that certain events or things will bring good or bad luck, or belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation.”¹³⁶ However, a modern alternate definition of superstition is, “the belief in supernatural causality—that one event causes another without any natural process linking the two events—such as astrology, religion, omens, witchcraft, prophecies, etc., that contradicts natural science.”¹³⁷ The first definition could *exclude* Christianity, while the second definition is designed to *include* Christianity, since it would claim that the Christian doctrine of miracles would “contradict natural science”.
- 4.1.4. Haman and his Persian contemporaries were highly superstitious. However, Haman was no more superstitious than any person who denies the true religion as defined in the Bible. We see examples of superstition all around us, in our ‘enlightened’ society’:
- 4.1.4.1. People use superstitious actions without realizing that they are superstitious. For example, they cross their fingers or knock on wood to reinforce a hope, make

¹³⁶ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/superstition

¹³⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstition

- wishes when blowing out birthday candles, refuse to shave during a winning streak, purchase lottery tickets with particular numbers, perform rituals such as when a boy in the Little League World Series steps to the plate and crosses himself, claim that bad events come in threes, avoid including a floor labelled ‘13’ in a multi-story building, or wear amulets (e.g., cross, rabbit’s foot, chili pepper, or hand shaped *hamsa henna tattoo*).
- 4.1.4.2. Mainstream newspapers (e.g., *Globe and Mail* and *National Post*) carry daily horoscopes; and there are dozens of psychic establishments in Toronto—with even a website ranking the top ten.¹³⁸
- 4.1.4.3. The terms ‘karma’, ‘reincarnation’, ‘the force’, ‘luck’, and ‘fortune’ permeate casual conversations.
- 4.1.5. Christians must avoid all forms of superstition (Dt 4.19; Dt 17.3; Is 2.6) because we believe that God governs the universe providentially and not the fates.
- 4.2. *Providence* – This leads to a second lesson: there is a difference between providence and fatalism.
- 4.2.1. Providence (and its concomitant concept, predestination) and fatalism may appear to be similar or even the same, however they are distinctly different.
- 4.2.2. Fatalism is the belief that whatever happens, happens because it is predetermined and inevitable, *and* that people are not responsible for their actions. Thus, a person’s genes or environment are the cause of whatever he does.
- 4.2.3. Free will is the belief that whatever happens, happens because, and only because, humans have made un-coerced decision. However, man does not have an ultimately free will. For example, no matter how hard a person tries or wishes, in this life, he cannot stop committing sin (Rom 7.7-24). His will is bound to sin, so it cannot be free.
- 4.2.4. The Bible does not teach either false view. Rather it teaches providence, which is that God acts according to his will *through* the responsible decisions and actions of human agents. Providence is the middle ground between two extremes (fatalism and free will) and is a concept that is hard for our finite minds to grasp because we naturally want to believe in one extreme or the other.
- 4.2.5. Chapter 5 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is dedicated to the topic of providence, and opens with a definition of providence, “God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible fore-knowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.” It then goes on to provide the middle ground between fatalism and free will, “Although, in relation to the fore-knowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly: yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”
- 4.2.6. Thus, God fulfills his eternal plans through providence. The events in Esther show clearly that God governs providentially. He planned for Vashti to be deposed, placed Esther in an influential position, raised Haman to a position of power, limited Haman’s quest for revenge by controlling the outcome of his casting of the lots, and provided time for the Jews to appeal against Haman’s actions and prepare to counter them.
- 4.3. *Patience* – An outworking of our belief in God’s providence is the belief that God is working all things for his glory and our good (Rom 8.28-30). Even though events may appear to be going from bad to worse and wicked men have the ascendancy, the world is not out of control. To the Jews living in Persia when Haman was the vizier, it might have seemed that God had forgotten them (Ps 10.11; Ps 42.9; Ps 77.9). Then, just as quickly events turned to their advantage. We must not fret, but rather need to learn to trust God and his providence and live before him in patient faith

¹³⁸ www.yelp.ca/search?find_desc=psychic+readings&find_loc=Toronto%2C+ON

and trust. He really does know what is best for us and lovingly disposes it.

Persuasion (Est 3.8-9)

1. What was Haman's strategy for gaining the king's agreement to destroy the Jews?
 - 1.1. To slander the Jews with half-truths and lies, and to bribe the king.
 - 1.2. He used a mix of plausible statements ("scattered abroad and dispersed" and "laws are different"), and half-truths ("do not keep the king's laws") to make Ahasuerus believe that the Jews were dangerous and to his disadvantage.
 - 1.3. He followed his accusations with a substantial bribe which would be to the king's advantage.
 - 1.4. Haman's approach was what we today would call Machiavellian—the use of cunning and duplicity in statecraft. It is how many (most) politicians seem to operate. They use half-truths and lies and apparently logical arguments to make their case and then appeal to the selfish interests of the constituents in their jurisdictions.
 - 1.5. Satan was the originator of this technique (Gen 3.1-5; Mt 4.1-11; Jn 8.44).
2. What is missing from Haman's communication to the king?
 - 2.1. He did not speak of his wounded pride, personal motives, and vendetta against Mordecai and his people's anti-Jewish history.
 - 2.2. He did not name the people group he was speaking of, but referred to them anonymously.
 - 2.2.1. It is easier to deal with enemies in the abstract than ones which have personalities—the king probably knew some competent Jews personally, or knew of them (e.g., Daniel).
 - 2.2.2. It allowed the king to draw his own inferences. For example, he might have thought that Haman was speaking of a network of traitors or terrorists, rather than a group of industrious, peaceful, law-abiding subjects.
 - 2.2.3. Haman avoided naming the Jews because a previous Persian king (the great Cyrus) had issued a decree (Ezra 1.1-4) in the Jews' favour. By pursuing the destruction of the Jews, Haman committed treachery since the Jews were a protected people in the empire.
 - 2.2.4. The king seems to have been so trusting of Haman that he did not bother to enquire about who the people were. Later (Est 6.10) the king identifies Mordecai as a Jew, but appears to have made no connection between Mordecai and the people who were to be destroyed by Haman's decree. He maintained a disinterested ignorance.
 - 2.3. He did not mention any positive contributions of the Jews—such as Daniel serving Cyrus, Mordecai reporting the assassination attempt against Ahasuerus, the substantial tax contribution to the Persian treasury made by industrious Jews, and Jews serving in the administrations of Babylon and Persia.
3. What are the specific accusations Haman made against the Jews?
 - 3.1. He referred to them as being a scattered and dispersed people.
 - 3.1.1. This is a truth intended to be interpreted incorrectly.
 - 3.1.2. The Jews were scattered and dispersed (i.e., living in places such as Judea, Babylon, Susa, and Casiphia).
 - 3.1.3. However, Haman's intent was to make Ahasuerus believe that the Jews were subversive because they had not settled and assimilated into the kingdom as good citizens. In fact, the Jews were the opposite of being subversive. Some of the subject peoples in the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire (e.g., Egypt, Cush (Sudan, Ethiopia, etc.), 'India' (west of the Indus River), Thrace (Bulgaria), Parthia (Turkmenistan), Sogdiana (on the border of China) were probably less assimilated, and considerably more nationalistic, than the Jews were. The Jews, for example, spoke Aramaic (the language of commerce throughout the Middle East), lived in the major urban centres of the Persian Empire, and participated in the civic administration (e.g., Daniel, Mordecai, Ezra, and Nehemiah).
 - 3.1.4. His statement may have also been intended to suggest that the Jews were of little importance

- and had no power because of being dispersed, and thus easy to eradicate.
- 3.2. He stated that their laws were “different from those of every other people”.
 - 3.2.1. By suggesting that their laws were different from those of other people he wanted the king to believe that they were bad laws made by rebellious subjects.
 - 3.2.2. There was an element of truth in what he said. God’s law is different from man-made laws. However, it is *better* (more righteous) than any which can be concocted by humans (Dt 4.8), and therefore different. However, the differences were not particularly problematic since the Persians generally allowed the provinces to retain their local laws and customs, provided that they did not interfere with the operations of the empire or reduce contributions to the central treasury.
 - 3.2.3. In truth, he could not have provided anything substantive which would have indicated that the Jews were rebellious. He would have had to use the same approach that the advisors to Cyrus had used to accuse Daniel—identifying something in the law of God that they found offensive (Dan 6.5).
 - 3.3. He claimed that they did not keep the king’s laws.
 - 3.3.1. If he had been asked to give an example, it would have exposed his own petty pride—for the only example he could have given immediately would have been Mordecai’s refusal to bow before him. Only one disobedient person out of the many in the people group did not provide a justification for genocide. The king would have likely directed Haman to deal with Mordecai specifically. So Haman left the accusation open ended.
 - 3.3.2. Haman may have also pointed to an accusatory letter which had been written by enemies of the Jews earlier (Ezra 4.6). The Ahasuerus mentioned in Ezra could be the same Ahasuerus as in Esther, but is more likely to be Cambyses II, the son and successor of Cyrus. However, the Jews did not repeatedly disregard or disobey Persian law or Ahasuerus would have already dealt with them.
 - 3.3.3. In reality, the majority of the laws of the Persians were reasonable and just—as, for example, were the laws of other ancient nations (e.g., Babylon, Greece, Rome, China). Persia operated under God’s general grace and he allowed the empire to function for about 200 years. The Jews would have observed most of the laws without hesitation. It was primarily in the areas of laws respecting religion and worship that the Jews would have had difficulties. However, Haman would likely have had little comprehension of the nature of Jewish objections.
 - 3.4. He claimed that tolerating the Jews was not profitable for the king.
 - 3.4.1. He appealed to the king’s welfare. Of course, Haman actually was only interested in his own profit and did not care a hoot for the king’s welfare unless it furthered his own.
4. What did Haman want Ahasuerus to do with respect to the Jews?
 - 4.1. Issue a decree to have them destroyed—literal: “let be written, to destroy them.”
 - 4.2. A precedent for what Haman was seeking had already been set by Darius I (i.e., Ahasuerus). Shortly after he ascended the throne he decreed the slaughter of the Magi.¹³⁹
 5. What should Ahasuerus have done at this point?
 - 5.1. He should have asked whom the people were and how many of there were.
 - 5.2. He should have asked for confirmation to substantiate the accuracy of what Haman had told him about the people.
 - 5.3. His willingness to accept what Haman said without confirmation, his lack of interest in his subjects, and his willingness to consider annihilating them without any concern, indicates that Ahasuerus was a cold and callous tyrant.

¹³⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 79, para. 1;
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D79%3Asection%3D1

6. What did Haman offer in exchange for the king's decree that the Jews be destroyed?
 - 6.1. He offered to put 10,000 talents of silver into the king's treasury.
 - 6.2. How much is 10,000 talents of silver worth?
 - 6.2.1. A talent was about 34kgs of silver. Converting the weight of silver, at a rough average price over the past thirty years (~\$250/Kg), gives an amount of \$85M. An alternate approach is to take the daily wage of a skilled worker (e.g., a carpenter) which was a silver coin weighing approximately 6.8g (about the same as a US or Canadian silver quarter, before coins were changed to nickel). At today's average wage (~\$250/day) for a skilled carpenter, the amount would be about \$12.5 Billion! This indicates that, in relative terms (purchasing parity), the price of silver has gone down significantly compared with 2,500 years ago—making it not a good investment in the very long term.
 - 6.2.2. Some commentators have used the information provided by Herodotus about annual tax revenues of the Persian Empire, at about 15,000 talents per year,¹⁴⁰ and have concluded that Haman offered to pay two-thirds of the annual revenue of the empire into the treasury. However, they haven't bothered to do a sanity check on what Herodotus says or on their conclusion. If the *entire* revenue of the Persian Empire were only 15,000 talents per year, they could not have funded their extensive construction projects (e.g., in Susa and Persepolis, and the pan-empire highways), courier system, central administration, and army. 15,000 talents of silver would have been enough to pay about 250,000 labourers and soldiers for a year, based on the going daily rate of a silver coin (the size of a quarter) per working day. But this would have provided funds for only a fraction of the total government-funded workforce and not have allowed for the acquisition of construction supplies, horses, wagons, armaments, etc.
 - 6.2.3. Regardless, what Haman offered to pay into the treasury was a significant amount of money.
 - 6.3. Where would Haman have gotten this amount of money?
 - 6.3.1. Haman was undoubtedly wealthy, and may have been able to supply directly a portion of what he promised. However, he likely did not expect to have to pay the money from his own purse. He likely expected to have access to the property and possessions confiscated from the Jews as they were annihilated (Est 3.13).
 - 6.3.2. He was being duplicitous. The money he offered the treasury would have belonged to the treasury anyway.
 - 6.4. How should the king have reacted to this offer?
 - 6.4.1. The king should have been suspicious of Haman and asked Haman why he was willing to pay out so much money and where he was going to get it.
 - 6.4.2. His suspicions should have also been raised when Haman indicated that the people he wanted to destroy were of no consequence, and yet was willing to pay so much to have them destroyed.
 - 6.4.3. However, Ahasuerus was easily led into folly by his counsellors (Est 1.19-21; Est 2.2-4).
 - 6.5. Why was this offer even considered by Ahasuerus?
 - 6.5.1. Bribery was common throughout the Ancient Middle East, and continues so today. The Bible speaks against the use of bribes (Ex 18.21; Ex 23.8; Prov 17.8, 23).
 - 6.5.2. Haman used a clever tactic, since no matter how much money a royal treasury collects, kings always want more.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 3.8-9).
 - 7.1. *Power Corrupts* – It is worth considering again what Lord Acton said in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." The promotion of Haman did not make him a better man. Rather his

¹⁴⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 95, para. 2;
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D95%3Asection%3D2

power inflated his ego—he expected to receive honours and he deceptively directed the power of his position to deceive a weak king and request the annihilation of God’s covenant people. Until they demonstrate otherwise, we should assume that this is the standard operating practice of all men (and women) who are promoted—particularly in the political arena. They will use their positions to advance their personal agendas and eliminate the vestiges of Christianity from the public forum.

- 7.2. *Perfect Commandments* – Haman was right when he said, “[T]heir laws are different from those of every other people.” The difference is not in one area of the content, that which deals with our interpersonal relationships. The laws of many nations include prohibitions on theft, murder, adultery, perjury, and obedience to those in authority. Men know in their hearts God’s righteous requirements (Rom 1.18-22, 32), so they generally include them in their law codes. However, the real differences are:

- 7.2.1. God’s law (the first four Commandments) prohibits humans from inventing their own religions and worshiping their invented gods.
- 7.2.2. God’s law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, deals ultimately with the attitudes of the human heart (as is explicitly shown in the tenth commandment) and not just with the outer actions, which Jesus shows in his exposition of the Ten Commandments in *The Sermon on the Mount* (Mt 5.21-6.18).
- 7.2.3. God’s law is holy and perfect (Ps 19.7).
- 7.2.4. God’s law changes hearts and lives. People who love it, try to live it by choice and not by threat.
- 7.2.5. People who take seriously the authority of God’s law and live by it are blessed. Any nation which lives by God’s law will prosper. Any nation which rejects God’s law will soon fall into chaos and be destroyed.

We must be proud (not apologetic) of the uniqueness of God’s law.

- 7.3. *Perjured Charges* – One technique wicked men try to use to destroy Christian influence in a society is to claim that Christians are disloyal to the state. For example, they show more animosity toward Christians who speak out politely against evils such as abortion or homosexual practices than they do to Muslims who agitate for the introduction of Islamic laws and the caliphate. As the Jews made false accusations against Jesus (Lk 23.2, 5), we can expect leaders today to make false charges against Christians. At one time Christians were accused of being cannibals because of their observance of the Lord’s Supper. Today we are vehemently accused of being judgmental, homophobic, excessively politicized, dogmatic, cold, and intolerant.
- 7.4. *Persecution of Christians* – Persecution of God’s people is inevitable (Jn 15.20). However, when men cannot overtly persecute Christians (e.g., slaughter them, as Haman was planning to do to God’s covenant people) because of civil restraints, they attack God’s law (Acts 16.21-22). We see this today as men attempt to drive out every mention of God’s law from colleges, city halls, and courthouses.

Permission I (Est 3.10-11)

1. What did Ahasuerus give to Haman?

- 1.1. His signet (ring).

- 1.1.1. All widely used English translations have ‘signet ring’. However, the Hebrew word translated ‘signet ring’ can also be translated as ‘signet’. Also, the text does not say ‘from his finger’ (as in the NIV), but from ‘from his hand’. It could be that we should understand the statement as saying, “he handed Haman his signet”. However, a later account (Est 8.2) may support the idea that the signet was a ring.
- 1.1.2. Some interpreters suggest that it was a signet cylinder, rather than a ring, since signet rings appear to have come into fashion later than the time of Ahasuerus. For example, it might have been a (or even *the*) cylinder signet of Darius Hystaspes (i.e., Ahasuerus) found in Iran, and taken to the British Museum. It shows the king riding in a chariot, driven by a charioteer,

shooting an arrow at a lion-rampant. Above the chariot and lion is the winged symbol of Ahuramazda the uncreated spirit in Zoroastrianism. To the right is a cuneiform inscription.¹⁴¹



1.1.3. Regardless, Haman was given the king's signet. What did this mean?

1.1.3.1. The power of the king was vested in his royal seal. Any document which bore the impression of the seal was viewed as being an irrevocable declaration of the king (Est 8.8), regardless of who had composed the communication, and a requirement for absolute obedience. Thus, Haman was granted almost unlimited authority to act in the king's name.

1.1.3.2. The assignment of the signet to Haman was a token that Ahasuerus had unquestioned confidence in him—a dangerous conclusion on Ahasuerus' part since he had not vetted the proposal Haman had made.

1.2. The money. What money was given to Haman?

1.2.1. Some conclude that Ahasuerus understood that Haman had planned to use the money from the plunder of the Jews to pay his bribe. Confiscation of property accompanied executions (Est 8.1, 11). Thus, he was telling Haman that he could keep the plunder and did not have to pay the 10,000 talents into the treasury.

1.2.2. Others suggest that Ahasuerus was giving Haman money to carry out his program against the people he had charged as being disloyal to the king.

1.2.3. Others suggest that this was only a polite gesture made by Ahasuerus, similar to what Ephron did when he told Abraham that he did not need to pay for the site to bury Sarah's body, but Abraham was actually expected to pay the money (Gen 23.15-16). The understanding of people who heard about the deal Haman had made, was that the money would be paid into the treasury (Est 4.7; Est 7.4).

1.3. The people (the Jews) to do with them as seemed good to him.

1.3.1. The people were treated as chattel—sheep destined for slaughter—or as like slaves whose lives depended on the will of their master.

1.3.2. He could destroy them, or let them live, if he chose.

1.3.3. Nothing as momentous had occurred to Israel since their time of slavery in Egypt, when the firstborn males were executed. Even the Babylonian captivity did not compare with what Haman had in mind for them.

2. What do these actions by Ahasuerus tell us about his character?

2.1. They provide additional evidence of his being easily influenced by his subordinates. He demonstrated an inability to think for himself and an unwillingness to examine the character of his staff.

2.2. He is shown throughout the first three chapters of Esther to be a fool who acted precipitously and

¹⁴¹ Edward Hayes Plumptre (ed.), *The Bible Educator*, vol. 1., 1874, p. 218; books.google.ca/books?id=j74CAAAAQAAJ

fell into the trap set by his counsellors, and then came to regret his actions afterwards.

3. How does the author refer to Haman?
 - 3.1. As, ‘the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews’.
 - 3.2. He places Haman within his genealogical context, as an Agagite—i.e., an Amalekite.
 - 3.3. Because he was an Amalekite, he was an enemy of the Jews, and because he had been offended by a Jew he was doubly an enemy of the Jews.
 - 3.4. Why does he add the statement, “an enemy of the Jews”?
 - 3.4.1. It is an historical fact.
 - 3.4.2. It shows the animosity of the natural heart against God and his people.
 - 3.4.3. It is a literary device to establish tension in the story.
 - 3.4.4. It is a veiled comment on cunning of an evil strategist.
 - 3.4.5. To call attention to the impending calamity—doom is pending.
4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 3.10-11).
 - 4.1. *Calamity* – The line between safety and danger is razor thin. One day the Jews were secure in their lives in Susa and throughout the Persian Empire. The next day they would be fearing for their lives. It all came down to the will of one individual. In a similar way, a single vote at the US supreme court can determine the lives of 100M unborn babies or require Christians to act against their moral principles (e.g., being required to subscribe to a health insurance program which funds abortifacients or photograph a union ceremony of avowed lesbians).
 - 4.2. *Corruption* – Foolish people are made worse by bad people around them. They are spineless and go along without thinking of the motivation of their subordinates or peers or of the consequences of their actions (Prov 18.13). They are easily influenced by the temptations of the sensual and act in a capricious manner. Paul summarizes it well, ‘Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning.’ (1 Cor 15.33–34)
 - 4.3. *Culpability* – People who act thoughtlessly or foolishly are as culpable as those who act with deceitful intention and deliberate destructiveness. As the proverbial statement says, “ignorance is no excuse”. Ahasuerus should not have used the excuse such as, “I did not mean to” or “I did not know what would happen”, but he probably did after he was informed of the wickedness of Haman by Esther. His seal would be placed on the decree (Est 3.12-15) and he was complicit in Haman’s intention to destroy the Jews.

Pronouncement (Est 3.12-15)

1. What did Haman do after obtaining the king’s permission to destroy the Jews?
 - 1.1. He summoned the king’s scribes to record an edict.
 - 1.2. He took advantage of having the king’s signet and dictated an edict in the king’s name, using the king’s administrators. He used the state apparatus for his personal vendetta.
2. When did he summon the scribes?
 - 2.1. Within two weeks of determining by lot the propitious day for the Jews’ destruction. If, as is supposed, he cast lots to determine the date for executing the Jews on the first day of the first month (New Year’s Day in the calendar used in the ancient Middle East), then it was twelve days later (on the thirteenth day of the month) that he issued the summons.
 - 2.2. Between the 1st and the 13th days he had met with Ahasuerus, made his proposal for the destruction of the Jews and received permission to move forward with his plans.
 - 2.3. Why did he publish the decree eleven months before the pogrom was to take place?
 - 2.3.1. Haman did not want to wait until closer to the time of his planned slaughter of the Jews, in case something should arise which would change circumstances and the king’s mind. So, as the expression is, “he struck while the iron was hot”. Once the edict was issued in the

- king's name and with the king's seal it would be considered irrevocable (Est 1.19; Est 8.8; Dan 6.8). He was attempting to ensure that nothing could hinder his plans.
- 2.3.2. Some suggest that he was allowing time for the Jews to leave their property and flee to lands outside of the Persian Empire. This would have given him access to their property, get the Jews out of his sight, and relieve him of any exertion at the planned time of the execution. However, this is a silly notion, because:
- 2.3.2.1. Haman wasn't particularly interested in the plunder of the Jews, for himself (Est 3.13). He would only be satisfied when every Jew was exterminated.
- 2.3.2.2. The Persian Empire included much of the 'civilized' world at that time. There were a few pockets of civilization outside of the Persian Empire such as in Greece and China. But much of Europe, Asia and Africa was inhabited by barbarians and there were very no areas easily accessible to which the Jews could have fled.
- 2.3.3. Others suggest that time was needed for his decree to be carried to the remotest edges of the empire. However, a royal edict would have reached every capital of the 127 provinces within days through the royal courier system (Est 3.13).
- 2.3.4. Others suggest that he wanted to maximize the anxiety of the Jews. They would have almost a year to fret over their pending execution. However, Haman was not that subtle. He undoubtedly wanted to move forward with his plans more quickly but because he was so superstitious he couldn't go against the signs from the fates, so he had to do what he could to ensure that nothing could interfere with the outcome—how little he knew of God's power!
- 2.4. Why did he wait until the 13th of the first month to issue the edict?
- 2.4.1. Assuming that he met with Ahasuerus within a day or two of casting lots, he waited more than a week to summon the scribes and issue the edict.
- 2.4.2. He may have waited a few days so that the edict was published on the 13th day of the month. We have already noted that this was the day viewed a propitious for his plan (Est 3.7) and the day associate with death in the Persian calendar. His superstitions again overrode his rational and volitional capacities.
- 2.4.3. There is an element of irony in the selection of the date for summoning the scribes and issuing in the edict. It would likely have been announced the next day in Susa (the 14th) as the Jews were observing the Passover as a celebration of their deliverance from their Egyptian persecutors (Ex 12.6, 18). At least in Susa, instead of celebrating deliverance, the Jews would be bewailing their pending destruction.
3. To whom was the edict directed?
- 3.1. The satraps, governors and officials (שָׂרִי; native-born princes or rulers) of all the provinces—of 127 provinces (Est 3.12).
- 3.2. The different provinces were ruled by different types of administrators. The larger provinces may have been satrapies, some may have had subject kings, and others probably had governors appointed from the central administration. In addition, there were the regional district, or territorial, governors where provinces had been grouped—twenty per Herodotus,¹⁴² or possibly seven super-districts (Est 1.14).
- 3.3. To all the people in the empire (Est 3.14).
4. What was done to ensure that the edict was understood and obeyed in every province?
- 4.1. It was issued in the script and language of each province.
- 4.1.1. We noted previously (Est 1.22) that this would have required translating the text into probably 100 different languages. In addition, it would have been transcribed on clay tablets and papyrus paper with different forms (e.g., cuneiform, hieroglyphs, and alphabetic

¹⁴² See the section entitled *Place*, related to Esther 1.1-3.

- characters).
- 4.1.2. This shows the extent of the power of Haman, since many administrative documents used to govern the empire would not have been translated into every language but would have been sent out in a few prominent ones such as Persian and Aramaic, and the local administrators would have been expected to read and understand them.
 - 4.2. It was written in the king's name.
 - 4.2.1. The king's name was used to reinforce the authority of the edict, even though he had not authored it, or was even aware of his contents.
 - 4.3. It was sealed with the king's signet.
 - 4.3.1. To reinforce the use of the king's name, the documents were sealed with the king's signet. The signet could be rolled or impressed on clay tablets or coated with ink and rolled on parchment.
 - 4.4. It was distributed by the king's couriers (Est 3.13, 15).
 - 4.4.1. As we noted (in the lessons to the section titled, *Primacy*) the Persians had an efficient and rapid system for sending messages and formal communications throughout the empire.
 - 4.4.2. It would have been expensive for the empire to maintain the courier system, as it would have been necessary to have a stable of horses at each of about ~110 way stations on just the royal road from Susa to Sardis. If we estimate that there was a total of 500 way stations throughout the empire, then it cost at least the equivalent of \$10,000 to send the edict in all directions throughout the empire.
 - 4.5. The decree was published by proclamation in each province and in Susa (14, 15).
 - 4.5.1. How was the edict proclaimed? It is not stated.
 - 4.5.2. Possibly the equivalent of the Middle Ages town crier was used in each province. The origin of town criers is unclear. However, a similar concept may have existed in ancient Egypt (Gen 41.43) and in Susa (Est 6.9, 11).
 - 4.5.3. Alternatively, people may have been called together on an appointed day, and the edict read aloud in a public square, at the town gate, or at a temple or shrine.
 5. What was included the contents of the edict?
 - 5.1. The edict announced that the people were to kill the Jews and to take their possessions as plunder.
 - 5.1.1. The text (13-14) provides only a summary of the contents of the edict.
 - 5.1.2. The edict was undoubtedly more detailed, and may have included explicit details such as: how to identify the people to be slaughtered, how to prepare for the event, how to round them up and execute them, and how to dispose of their possessions and remit a portion of the proceeds to the royal treasury.
 - 5.2. Who was to be included in the genocide?
 - 5.2.1. The rulers and people receiving the edict were to kill every Jew—young and old, women and children.
 - 5.2.2. The brutality of what was proposed is appalling, but not beyond what we would expect from sinful human nature, particularly in light of historical example.
 - 5.2.3. Genocide may not occur every day, but it has occurred often enough that we know that the edict was real, and not the invention of a pro-Jewish polemicist.
 - 5.3. What are examples of genocide that demonstrate the wickedness of men who appear to be unchecked in their evil aspirations?
 - 5.3.1. Mithradates VI of Pontus, in 88 BC ordered a slaughter of everyone of the Italic race, including men, women and children in a newly subjugated territory.
 - 5.3.2. Herod slaughtered the male infants of Bethlehem in an attempt to get at one child—Jesus (Mt 2.16-18).
 - 5.3.3. Between 64 and 313 AD, there were a number (some count ten) of periods of persecution

- of Christians within the Roman Empire.¹⁴³
- 5.3.4. Caliph Walid (705-715) assembled the nobles of Armenia in churches in Naxcawan and on the Araxis River and burned them to death. It is estimated that eighty thousand were killed in one day.
 - 5.3.5. The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre occurred during a 5-day period in August 1572. More than 15,000 Huguenots (French Calvinist Protestants) were assassinated. It is believed to have been instigated by Catherine de' Medici, the mother of King Charles IX, after the wedding of the king's sister to the Protestant Henry III of Navarre (the future Henry IV of France)—the wedding had been attended by many wealthy and prominent Huguenots in Paris.
 - 5.3.6. Leopold II of Belgium (1886-1908) had an estimated 8 million citizens of the Congo killed. The 2016 movie, *The Legend of Tarzan*, is set in that period, in the Congo.
 - 5.3.7. Ismail Enver (1915-20), in Ottoman Turkey, had more than 1 million Armenians, 350,000 Greeks Pontians, 480,000 Anatolian Greeks, and 500,000 Assyrians slaughtered
 - 5.3.8. Millions of Jews and Poles were killed in the German Nazi furnaces during WW II.
 - 5.3.9. During Stalin's 30-year rule in Russia more than 10 million peasants and dissidents were directly executed or died while under forced labour.
 - 5.3.10. Mao Zedong's 'Great Leap Forward' killed more the 45 million during 1958-1962.
 - 5.3.11. The Pol Pot regime (1975-1979) in Cambodia slaughtered more 1.5 million citizens.
 - 5.3.12. Kim Il Sung (1948-1994) slaughtered an estimated 1.5 million North Koreans.
 - 5.3.13. We don't have to go very far back in history to identify other examples of genocide, such as those conducted by: Papa Doc Duvalier (Haiti, 1957-71), Rafael Trujillo (Dominican Republic, 1930-61), Bashir Assad (Syria, 2012-13), Francisco Nguema (Equatorial Guinea, 1969-79), Idi Amin Dada (1971-1979) Hissene Habre (Chad, 1982-1990), Vladimir Ilich Lenin (USSR, 1917-20), Fidel Castro (Cuba, 1959-1999), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe, 1982-87), Osama Bin Laden (worldwide, 1993-2001), Augusto Pinochet (Chile, 1973), and ISIS (Iraq and Syria, 2014-2016).
 - 5.3.14. We should also include the hundreds of millions of unborn infants who have been aborted, from about 1950 to the present.
- 5.4. What synonyms are used in the edict, and why?
 - 5.4.1. 'Destroy', 'kill', and 'annihilate'.
 - 5.4.2. The use of three synonyms is a Hebraic form of emphasizing completeness. It may have been a universally understood idiomatic form in the ancient Middle East.
 - 5.4.3. The edict was intended to ensure that the extermination of the Jews would be complete. No Jew was to be spared for any reason—even if the person was a spouse, a friend, a co-worker, a business partner, or a respected and honourable member of society
 - 5.5. What were the rulers and people of the provinces to do in addition to slaughtering the Jews and Why?
 - 5.5.1. To plunder their possessions.
 - 5.5.2. This would add an incentive to undertake the slaughter. Authorized murder for self-enrichment should be appealing, but it is standard operating practice for the wicked.
 - 5.5.3. Haman likely had planned to use a portion of the plunder to bribe the king. By giving the people an opportunity to partake of the plunder (the details of the edict might have required the people to remit a taxed portion of the plunder to the royal treasury) he ensured that the extermination of the Jews would be complete. Some non-Jews, mistaken for being Jews, might suffer as collateral damage, but what would that matter if the Jews were exterminated?
 - 5.6. What other instruction was given to the provincial rules and people about the slaughter? (14)

¹⁴³ *Anti-Christian policies in the Roman Empire*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Christian_policies_in_the_Roman_Empire; *Persecution in the Early Church*, www.religionfacts.com/persecution-of-early-church

- 5.6.1. They were to prepare for it.
- 5.6.2. The slaughter was to be a planned and organized event. People could not be permitted to run at their neighbours with swords and spears in an uncontrolled pogrom. Rather, the rulers of the provinces would have had to determine how to organize the roundup of the Jews and the most efficient way to execute them.
- 5.6.3. This would help to ensure that there would not be riots and chaos, that the slaughter would be efficiently orchestrated, and that the disposition of the plunder would be managed.
- 5.7. What, in summary, are the characteristics of Haman's proposed genocide?
 - 5.7.1. A long duration (11 months) between the time the edict was published and the act was to be performed; which would cause the Jews much anguish and give the general populace time to plan and prepare.
 - 5.7.2. The geographical extent of the planned massacre—Jews likely lived in the urban areas in most the 127 provinces of the empire.
 - 5.7.3. The universality of the planned massacre—every identifiable Jew—male and female, adult and child, was to be killed. Estimates of how many Jews were in the Persian Empire at the time of Esther range from one to fifteen million. The upper end of the estimate seems to be unrealistic given that the entire population of the empire is estimated to have been around 50 million¹⁴⁴ and there are fewer than 15 million Jews today in the world. Since about 42,000 males (plus their families) returned with Ezra (Ezra 2.64), it is probable that the number of Jews was at the lower end of the estimates, and probably less than 1 million. If the population of Jews was 1 million and each male family head had on average a wife and three children, then 21% of the entire population returned with Ezra.
 - 5.7.4. The simultaneity of the planned massacre—it was to be carried out in a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.
 - 5.7.5. The specificity of the targeted people—God's covenant people.
 - 5.7.6. The incentive to greed to facilitate the efficient execution of the massacre—the plunder could be shared among the executioners, not all the money had to be remitted to the royal treasury.
- 6. What would have been the consequences, if Haman's edict had been followed?
 - 6.1. The Jews would have been exterminated and the line leading to the Messiah could have been cut off.
 - 6.2. Satan attempted at various points in history to obliterate the line of the Messiah. What are other times when Satan attempted to destroy the covenant people so that the Messiah could not be born?
 - 6.2.1. Cain killed Abel (Gen 4.8).
 - 6.2.2. Pharaoh had the baby boys killed (Ex 1.16).
 - 6.2.3. Athaliah killed all the royal family except for Joash (2 Ki 11.1).
 - 6.2.4. Herod killed the baby boys under the age of two (Mt 2.16)
 - 6.3. God's promises of the Messiah coming through Abraham, Judah, and David would have failed (Gen 3.15; Gen 12.1-3; Gen 18.18; Gen 49.10; 2 Sam 7.12-17; Gal 3.7-9).
- 7. What did Ahasuerus and Haman do after the decree was issued?
 - 7.1. Sat down to drink—obviously not to drink water, but to become drunk on wine or beer.
 - 7.2. Haman had plotted the destruction of many people and invited the king to celebrate his hard day's work with an earned reward of alcohol—he acted as if he had done nothing more than dig a trench for a wall's foundation and then he went to the pub for a beer.
 - 7.3. Some suggest that he took to the 'bottle' to drown the voice of his conscience. While this can be a reason that people use alcohol or drugs, Haman was so hardened that his conscience was seared (1 Tim 4.2). It is unlikely that he gave any thought to the trouble he had planned for the Jews, other

¹⁴⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire

- than wishing that their destruction could occur more quickly. Rather he excited and toasted their pending demise (Prov 4.16-17).
- 7.4. Haman and Ahasuerus are typical examples of the wickedness of many rich and pampered people who give no thought about the victims whom they have crushed and the carnage they have left behind by their pursuit for luxury and applause.
- 7.5. This passing comment about Haman's callous behaviour, provides a contrast (Amos 6.6) and tension point with the action of Mordecai who took to mourning because of the published edict (Est 4.1).
8. What was the response in Susa after the decree was issued?
- 8.1. Susa was thrown into confusion.
- 8.2. It is unclear what the nature of the people's confusion was. We can hope that the confusion was not the result of how best to go about executing Haman's plan and how to divide up the plunder.
- 8.3. It is unlikely that the people, in general, sympathised with the Jews. Faithful Jews would have seemed peculiar because of their religious practices, limited association with the Persians, and unwillingness to participate in the debauched practices of their neighbours. Also, the Jews had other enemies in Susa beside Haman (Est 9.12-15).
- 8.4. They were likely perplexed about why a decree would be issued for the annihilation of so many people who were peaceful and law-abiding. It appeared to be a capricious action and might have raised concern about how far Haman and the king might be willing to go—many non-Jews, from the provinces might have been asking themselves if they would be next.
9. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 3.12-15).
- 9.1. *Hamans Devise* – When government administrators (elected or appointed) are permitted to act unchecked by conscience, law, or force they use their positions of power to devise wicked schemes which advance their selfish and malicious ends. Hamans exist in every government—thankfully we have seen few examples in the West because God has blessed us with a Christian heritage. Examples:
- 9.1.1. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of Sunni militant jihadist organization ISIS, follows in the footsteps of Haman by slaughtering Christians, God's covenant people in the Middle East.
- 9.1.2. *Time* magazine listed recent examples¹⁴⁵ including, Richard Nixon's 'plumbers' who dug up dirt on opponents and participated in the Watergate burglaries, India's government 'telecoms scandal' of bribery and graft, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's appointment of his family members to positions where they oppressed and abused others, Silvio Berlusconi of Italy abused his position as prime minister to hold 'bunga bunga' parties, China's food safety supervisor accepted bribes to bypass safety regulations which lead to deaths and perpetuated China's bad image as produces of poor quality food.
- 9.1.3. President Obama's administration has been accused of being behind many scandals relating to the abuse of power such as the IRS's scrutiny of conservative organizations and the 'lost' e-mails, modifying Obama care regulations by executive order, violating constitutional law with three 'recess appointments' to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) when the Senate was still in session, and filing a lawsuit against Arizona for enforcing immigration laws rather than partnering with the state to enforce *federal* immigration laws.
- 9.1.4. There are claims that dozens of people who had incriminating evidence against Bill and Hillary Clinton have ended up dead.¹⁴⁶ It has been suggested that during their ascendancy they were the US's equivalent of Ahab and Jezebel.

¹⁴⁵ content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2071839,00.html

¹⁴⁶ lidblog.com/47-dead-clinton-friends-pt1/; www.snopes.com/Politics/clintons/bodycount.asp; www.whatreallyhappened.com/RANCHO/POLITICS/BODIES.php#axzz4QS9tngFQ

- 9.1.5. In Canada, Senators Mike Duffy, Pamela Wallin, Mac Harb, and Patrick Brazeau claimed travel and housing expenses for which they were not eligible.
- 9.2. *Heathens Delight* – Evil delights in the misery it creates. History is replete with examples of behaviour similar to Haman's, in which people create hardship for others and celebrate over their actions. Nero's 'fiddling while Rome burned' is given as a classic example. Some corporate executives are as abusive as Haman when they dictate massive layoffs to save money but spend far more than they save on their, and their cronies, salaries and perks; or require their employees to work in sweatshop-like conditions for low pay while they indulge in luxuries. A term was coined by Marcia Whicker in 1996 for this kind of behaviour—'toxic leadership', in which a leader leaves a group or organization in a worse-off condition than when he became its leader.
- 9.3. *Hell Drinks* – Satan figuratively sits down to wine as billions of sinners are destined for slaughter. Meanwhile, Christians do very little about it. Are we even, perplexed like the people of Susa, over the trouble he causes among mankind? For example, the genocide of abortion is off the radar of many professing Christians.
- 9.4. *Heaven Disposes* – Man devises but God disposes (Prov 16.1, 9; Prov 19.21). We know the outcome for Haman's plans, because of what is recorded in Esther. But often we don't know what will be the immediate outcome for the evil plans of men around us (e.g., the plans of people who are pro-abortion or advocating for wide acceptance of homosexual practices). We need to remember that God is in control and working all things for his glory and the good of his people (Rom 8.28). We need to continue praying that God's rule would be displayed clearly in the world (Mt 6.10), that he would openly frustrate the cruel and tyrannical counsels of men, and that his people would be delivered from the hands of their persecutors.

Plan Developed (Est 4.1-17)

Prayer (Est 4.1-3)

1. What did Mordecai do when he learned about Haman's edict?
 - 1.1. He exhibited the outward signs of mourning in both a personal and public manner.
 - 1.1.1. He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes.
 - 1.1.2. He lamented with a loud and bitter cry—a wailing—of terror over the pending premeditated murder of his people.
 - 1.1.3. His appearance and actions were those of a person showing heartfelt and honest grief over a death, rape, or similar serious event (Gen 37.34; 2 Sam 1.11-12; 2 Sam 13.19; Job 1.20)
 - 1.1.4. His mourning was not a mere customary response—like that of professional wailers at funerals (Mt 9.23), a 'tradition' which continues to this day.¹⁴⁷
 - 1.2. He prayed. Can we conclude that he prayed?
 - 1.2.1. The act of praying is not mentioned. We noted in our introductory considerations (*Purpose*) that the book of Esther does not mention the name of God. It also does not mention any pre-existing Jewish religious observances or refer to Jerusalem or Judea. We will consider this in more detail, shortly, after we address the key verse of the entire book—4.14.
 - 1.2.2. However, it is reasonable to conclude that he prayed, since Jewish mourning included prayer (Ps 35.13; Dan 9.3) and Mordecai knew that the only true help for the Jews would come from God.
 - 1.3. He confessed sin. Can we conclude that he made confession?
 - 1.3.1. Confession and repentance appropriately accompany some instances of mourning (Jonah 3.6-9; Neh 9.1-2).
 - 1.3.2. What sin would he have confessed?
 - 1.3.2.1. He may have believed that there had been an element of pride in his dealings with

¹⁴⁷ Hugo Guy, "Professional sobbers' who charge £45 to attend strangers' funerals and pretend to mourn," Daily Mail, 2013-03-27; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2299764/Professional-sobbers-charge-45-attend-strangers-funerals-pretend-mourn.html#ixzz3D6PYGswR

Haman which tainted his principle for refusing to bow before Haman—all our righteous actions are tainted by sin (Is 64.6; Rom 7.1, 20; Phil 3.9).

- 1.3.2.2. He may have felt a degree of personal responsibility for Haman's edict. Had he 'swallowed his pride' and bowed to Haman, Haman would have ignored him and the Jews, and the Jews would not have been threatened with extinction.
- 1.3.2.3. He likely believed that he and the rest of the Jews had not been faithful to God. They had become syncretistic and materialistic as they had lived under the Babylonian and Persian rule. Thus, like Nehemiah, after him, he confessed his personal sin and the sin of the nation (Neh 9.32-35).

- 2. Why did Mordecai go into the midst of the city?
 - 2.1. To make his lamentation public.
 - 2.2. He wanted to declare publicly that he was a Jew. Why?
 - 2.2.1. In the past, he may have been circumspect about his Jewishness, not making a display of it. However, he had informed the counsellors at the king's gate that he was a Jew when asked why he would not bow to Haman (Est 3.4).
 - 2.2.2. He wanted to show that he was not ashamed or afraid to be identified with the Jews, God's covenant people.
 - 2.2.3. It is possible that some of the Jews might have been concerned that he would hide behind his fatherly relationship with Esther and appeal for his life. If so, he wanted to make sure that no one could believe that. By publicly declaring himself to be a Jew, he aligned himself with those who had been sentenced to death.
 - 2.2.4. He wanted to encourage his fellow Jews. He took a leadership position by displaying a combination of lamentation (in the garments of a penitent) and bravery. By so doing he would encourage the Jews to appeal to God for deliverance.
 - 2.2.5. His actions also served as a form of protest against the unjust death sentence which had been declared against the Jews. An equivalent (from modern pop culture) is when Katniss Everdeen faces down the 'peacekeeper' who is whipping Gale Hawthorne and aligns herself with the people from district 12 who are being harassed by the Capitol.
- 3. Where did Mordecai continue his lamentation? Why?
 - 3.1. At the king's gate
 - 3.2. He continued his protest against the unjust death sentence by taking his case to the king's gate where judicial matters which did not require the king's attention were dealt with.
 - 3.3. He may have wanted his protest to become known to the king, assuming that he did not know the details of Haman's scheme and the people group who were designated for death—he was giving the king the benefit of the doubt.
 - 3.4. He may have also wanted Esther to hear about the plight of the Jews. She may have been isolated from the news. He may have hoped that one of her maids or harem eunuchs would recognize him (Est 2.11) and she would send out a query to determine the cause of his mourning. Then he could relay a message to her about Haman's edict.
- 4. Why could Mordecai not communicate directly with Esther?
 - 4.1. Even before these events he probably could not have entered the queen's quarters directly, and would have been dependent on communicating through those who had direct access to her.
 - 4.2. However, because he was wearing mourning garments, he could no longer enter the palace precincts, where he previously had access (Est 2.11). As the text states, "no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth".
 - 4.3. Why was there a prohibition against anyone wearing sackcloth to pass through the king's gate into the palace?
 - 4.3.1. The palace precincts were a garden paradise, a place of luxury and soft clothing (Mt 11.8),

- sheltered from reality. The king likely did not want anyone to spoil that atmosphere with mourning garments or sadness (Neh 2.2).
- 4.3.2. The king was superstitious, and garments of mourning would have reminded him of death. So, he likely had banned such reminders from his presence.
- 4.3.3. However, it is possible that there was a deeper reason for the command against wearing sackcloth in the palace precincts. At this time, the Persian monarchs appear to have adopted the dualism of the Zoroastrians, with Ahuramazda and Ahriman corresponding to light and dark, good and evil, and clean and unclean. Thus, the Persian monarchs likely considered anyone wearing mourning garments to be ceremonially unclean. The king of Persia, as the visible representative of Ahuramazda, could not allow anyone ceremonially unclean to approach him.
- 4.3.4. Where might we find parallels to the Persian king's shutting out the presence of mourning, since it reminded him of death?
- 4.3.4.1. At the time of the Nazis, some Germans did not want to hear about what was happening in the concentration camps. They could (or would) not believe that such things could actually be happening in their country so they approached the matter with indifference.
- 4.3.4.2. Today, some professing Christians do not want to hear about what goes on in abortion clinics and are indifferent to the slaughter of the unborn.
- 4.3.5. The attitude seems to express the belief that if you deny the presence of death, then it isn't happening. In contrast the Bible teaches that we should face the reality of death so that we are prepared for the next life (Eccl 7.2-4).
- 4.4. Why is this reference about the exclusion of someone wearing sackcloth important?
- 4.4.1. It is a small historical detail which provides evidence that the book of Esther was written around the time of the events which it records by an eyewitness of the events. No Jew writing a polemical piece, centuries later, would have thought to insert such a minor historical detail. It validates the historical accuracy of the book of Esther.
5. What was the response among the Jews in the provinces when they heard of the edict?
- 5.1. Throughout the provinces there was great mourning among the Jews. The edict was a great shock to them, especially among those who had heard the rumor circulating among them that a Jewess had been declared queen and felt that their people's fortunes were looking bright.
- 5.2. They fasted, wept, and lamented; and some lay in sackcloth and ashes. The people did not go into hiding. Like Mordecai, they were not ashamed of being Jewish and declared this fact through their display of public lamentation.
- 5.3. The use of the three words ('fasted', 'wept', and 'lamented') for their response may be an instance of the Hebraic grammatical form for showing completeness—i.e., their mourning was as total as can be imagined.
- 5.4. Fasting was often an outward sign of penitence among God's covenant people and was accompanied with prayer (Ezra 9.5; Neh 1.4).
- 5.4.1. OT law required a fast once per year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16.29; Lev 23.27; Num 29.7).
- 5.4.2. The Jews appear to have added other annual fasts (Zech 8.19).
- 5.4.3. In addition, special times of fasting were called during national emergencies (Judges 20.26; Joel 1.14) and individuals fasted at times of personal distress (2 Sam 12.22; Nehemiah 1.4).
- 5.5. The people appealed to God, based on his promise to help them in times of need (Dt 4.30-31; 1 Ki 8.47-53; Ps 18.6; Ps 107.6; Joel 2.12).
- 5.6. They did not appeal to the king in Susa, knowing that the edict had been issued in his name. Rather they appealed to the great King and Judge who does what is just (Gen 18.25; Ps 67.4; Ps 96.13; Ps 98.9).

6. What are the different ways people responded to the plight of the Jews? (Est 3.15-4.3)
 - 6.1. Haman looked forward to their destruction.
 - 6.2. Haman and the king ignored their plight and partied.
 - 6.3. The citizens of the kingdom (at least in the capital) were perplexed by the decree.
 - 6.4. Esther, in the seclusion of the harem, was ignorant of what had happened and of the danger for her people.
 - 6.5. The Jews throughout the provinces (including those who had returned to Judea to rebuild the Temple) greatly lamented their pending demise and sought God's help through prayer.
 - 6.6. Mordecai lamented and prayed and also took action to get Esther's attention so that he could direct an appeal to the king. He was God's man at this crucial moment.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 4.1-3).
 - 7.1. *Prayer's Cry* – Mordecai's and the people's first action on hearing of the edict was to pray. Often, we hear people say, "We can do nothing more now but pray," when they are in a crisis. They have it backwards. Our first action should be to pray—it doesn't need to be a lengthy prayer—and then to take action. For example, when rescuing people from an accident or fire, dealing with a medical issue, or confronting a fiscal difficulty we should place our concerns before God and act to address the issue.
 - 7.2. *Provided Champions* – God raises up 'champions' when he needs them to fulfill his purposes on earth—for example, he raised up Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, Daniel, Mordecai, Nehemiah, Paul, Athanasius, and Luther when and where he needed them to bring about his purposes. Likewise, God raised the ultimate champion at the right time (Rom 5.6) to conquer sin and death.
 - 7.2.1. Human champions do not start reformations, God does.
 - 7.2.2. The champions may even be reluctant to be called into service, but God gives them the strength which they need to move forward—Moses claimed he could not speak well, Gideon tested his calling with a fleece, Nehemiah was afraid to approach the king, Paul had to be blinded and dragged into the Kingdom, and Esther may have initially hesitated (Est 4.11).
 - 7.3. *Public Confession* – Like Mordecai, we must be prepared to make a public confession of our alignment with God's covenant people.
 - 7.3.1. In the applied lessons in a previous section (*Provocation*; Est 3.2b-6) we noted that we must make a declaration when silence would be a sin—in a considerate manner—and that it must be consistent, without shame, and accompanied by obedience to God's laws, displayed through good works.
 - 7.3.2. Mordecai made his public confession on behalf of God's covenant people who were being oppressed by an unjust Persian edict. We also should make a public confession on behalf of the powerless oppressed (e.g., the unborn who are being slaughtered by abortion) and those who are victims of unjust laws (e.g., small business owners being harassed by HRCs because they are willing to abide by the politically correct nonsense that same-sex unions fall within the definition of 'marriage').
 - 7.3.3. However, a dramatic show of fasting and weeping, with tearing of clothes and anointing with ashes, probably should *not* be included with our public confession. Jesus indicates that fasting is to be an inner act of worship not to be made visible to others (Mt 6.17-18). It is a private matter between a Christian and God. We cannot, and should not, know if another person is fasting.¹⁴⁸

Problem (Est 4.4-11)

1. What did Esther's servants discover, and what did they do with the information?

¹⁴⁸ For more on the role of fasting in the NT Church, refer to: "Appendix N – Fasting," in: James R. Hughes, *Nehemiah the Church Builder: Instructor's Guide*, 2006; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 1.1. They did not find Mordecai inside the king's gate as formerly. Instead, they found him sitting outside the king's gate dressed in sackcloth with his head covered in ashes.
- 1.2. Initially, they may have been surprised at his absence as he likely had communicated with them regularly to determine how Esther was doing (Est 2.11, 22). So, when they heard that he could not enter through the gate into the administrative precincts they probably enquired about his welfare and found him outside the gate.
- 1.3. They reported Mordecai's circumstances to Esther.
2. What was Esther's reaction, on hearing of the news about Mordecai? Why?
 - 2.1. She was deeply distressed over Mordecai's circumstances.
 - 2.2. At this point she did not know of Haman's decree against the Jews. She lived in a secluded part of the palace harem precincts and had not had an opportunity to interact with people beyond the harem staff, because she had not been called to visit the king in a month (Est 4.11).
 - 2.3. So, she probably thought that Mordecai was mourning over the death of a relative or near friend—a common reason for wearing sackcloth (Gen 37.34; 2 Sam 3.31; Jer 6.26; Joel 1.8).
 - 2.4. Her heart went out to her adopted father and she displayed genuine love and concern for him.
3. What did Esther do for Mordecai?
 - 3.1. She sent him a change of clothing so that he could remove the sackcloth, would no longer be viewed as unclean in the eyes of the Persians, and return to his position in king's gate. She may have been concerned that if the king passed through the gate and saw Mordecai in sackcloth he could be punished for spoiling the king's view and disturbing his peace.
 - 3.2. Her motives were right. However, she should have sent first to inquire of the reason for his distress rather than assuming anything—e.g., that his mourning was over the death of a relative or near friend.
 - 3.3. It has been suggested that by sending the clothing, Esther was observing a Persian custom rather than a Jewish one; which provides additional evidence that the book of Esther was written during the Persian period rather than at a later date by a Jewish polemicist.¹⁴⁹
4. Why did Mordecai not accept the garments and remove his sackcloth?
 - 4.1. He used his refusal as a means for getting Esther to send a trusted messenger so that he could communicate to her the situation of the Jews.
 - 4.2. He may have also been indicating, symbolically, that he was one who could not be comforted (Ps 77.2; Jer 31.15). The situation of the Jews was so dire that drastic action was required.
5. How did Esther determine the reason Mordecai was wearing sackcloth? (Est 4.5-6, 9)
 - 5.1. She sent Hathach, a trusted servant to enquire about the reason why Mordecai was mourning.
 - 5.2. Some suggest that Hathach was a Jewish eunuch. However, there is no reason to think that Esther, at this point, would have wanted to send a Jew to enquire further into the cause of Mordecai's distress. She did not know about Haman's edict, and of the pending disaster for the Jewish people. In addition, the court eunuchs, although drawn from various subject nations throughout the empire, were generally very reliable (notwithstanding those who attempted to assassinate the king; Est 2.21) and aligned themselves entirely with the royal person they served.
 - 5.3. Esther 'ordered' ('commanded') Hathach to go to Mordecai to enquire about his circumstances. She had been in the royal harem for over six years and queen for five years. She was, by this time, used to exercising royal authority over her servants.
 - 5.4. Hathach faithfully executed his duties by going to Mordecai, where he was stationed in the open square outside the king's gate, learning the reason for Mordecai's distress, and returning to tell

¹⁴⁹ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), pp. 152-153; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAIAAJ

Esther what Mordecai had said.

- 5.5. When Hathach was sent, he would have had no idea what an important message he would be carrying back to Esther.
6. What did Mordecai tell Hathach? (7-8)
 - 6.1. He told Hathach of:
 - 6.1.1. His refusal to bow before Haman; and likely the reason for his being unwilling to bow before Haman.
 - 6.1.2. The decree to destroy the Jews.
 - 6.1.3. The exact amount of money which Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury.
 - 6.2. He also gave Hathach a copy of the decree which Haman had dictated, to show to Esther.
 - 6.2.1. Providing a copy in writing does not indicate that he mistrusted Hathach to relay the message orally. Rather it would provide official evidence, in Mordecai's own handwriting that Haman's decree was a serious matter for her to consider. As the only (adopted) child of a well-educated and financially comfortable Jewish administrator, it is very likely that Esther could read.
 - 6.2.2. Some commentators infer that Mordecai's access to the text of the decree proves that he held a high position in the government—a position God had given him in anticipation of his role in saving the Jews. However, the decree had been issued in Susa (Est 3.15; Est 4.8). If it had been posted in the public square outside the king's gate, it would have been available for anyone who could read to copy.
 - 6.3. He asked to have Esther plead with the king on behalf of the Jews.
 - 6.3.1. If Hathach did not already know that Esther was a Jewess, he certainly knew by this point; because Mordecai would have revealed his own identity as part of the explanation for his being unwilling to bow to Haman and why he was mourning on behalf of the Jews. Also, Mordecai told Hathach that the Jews were Esther's people.
 - 6.3.2. Mordecai now wanted Esther to reveal her national identity and to declare herself to be aligned with the Jews and to intercede for them before the king.
 - 6.4. Why was it dangerous for Mordecai to reveal this information to Hathach?
 - 6.4.1. It contained an accusation against the powerful Haman, a favourite of the king.
 - 6.4.2. It revealed Esther's Jewish origin.
 - 6.4.3. It commanded the queen to go before the king and plead with him on behalf of her people.
 - 6.4.4. Hathach could have gone to Haman or the king with the information. This would have resulted in the execution of both Mordecai and Esther.
 - 6.5. Why did Mordecai trust Hathach to carry such a sensitive message to Esther?
 - 6.5.1. Mordecai trusted Esther and would have had full confidence that if she trusted Hathach then so could he.
 - 6.5.2. He probably had already had many encounters with Hathach over the preceding five years through his communications with Esther, through Hathach, and had come to know him to be a reliable and faithful servant.
 - 6.5.3. He communicated everything in detail, even a message which could have had him executed for treason for not revealing it to Haman or the king. Hathach aligned himself with Esther, Mordecai and the Jews, even if he was not a Jew himself. We can surmise that after Esther revealed Haman's plot and Mordecai was elevated to the position of first minister (Est 8.2), that Hathach was rewarded for his faithful part in saving the Jews. We can also hope that as Hathach learned about the faith of Esther and Mordecai that he became a Jewish convert, looking to the coming Messiah, and is now in heaven. The fact that he is named in this account indicates a degree of recognition for what he did on behalf of the Jews.
7. How did Esther reply, on hearing of Mordecai's request that she go to the king?
 - 7.1. She explained why it would be difficult for her to get an audience with the king:

- 7.1.1. The Persian court custom forbid anyone coming before the king who had not been called into his presence. Her summary of the Persian court custom to control access to the king is attested by extra-Biblical sources.^{150, 151}
- 7.1.1.1. Persian kings were sheltered from observing those who were mourning (Est 4.2; Neh 2.1-4) and from hearing bad news.
- 7.1.1.2. The kings were also protected from interruptions that might interfere with their business or pleasure.¹⁵²
- 7.1.1.3. The prohibition may have also had a practical element, to protect the king from would be assassins, since autocratic and despotic rulers need to be constantly on guard for their lives—e.g., using food tasters, bodyguards, protective armour, and security systems.
- 7.1.1.4. Also, since a Persian king was adored as a god, and believed to be the human manifestation of Ahuramazda, no person could enter his presence without being invited to approach.
- 7.1.2. However, it was possible for people wishing an audience with the king to ask to be announced.¹⁵³ Why did Esther not think she could avail herself of this approach?
- 7.1.2.1. She hadn't been called into the king's presence (whether into his bedchamber or into his courtroom) for a month and may have believed that she had offended the king in some way.
- 7.1.2.2. She may not have wanted to disclose her reasons for her wish for an audience to any court administrator who would have to review her request.
- 7.2. Did Esther display cowardice and evade responsibility toward the Jews?
- 7.2.1. Some suggest that she hesitated and made excuses, and did not act in a heroic manner.¹⁵⁴ Support for the idea that she was timid may come from Mordecai's response (Est 4.13-14), which appears to indicate that he thought that she was hesitating—his message back to her appears to be intended to cut off her hesitation with a firm fatherly rebuke.
- 7.2.2. Others say that she was simply stating facts about the legitimate difficulties that she would encounter.
- 7.2.2.1. She was explaining that she may have somehow fallen out of favor with Ahasuerus and that his love (infatuation; Est 2.14, 17) with her had waned. By going unbidden to the capricious and unpredictable Ahasuerus and ask for an audience she might have made matters worse for the Jews.
- 7.2.2.2. To ask to have set aside an irrevocable decree, made by a favourite of the king, and sealed with the king's signet, may have appeared to Esther an impossible task.
- 7.2.2.3. By stating the situation, she was implicitly asking that Mordecai provide guidance about how to deal with palace protocol.
- 7.2.3. As with modern e-mail communications, it is difficult to judge the tone and subtleties of a written message since a reader does not also have the opportunity to see the sender's body language and facial expressions. We should not accuse Esther of cowardice when we cannot discern what was going through her mind.
- 7.3. What might have been the reason that Esther had not been called into Ahasuerus' presence for about a month?

¹⁵⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 118;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D118%3Asection%3D1

¹⁵¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* (translated by William Whiston), book 11, chapter 6, para 3; www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-11.htm

¹⁵² Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 118;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D118%3Asection%3D1

¹⁵³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 3, chapter 140;

www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D140%3Asection%3D1

¹⁵⁴ E.g.: Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *The Feast of Purim: A Jewish Mardi Gras*, bible.org/seriespage/feast-purim-jewish-mardi-gras-esther-81%E2%80%9494103

- 7.3.1. About five years had passed since Esther had been married to Ahasuerus. With a harem filled with young women, and a pampered sensuous past, Ahasuerus may have become bored with Esther and entertained himself more frequently from his harem. Thus, Esther may have been overlooked.
- 7.3.2. Haman may have deliberately distracted Ahasuerus for a number of days before and after he asked to destroy the Jews. It is likely that the feast Haman provided for the king (Est 3.15) included the presence of concubines. Haman may have been among those who disliked the presence of Esther in the palace because she was not from the Persian nobility. He may have had a suspicion that she was a Jewess—he undoubtedly kept informed of the rumours circulating in the palace and knew that she communicated with Mordecai.
8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 4.4-11)
- 8.1. *Perversity Confronted* – If evil is not checked it will grow, and those who do not prevent or stop evil when it is in their power to do so have abdicated responsibility and increased the world's moral pollution (Prov 25.26). We know this from our experience with children. If they are not disciplined when they are bad, they will grow into rebellious teens and delinquent adults. As someone once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing."¹⁵⁵
- 8.1.1. Mordecai acted to stop Haman's evil plot and he expected Esther to act also.
- 8.1.2. We might conclude that Esther made an excuse for why she could not act—she said that she had no access to the king.
- 8.1.3. Whether or not Esther abdicated responsibility at first, Christians often make excuses when confronted with evil. We say such things as, "I am not in a position to do anything about it." "I have no authority, nor do I have access to people with the authority to do something about it." Or even, "It is not my problem, someone else should take care of it."
- 8.1.4. This kind of abdication on the part of Christians is part of the reason many Jews died in the German concentration camps during the Second World War, why abortion has become a plague in NA, and why unnatural homosexual practices have become accepted within our culture. Christians are generally happy to live in their ghettos and let the unbelieving world condemn itself to death.
- 8.1.5. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know how far our responsibility extends and what kinds of action are appropriate in some situations.
- 8.1.5.1. For example, should the US play global cop and stop the evil of ISIS? Some liken ISIS to Hitler and suggest that if we don't stop them we will become embroiled in WW III, and they should also be stopped because they persecute Christians. Others suggest that if Saddam Hussein had been left in place, Christians in the Middle East would be better off today than they are, and that the West's interference and incompetence has allowed ISIS to flourish. They suggest that we should let Islamic factions destroy one another.
- 8.1.5.2. Similarly, there are many examples of injustice (e.g., fines for Christians who refuse to allow their establishments to be used for same-sex wedding ceremonies, or dismissal of professors who believe God created the universe in six days, about 6,000 years ago) and evil (e.g., government sponsored gambling and regulations permitting brothels) which need to be challenged.
- 8.1.5.3. We as individuals obviously cannot tackle every injustice and evil. However, if every Christian took seriously his responsibility to confront perversity and evil, and applied concerted and continuous effort to a single cause the world would be turned upside down (Ps 82.4; Prov 24.11; Is 58.6; 1 Jn 3.16-17)
- 8.2. *Providential Challenge* – God delights in making what appears to be impossible, possible. Sarah

¹⁵⁵ quoteinvestigator.com/2010/12/04/good-men-do/

was barren and past the age of childbearing, yet God told Abram that he would have a son through Sarah because nothing is too hard for the LORD (Gen 18.14). A son was born to a virgin (Lk 1.37), the dead were raised (Acts 26.8), and the spiritually dead are regenerated (Mt 19.26). So, human edicts from a pagan first minister cannot stand in God's way. While Mordecai and Esther might have thought that the end for the Jews was near, God was working out his providences to give them a glorious future—through them (the Jews) would come the Messiah, almost all of the New Testament, and the early missionaries who took the Gospel to the world.

- 8.3. *Plain Chosen* – God not only delights in demonstrating that he can overcome any supposed challenge, he also often chooses to use the things considered to be foolish by the world's standards to confound the worldly wise (1 Cor 1.26-29). Hathach, as a eunuch and slave, was a 'nobody' in the world's eyes. Yet he played an important role in saving the Jews. There are many unnamed and apparently insignificant individuals in the Bible's records who have important roles, such as:
- 8.3.1. A servant girl who directed Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, to salvation (2 Ki 5.3).
 - 8.3.2. A little boy who gave up his bread and fish so that a multitude could be fed (Jn 6.9).
 - 8.3.3. A widow who gave two small copper coins, all that she had (Mk 12.41-44).
 - 8.3.4. Men who rescued Paul in Damascus by lowering him in a basket (Acts 9.25).
 - 8.3.5. The son of Paul's sister who heard of the Jews plan to ambush Paul and reported it (Acts 23.16).

We don't know who these people were, but God knows them, and used them to accomplish his great purposes. As Warren Wiersbe said, 'As great doors can swing upon small hinges, so great events can turn upon the deeds of "small" and sometimes anonymous people.' We should never underestimate what good we can do through us when we have strong faith in the power of God and persevere in his strength.

- 8.4. *Princely Contrast* – Kings and princes should be protectors of their people. Ahasuerus was the exact opposite of what he should have been—he was a selfish, spoiled, simpleton who would not let his people approach him. In contrast Jesus is a prince who protects his people (Is 9.6-7) and bids them come to him (Mt 11.28). We should ever look to our true Prince and not to the fickle magistrates of this passing realm.

Pressure (Est 4.12-14)

1. Who is the 'they' who brought Esther's answer to Mordecai?
 - 1.1. A delegation from among Esther's eunuchs (Est 4.4), probably led by Hathach (Est 4.9), and possibly from her young women (female attendants), although they may not have been permitted to leave the harem precincts.
 - 1.2. The use of 'they' instead of providing the names of the delegation (in particular that of Hathach) is not a slight on the importance of their work but a stylistic feature of continuous narrative. The 'they' is inclusive of all of Esther's staff, whom she undoubtedly had grown fond of over the previous five years, and who in turn loved her.
2. What is the apparent tone of Mordecai's reply to Esther's response?
 - 2.1. It displays exasperation and firmness—exasperation over Esther's apparent equivocation and firmness in telling her what she must do on behalf of the Jews.
 - 2.2. There may be an additional note of firmness in the words 'Mordecai told', rather than 'Mordecai asked', in verse 13. However, the Hebrew word (אָמַר) can also be translated as 'said'.
 - 2.3. Mordecai does not speak reproachfully. He does not say something like, "Tell that stupid girl, if she doesn't act ...". He knows Esther's heart and knows that she has a concern for her people and would take action if she knew how.
 - 2.4. Mordecai may have misinterpreted Esther's message. As we noted previously, it is difficult to judge the tone and subtleties of a written message since a reader does not also have the opportunity to see the sender's body language and facial expressions.

3. What is the content of Mordecai's reply to Esther?
 - 3.1. *You aren't protected.* The edict with the king's seal applied to all Jews (Est 3.13). Esther would not be protected from Haman's vindictiveness even though she was in the palace. Haman, and those who hated Esther (a commoner) for taking Vashti's place, would manipulate the king to get rid of her. They would use guilt tactics and tell Ahasuerus that he couldn't play favourites, use a previous precedent and remind him that he had deposed Vashti, and appeal to principle and claim that the law of the land had to be upheld. Haman would ensure that every Jew in the empire was rooted out and slaughtered.
 - 3.2. *You can't prevent.* Esther's silence and inaction wouldn't prevent deliverance relief from coming from another source. Mordecai implies that God would act to deliver his covenant people, whether or not Esther acted, although he doesn't mention God's name. The implied message is that Esther shouldn't think that she is so important that God depends on her to save his people, even if she is in a place where she can do a good work.
 - 3.3. *You won't partake.* If Esther doesn't act when the opportunity is presented to her, she will regret her inaction as see destruction come upon her and her family. Mordecai indicates that she will be punished for not acting.
 - 3.3.1. Why would God help the rest of the Jewish nation but not Esther?
 - 3.3.1.1. The others were innocent, not being in a position to take protective action, but she would be guilty of committing a sin of omission. "[W]hoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." (James 4.17)
 - 3.3.2. Why would Esther's family perish along with her?
 - 3.3.2.1. There is a covenantal aspect to punishment, and Esther as queen would represent a position of authority in a family (Ex 20.5).
 - 3.3.2.2. In the ancient Middle East, when a person of power and influence was punished his entire family was brought down with him and his possessions delivered to others (Est 8.2; Est 9.13; Num 16.27; Josh 7.24; Dan 6.24).
 - 3.3.3. Whom else did Esther have as family?
 - 3.3.3.1. Mordecai, her adopted father, would have been shamed by Esther's inaction, even if deliverance for the Jews came from another place.
 - 3.3.3.2. She was an orphan, so she did not have immediate family members, including older brothers or they would have been charged with her care rather than Mordecai.
 - 3.3.3.3. Mordecai could be referring to uncles, aunts and cousins of Esther.
 - 3.4. *You were placed.* Mordecai, speaking as a prophet, reminds Esther that nothing occurs by chance, but all unfolds according to God's plan. Her being placed in the position of queen at this crucial point was no accident and a clear indicator that it was her responsibility and time to act.
 - 3.4.1. Mordecai states explicitly that God had placed her in her position—not her beauty, charm, skills, intelligence, or character; which were all gifts given to her by God. He encourages her to reflect on her life—how she came to be an orphan; was in Susa at the right age and right time to be taken into the king's harem, when he was looking for a replacement for Vashti; how she was assisted by her attendants; and how she had become queen—she would see the hand of God leading her and directing her life. She could reflect on the life of Joseph who was sold into slavery, unjustly accused of sexual immorality, and confined to prison but who later said, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Gen 50.20)
 - 3.4.2. Verse 4.14, and in particular the words, "for such a time as this", is the fulcrum point of the book of Esther. Like a playground teeter-totter can tip to the left or right, so subsequent events for the history of the Jews can turn one way or another.
4. What guidance does Mordecai give to Esther about what action to take?
 - 4.1. If Esther had been seeking guidance from her adopted father, he did not give any. He had already

- told her what to do—present herself to the king and petition him to preserve the Jewish people from Haman’s destructive plan (Est 4.8).
- 4.2. Rather, he reinforced the imperative by telling her that it was her responsibility to act. He implored her to act along the lines of the instruction he had already sent. He says, in effect, “You are a smart woman and you have the power to act, figure out how to get your husband to revoke the wicked decree of Haman!”
5. What confidence is displayed in Mordecai’s reply?
 - 5.1. Mordecai displayed confidence in the God of the covenant. He knew that God had promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his descendants (Gen 12.1-3) and that the Messiah would come through the Jews, Judah, and David (Gen 49.10; 2 Sam 7.12-13) and set up an eternal kingdom (Is 9.6-7; Dan 2.44). He knew that these promises had not yet been fulfilled and thus that God would preserve his people—at least a remnant—in order to bring them to fruition. Mordecai likely had access to the prophecies of Daniel and knew that the Jews still had a future of at least half a millennium (i.e., from what was recorded in Dan 9.24-27 and chapter 11).
 - 5.2. The expression “who knows” is sometimes used as an expression of confusion (e.g., Eccl 2.19; Eccl 3.21; Eccl 6.12; Eccl 8.1). However, here it is exclamation of certainty.
 - 5.3. Some have suggested that Mordecai was an impious man who had become culturally a Persian and that he was expecting help for the Jews from another source than from God and, to his surprise, God intervened. This is nonsense. Mordecai would not have been willing to risk his life by declaring his alignment with the Jews (Est 3.4) if he had not had deep spiritual convictions.
 - 5.4. Although the text does not explicitly say so—e.g., “Mordecai believed God” (Gen 15.6), “Mordecai walked with God” (Gen 5.22), or “Mordecai was a righteous man” (Gen 6.9)—these words (Est 4.14) indicate that Mordecai was a man of faith and that he believed in God, in God’s word, and in God’s providential governance of human affairs. He was confident that God would act on behalf of the Jews and work a miracle like their deliverance from slavery in Egypt or change the king’s heart so that he would issue a decree like Cyrus had done, which ended the Babylonian Captivity.
 - 5.5. This is the theological high point in the book as well as the fulcrum point for deciding the Jew’s future existence. God used the faith of Mordecai—and subsequently Esther’s faith, which she would display by asking the Jews to hold a fast (and, by implication, to prayer) on her behalf (Est 4.16) and being willing to risk her life for the cause of the Jews—to work out his plan to save the Jews and to fulfill his promise to send the Redeemer. Faith in God is at the heart of the book of Esther.
 6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 4.12-14)
 - 6.1. *People* – God accomplishes his purposes through people—both unbelievers and believers.
 - 6.1.1. He wills and permits wicked people to carry out their rebellious plans so that he can show his glory by bringing their rebellion to nothing (Ex 9.16; Prov 16.4; Rom 9.21-22).
 - 6.1.2. He uses believers to execute his purposes. For example, he uses the prayers of his people to bring about revival (Mt 9.38) and to rescue the persecuted (Heb 13.3). He uses his people to preach the Gospel (Rom 10.14-15) and provide for the needy (Jam 1.27). If the church isn’t praying, preaching, and providing, God’s work is diminished. This does not mean that he is dependent on human actors. Rather, it means that he *chooses* to use them to advance his cause. When the Church does not display a strong faith, and is not being obedient, then the work of God does not advance as it should.
 - 6.1.3. God decreed Ahasuerus’ drunken party and temper so that he would depose Vashti and his acceptance of his advisors’ plan to fill the harem so that Esther would be brought into the palace. He decreed Haman’s wicked edict, and the king’s sleepless night so that he would recall Mordecai’s kindness in saving his life. And he decreed Esther’s banquets so that Haman would be accused of his treachery. In all things, God fulfills his sovereign plan

through people so that all things work out for his glory (Rev 4.11) and our benefit (Rom 8.28).

- 6.2. *Placement* – Esther was reminded by Mordecai that she was in her position “for such a time as this”. However, it is not Esther alone that was placed precisely where God wanted her to be, when he wanted her there. Every person is in exactly the same situation—precisely where God wants him and when he wants him there. This does not mean that every decision or action we take is equally momentous as that which Esther was called to make. However, we should not attempt to second-guess God and question why he has placed us where he has, and for what purpose. We should live obediently for his glory, where he has placed us.

6.2.1. For example, a young Christian woman working as a checkout clerk in a supermarket may decide to help a disabled woman bag her groceries instead of moving immediately to check through the next customer. From this apparently simple action a chain of events could unfold which lead to significant events at an international level. The customer being helped might have reported it to her son, who in turn went to thank the checkout clerk by inviting her to dinner. After they fell in love and were married their first daughter became a world-renowned specialist in tropical medicine. Or a customer waiting in line missed an important meeting because the cashier helped bag the disabled ladies groceries, and his anger escalated to the point where he went to the Middle East and joined ISIS and became one of their snipers who killed an elected official, which triggered a world war.

6.2.2. Sometimes we can look back at our lives and see how ‘small’ decisions and actions have led us in particular directions which have changed the course of our lives. In other cases, we may not know how important some apparently simple decisions or actions really were until we reach heaven and look back at the amazing work God has been carrying out.

- 6.3. *Purposes* – God’s purposes are being worked out in the world through people and nations—nothing can derail his plans; nothing is outside of his directive power. His purposes direct the lives of everyone, from kings to commoners, whether they are good or evil. God will accomplish his purposes even if individuals refuse to obey his explicit commands or rebel against his clear direction for their lives. He will accomplish his purposes despite their disobedience. Although God uses people to fulfill his purposes, his plans are not dependent on any person. If Esther rebelled against God’s clear direction for her life, God would still accomplish his purposes for Israel by saving his people from disaster, but Esther would be cast aside. Likewise, if you and I refuse to obey God, he may abandon us and move on with someone else to accomplish his purposes and we will forfeit a reward or blessing. However, in some cases he may discipline us to bring us in line. For example:

6.3.1. When John Mark abandoned Paul (Acts 13.13; Acts 15.36-41), God supplied Timothy to take his place (Acts 16.1-3).

6.3.2. When Jonah tried to flee from God’s call, God hounded him until he complied.

When we attempt to reconcile God’s control of all events with human responsibility to act we can tie ourselves in intellectual, psychological, and spiritual knots. The conundrum has always presented a challenge for finite human minds. We cannot fully understand how all actions can be predetermined by God and yet how man can be a responsible agent. Attempts to explain this often end up limiting God and declaring that man has an ultimately free will—which the Bible does not teach—or fatalistically absolving man of all responsibility. We need to accept the fact that God uses secondary means (including human wills) to accomplish his purposes. The question we need to ask is not “Is God controlling my life?”—he is!—but “Am I submitting to his revealed will?”

- 6.4. *Promises* – God is faithful to his promises (Josh 21.45; Josh 23.14; Lk 21.33; 1 Cor 1.20).

6.4.1. Over 1,000 promises occur in the Bible. Among these promises, God promises to protect and provide for his people (Prov 3.25, 26; Is 46.4; Heb 13.5)

6.4.2. How can we reconcile his promise to protect and provide for us, with the fact that the bad things happen to his people—such as illness, financial hardships, persecution from evil men, and physical death?

- 6.4.3. Suffering, and eventually death, are part of God's decree for everyone living in this sin-polluted world because of the curse on sin (Gen 3.17). Our confidence lies not in a total escape from suffering in the spatial-temporal realm but in comfort and care through (Ps 55.22; 1 Pt 5.7), and eventual removal of (Rev 21.4), all suffering.
- 6.4.4. In addition, those who have placed their faith in Jesus know that God uses the suffering of his people for his greater purposes. The following are a few principles which we should apply to provide a balanced approach for dealing with God's promises and Christian suffering:
- 6.4.4.1. God never sends trials our way that he has not equipped us to bear, with his supply of grace and faith (1 Cor 10.13).
 - 6.4.4.2. We need to put our trials into a larger context. What we suffer is temporary (2 Cor 4.17) and usually considerably less than what many Christians have suffered. Our trials cannot compare to those of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 11.23-28). Yet he was content with what he had been provided (1 Tim 6.8), rejoiced always (Phil 4.4), and gave thanks in all things (Eph 5.20).
 - 6.4.4.3. Our trials are always mixed with some evidence of blessing. Christians who have suffered greatly will often tell amazing stories of how great good came out of what looked like the worst evil.¹⁵⁶
 - 6.4.4.4. God sends harder trials only when we have been prepared by less severe ones. Christians facing the toughest trials for the cause of Christ are the most blessed (Mt 5.10-11; Jam 1.2-3).
- 6.5. *Pacing* – God works out his purposes on his own schedule. His timing for events is perfect (Rom 5.6; Gal 4.4; Eph 1.10), but not necessarily what we might wish or expect (Ps 119.84; 2 Pt 3.8; Rev 6.10). What are examples of how God shows his control over the timing of events in Esther and elsewhere in the Bible?
- 6.5.1. In Esther, God allowed 3-4 years to pass before Ahasuerus appointed a new queen. Another 4-5 years passed before Haman cast lots and issued his decree. At that point, time for the Jews was running out quickly, since the planned date (almost a year away) for their execution grew closer. During that time, they called to God and said "How long, O Lord?" But their answer did not come for two months and 10 days, when Mordecai issued his decree (Est 8.9).
- 6.5.2. Elsewhere, we might wonder why God allowed evil before the flood (Gen 6.5) to continue so long and then even 120 years after he gave warning (Gen 6.3). Or why he allowed the iniquity of the Amorites to persist for so long and allow his people to suffer under the Egyptian captivity for hundreds of years (Gen 15.13-16). Finally, we might wonder why Jesus hasn't returned to earth to usher in the end of this age, permanently remove sin and Satan, and inaugurate the era of new heavens and earth.
- 6.5.3. Sometimes people become impatient with God and frustrated with his apparent delays. They may not understand why he allows evil to have the ascendancy for as long as he does, why he doesn't provide healing sooner, why he doesn't take them from suffering into Glory more quickly, or why they have to wait so long to see the conversion of loved ones.
- 6.5.4. The answer is that God knows how best to fulfill his purposes in his perfect time, and we need to trust him not only with regard to his providences but also with regard to the pacing of them.

Perspicacious

1. What is the obvious, and often noted, omission in the book of Esther?
 - 1.1. The wording of Esther 4.14 makes the omission evident.
 - 1.2. There is no mention of the name of God in the book of Esther. We observed when introducing our studies to the book (*Purpose*), that we cannot study the book of Esther without observing that there is no mention of the name of God (by any of his names, a metonymy, or a synecdoche) anywhere

¹⁵⁶ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good . . . Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009), pp. 158-159.

in the book.

- 1.3. How would 4.14 have been written in another OT (or NT) book?
 - 1.3.1. “For if you keep silent at this time, *God* will send relief and deliverance from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish.”
 - 1.3.2. The Ezra and Nehemiah, who lived in Persia shortly after the time of the events recorded in this book, demonstrated their understanding of God’s working out his providences in the affairs of the Persian Empire (Ezra 8.31; Neh 2.8, 12, 20; Neh 4.9; Neh 7.5).
 - 1.4. Surprisingly, in the book of Esther, a book of the Bible, there is no mention of prayer, God’s law, Jerusalem, the Temple, or the ceremonial sacrificial rites or feasts. There is nothing which makes this book appear Jewish, other than the mention of Mordecai and Esther’s Jewish nationality and Haman’s plot against the Jews. Also, there is no obvious religious teaching in the book—as in other books such as in Proverbs, Psalms, and many of the prophetic books. The only potentially religious action is fasting and its associated signs (torn clothes and ashes on the head); but fasting was a common practice among mourners throughout the ancient Middle East.
2. Why is there such a significant absence of the mention of God and of Jewish practices and traditions in the book of Esther?
 - 2.1. Is the reason because Mordecai and Esther were non-practicing Jews or Jews who had been largely assimilated into the Persian culture?
 - 2.1.1. This idea is consistent with the view that the Jews who remained behind in Persia after Cyrus’ decree were not following God’s will and were avoiding their responsibilities to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple and re-establish Temple worship.
 - 2.1.2. However, this view would suggest that Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah (among others) were disobedient to God. Daniel did not return to Judea (as far as we know; his tomb is among the ruins of Susa¹⁵⁷) and remained in the service of the Persian government after Cyrus had captured Babylon. Ezra returned later (after the time of the first returnees with Zerubbabel). And, Nehemiah went for a time, but continued to serve in the Persian government.
 - 2.2. Is the reason because the author did not want to introduce the name of God into a secular historical account?
 - 2.2.1. This view assumes that the account was written as ‘secular’ history. That makes a distinction which God does not make. All history belongs to God and is the result of his direction. There is ultimately no such thing as ‘secular’ history.
 - 2.2.2. In fact, Esther is not ‘secular’ history—e.g., dealing with the history of a nation other than the Jews—it is Biblical history, presenting a key event in the history of the covenant people, leading to the arrival of the Messiah, during the Persian period.
 - 2.3. Is the reason because the author was afraid of the repercussions if he mentioned God’s name or Jewish practices? Was he being politically correct (or as one person suggested, his composition was “a political act of prudence”) so as not to offend Persian sensibilities?
 - 2.3.1. The book portrays Ahasuerus as a fool, even though it does not explicitly say that he was narcissistic, spoiled, naïve, easily duped, subject to flattery, etc. It also has a primary tension point around the Jewishness of its protagonists.
 - 2.3.2. The book’s primary theme is around Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews and how the Jews were enabled to overcome their enemies. It portrays Haman, the first minister of Persia, as a wicked villain.
 - 2.3.3. The book is far from being politically correct.
 - 2.4. A possible reason is that Mordecai (as the presumed author) wanted to make the account useful for pre-evangelism (a modern term applied to an historical situation) with a Persian audience as well as speaking to his Jewish readers.

¹⁵⁷ Jean Perrot (Editor), John Curtis (Introduction), *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. xvi.

- 2.4.1. The primary purpose of the book is to demonstrate that God controls every event and action, including the events occurring in the most powerful pagan kingdoms of this earth.
 - 2.4.2. For a Christian (covenantal Jewish) audience it:
 - 2.4.2.1. Reminds them that God overrules and accomplishes his purposes even when the ‘odds’ appear to be against it—for example an ‘unalterable’ decree of a powerful monarch.
 - 2.4.2.2. Encourages them by showing that they have a special place in God’s providence, as his own covenant people.
 - 2.4.2.3. The author did not need to insert references to God’s providence for a Jewish audience, because Jewish readers would know that God was actively controlling all events—even the councils of kings in the pagan nations (Prov 21.1).
 - 2.4.3. It would also speak to pagan readers, by demonstrating that:
 - 2.4.3.1. There are ultimate standards for right and wrong, and rewards and punishments are dispensed according to men’s actions relative to those standards.
 - 2.4.3.2. God uses human decisions and actions as secondary causes (even those intended for evil) by which he fulfills his purposes.
 - 2.4.4. The account was designed to be read by a diverse audience, including Persian court administrators, not only by Jews.
 - 2.4.4.1. The contents of the book of Esther was likely included in the archives of the Persian government along with records of Mordecai’s accomplishments (Est 10.2).
 - 2.4.4.2. By avoiding the use of Hebrew names for God (Adoni, Jehovah), Mordecai would not have confused his potential Persian readers of the account. He certainly wouldn’t have wanted to use the name Ahuramazda as a substitute. This is similar to the challenge presented to modern translators when translating the Bible into some languages which have words for their gods but not for God—for example, translators debate whether a translator should use the name ‘Allah’ for God when translating Christian materials into Arabic.
 - 2.4.4.3. Later Apocryphal additions to the book of Esther include references to God—there are 25 references, each, to God and Lord (>1.5% of the additional text). These additions of the names for God in the Septuagint text is an argument against the inclusion of the Apocryphal portions of Esther in the canon of the OT, as they clearly are not part of the original text and were composed centuries later (e.g., Esther chapter 11 refers to the “fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra”).
 - 2.4.4.4. Mordecai may have communicated more explicitly God’s providence in his message to Esther (Est 4.13-14) but chose to record only a summary with the essence of his message, without using the names of God, when he reported it here.
 - 2.4.5. As a pre-evangelistic tract, the book of Esther would have allowed Persian readers to hear of God’s providence at work and potentially lead some of them to ask questions about the true God behind the Jew’s salvation.
3. What additions to the Book of Esther were included in the Septuagint?
- 3.1. The Septuagint edition of Esther adds 105 verses to the 167 in the Hebrew.
 - 3.2. The additions are:¹⁵⁸
 - 3.2.1. A prologue with a dream which Mordecai had (a section 11.2-12.6; placed before Est 1.1).
 - 3.2.2. The contents of the edict against the Jews created by Haman and published by Ahasuerus (a section, 13.1-7; placed after Est 3.13).
 - 3.2.3. Prayers, offered by Mordecai and Esther, asking God to intervene on behalf of the Jews (a section, 13.8-14.19).

¹⁵⁸ www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/aes.htm

- 3.2.4. An expansion of the scene in which Esther appears before Ahasuerus (a section, 15.1-16; placed after Est 4.17).
 - 3.2.5. A copy of the Mordecai's decree, in favor of the Jews, issued in the king's name (a section, 16.1-24; placed after Est 8.12).
 - 3.2.6. An interpretation of Mordecai's dream given in the prologue (a section, 10.4-11.1; placed after Est 10.3).
 - 3.2.7. A colophon appended to the book, dating from the fourth year (78-77 BC) of the reign of Ptolemy XII Auletes (117–51 BC) and Cleopatra V.
 - 3.3. We cannot know when each part was added, and whether these additions in the Greek version were based on original material from the Persian period or fabricated later to remove the contention that Esther was a secular book.
 - 3.4. Jerome removed these additions from their context because they were not in the Hebrew text and put them together in an appendix (a section containing 10.4 through 16.24) in his Latin Vulgate translation. The 1611 edition of the King James Version included these additions to Esther, with the other parts of the Apocrypha, in an appendix at the end of the OT.¹⁵⁹
4. Should Esther be included in the OT canon since it does not mention God?
 - 4.1. Some people have questioned the inclusion of Esther in the Bible. Arguments for excluding it have included:
 - 4.1.1. Its 'secular' tone, lacking the name of God, and reporting the marriage of a Jewess to a pagan.¹⁶⁰
 - 4.1.2. The New Testament does not quote directly from the book of Esther.
 - 4.1.3. Copies of Esther were not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This may be an indication that the Essenes challenged the observance of Purim,¹⁶¹ or did not like the portrayal of Esther's marriage to a pagan,^{162, 163} rather than an indicator that the book was considered to be non-canonical.
 - 4.1.4. No Hebrew manuscripts of Esther appear to be earlier than the tenth century AD.
 - 4.1.5. The *Book of Sirach* (c 180 BC), a collection of OT books, does not include Esther, Ruth, Daniel, or the Song of Songs. Some surmise that the compiler, Yeshua ben Sira, did not have access to these books (suggesting to some people, a late date for a few of the books), or that in the early second century BC, the full Hebrew OT canon had not yet been widely accepted among the Jews.
 - 4.2. Evidence supporting Esther's inclusion in the OT canon:
 - 4.2.1. There is probably an allusion to the book of Esther in Mark's Gospel account demonstrating popular Jewish familiarity with the book. 'The setting is a banquet celebrating Herod Antipas' birthday. ... As ruler, he is waffling and ineffectual, subject to manipulation by evil courtiers, as was [Ahasuerus]. His wife Herodias, like Haman, schemes to kill a righteous Jew (in this case, John the Baptist). A young woman is summoned to entertain the guests, just as Vashti was (Esth 1:10–11). In Mark 6:22, 28, Herodias' daughter is called a κοράσιον (damsel), the same word used of Esther in the LXX version of Esth 2:7. Her performance "pleases" (ἀρέσκω) "king" Herod, just as Esther had pleased [Ahasuerus] (Esth 2:4). So pleased was he, in fact, that he promised to give the damsel anything she requested, "up to half his kingdom" (Mark 6:23), using precisely the words used by [Ahasuerus] in his promise to Esther (Esth 5:6; Esth 7:2). (This precise phrase is found nowhere else in Scripture.)

¹⁵⁹ archive.org/stream/TheHolyBibleKjv1611Wapocrypha/1611KjvW_apocrypha_djvu.txt

¹⁶⁰ For example, Martin Luther said, "I am so great an enemy to the second book of the Maccabees, and to Esther, that I wish they had not come to us at all, for they have too many heathen unnaturalities." (Table Talk, XXIV); www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/tabletalk.txt

¹⁶¹ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), p. 24.

¹⁶² Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), p. 312.

¹⁶³ A. Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. (H. W. House & W. Barrick, Eds.), n.d., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Logos electronic ed.)

[Ahasuerus] may well have been exaggerating, but Herod outdid him for bombast, since he, being a governor, actually had no kingdom to give! Instead of a literal account of Herod's promise, these words were deliberately chosen by the author to make explicit the parallelism with the book of Esther. This echo sets up an ironically opposite outcome for the two episodes: in Esther, the villain is killed and the Jewish hero is rewarded with his property; in Mark, the hero is killed and the villain is rewarded with his head.¹⁶⁴

- 4.2.2. Esther is included among the books which Josephus said were acknowledged by Jews to be the authoritative Scriptures.¹⁶⁵
- 4.2.3. More fragments of Esther manuscripts were found in the Cairo Genizah collection,¹⁶⁶ than of any other book outside of the Pentateuch.¹⁶⁷ This indicates that it was read often in that synagogue.
- 4.2.4. Clement of Alexandria (late 1st c AD) included Esther in the OT canon, consistent with Jewish and Christian thinking of that time.¹⁶⁸ Questions about Esther's canonicity arose in later centuries.¹⁶⁹
- 4.2.5. Esther was included in the canon of Aquila of Sinope, a second century native of Pontus, who converted to Judaism and prepared an accurate translation of the OT into Greek around 130 AD, from the Masoretic Hebrew as a replacement for the Septuagint. Christians generally disliked his translation, claiming that it rendered Messianic passages incorrectly; although Jerome and Origen apparently praised it, and Origen incorporated it in his *Hexapla*.
- 4.2.6. The Syriac translation (c 2nd c. AD) of the Hebrew includes Esther but not the Apocryphal additions.
- 4.2.7. We can conclude that the book of Esther was accepted as a portion of the Hebrew canon from shortly after its time of composition.¹⁷⁰ It may have been first introduced into the canon by Ezra who appears to have played a significant role in assembling the canonical books available in his day.

5. How does the book of Esther incorporate a Christian worldview?

- 5.1. Evil is displayed as being evil with no attempt to rationalize why it might be acceptable in another cultural context.
- 5.2. Good triumphs over evil in this life. Evil and good actions receive their just recompense. For example, Haman is punished for his wicked plot against the Jews and Mordecai, who showed kindness to the king by reporting the assassination plot, is eventually rewarded.
- 5.3. Christian conviction, which is willing to resist to the death if necessary, is clearly displayed in the unwillingness of Mordecai to compromise his beliefs by bowing before Haman, his public declaration of being a Jew by wearing sackcloth in the public square, and his firm exhortation of Esther to reveal her identity by appealing to the king for protection of the Jews.
- 5.4. Although God's name is not mentioned, his active works of providential governance are evident. We cannot read the book without observing that God's hand of providence is clearly behind the timing, irony, and outcomes. The book is permeated with coincident events which are so improbable that they fall outside of the realm of 'chance' occurrence. As one has said, in Esther, "God is not hiding, he is only hidden." Christian faith in God's sovereignty is implicitly expressed (Est 4.14).
- 5.5. There is no politically correct allowance or apology for Persian religious views. However, the

¹⁶⁴ A. Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. (H. W. House & W. Barrick, Eds.), n.d., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Logos electronic ed.) Note: the name Xerxes has been replaced by Ahasuerus in the quotation.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), pp. 292, 322.

¹⁶⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo_Geniza; cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/genizah

¹⁶⁷ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), pp. 291-2.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), p. 315.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), pp. 296-7, 308.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), p. 327.

account does not make moralistic comments about the stupidity of false religion—for example, the superstition of Haman is recounted without comment.

- 5.6. The account is discreet and decent. Even when dealing with sinful actions it does not dwell on them or titillate the senses. It does not give an account of what happened at Ahasuerus's party in which concubines would have been on display nor does it take us inside the harem or describe how Esther won over Ahasuerus on the night she was taken to his bedchamber. The death of Haman on the gallows is mentioned along with the Jews destroying their enemies, but the account does not describe them in detail.
 - 5.7. All things are worked out for the glory of God and good of his people (Rom 8.28).
6. What are some lessons which we can derive from the lack of obvious religious teaching in the book of Esther?
 - 6.1. *Subtlety* – The book of Esther is permeated with the Christian worldview—it is perspicacious (discerning), with a presentation of the Christian worldview that is subtle and shrewd, yet clear. God's handiwork in the book can be observed in such a way that it cannot be denied; in the same way that his handiwork can be observed in creation, so that men are without excuse (Rom 1.19-20). However, as Esther illustrates, it is not necessary for every Christian-themed work to have agenda-driven plots and to be preachy. As Frank Capra said, "If you want to send a message, try Western Union."
 - 6.1.1. It seems to be obligatory for stories (including screen plays for movies) written by Christians to include a 'spiritual moment' if they are to appeal to a 'Christian' audience. For example, in Frank Peretti's 2012 novel, *Illusion*, about a pair of magicians, Mandy, has the ability to move through time and space and be in multiple parallel dimensions simultaneously. The story could be classed in the genre of science fiction. At various points, Peretti has Mandy pray or mentions that she attended church. These interjections seem gratuitous in the context of the story. Yet, her strength of convictions stands out, particularly when she does not succumb to the suggestions of her manager who wants to bed her. The story is interesting and compelling, but it could clearly present the Christian worldview without using references to, almost, random religious practices.
 - 6.1.2. Jesus told compelling stories through his parables, which changed lives; yet they often do not have explicit references to religious practices. For example, the story of the prodigal son demonstrates God's love, through the prodigal's father, but does not need to mention that the father prayed for his son. Similarly, C. S. Lewis's, J. R. Tolkien's, and George MacDonald's (e.g., the *Light Princess* and *At the Back of the North Wind*) stories are effective at presenting a Christian worldview and ontology in a compelling way, without introducing gratuitous references to Christian religious practices by the protagonists. The *Divergent* series written by Veronica Roth, a professing Christian, operates within a Christian worldview. Her protagonist, Tris, does not engage in pre-marital sex and sacrifices her life for others. This series has a broad appeal to audiences who would not open a Bible.
 - 6.1.3. In contrast, many modern novels and movies written by professing Christian are considered sentimental, sanctimonious, and stilted. They often include false doctrine (e.g., about how a person is saved, what heaven will be like and who will reside there, the nature and role of angels, or how Christ will return) and yet are labeled as 'Christian'—a recent example is *Left Behind*, ironically the 2014 version, starring Nicolas Cage, received a 3.1 rating on IMDB, compared with the 2000 version, starring Kirk Cameron, which received a 4.6 rating.¹⁷¹
 - 6.2. *Story* – Esther is a superb story. Nothing in extra-Biblical literature is better. We noted in the preface (*Play*) that the story has a strong plot, a clear theme, developed characters, an interesting setting, a polished style, and a crafted structure.
 - 6.2.1. Moviemakers today wonder why their recent movies haven't been making more money.

¹⁷¹ As at, 2014-10-05.

They think that they need gimmicks like 3D or need to increase the level of violence or sexual titillation, in order to sell tickets. The actual problem is that many movies today don't tell a good story. Comparing ratings data, derived from the International Movie Database,¹⁷² for almost 6,500 movies, shows that since 1980 there has been a statistically significant¹⁷³ decline in the public's average perception of the quality of movies—although there has been a statistically significant improvement in the most recent decade over the previous decade.

Average Ratings of Movies on IMDB. by Decade					
Decade	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1920s	12	6.0	8.4	7.458	.7128
1930s	209	5.2	8.7	7.180	.7118
1940s	230	6.0	8.7	7.300	.6133
1950s	204	3.1	8.9	7.123	.8797
1960s	202	4.1	8.6	6.994	.8991
1970s	330	2.7	9.2	6.688	1.0421
1980s	1201	2.2	8.8	6.157	1.0639
1990s	1613	2.3	9.3	6.204	1.0359
2000s	1804	1.8	9.0	6.296	1.1263
2010s	667	1.6	8.8	6.494	1.0120

6.2.2. The thoughtful construction of the story of Esther teaches writers how to craft compelling stories. The book itself has been made into a movie a few times. However, the story in the book of Esther provides an example of how Christians can write better stories and make better movies which are appealing to a wide audience. One reviewer writing about *Left Behind*, said, 'My biggest beef with "Left Behind" isn't that it adheres to a controversial end-times theology, but rather than it adheres to a proven formula for making bad movies, the mistaken belief that a compelling message can make up for a lack of compelling filmmaking.'¹⁷⁴

6.2.3. Christians should dominate the arts and not abdicate them to non-Christians, since we are created in the image of God—the great Creator. Esther teaches us that Christian writing should be of high quality, should maintain an emphasis on morality and justice, and does not require the graphic depiction of evil.

Pledge (Est 4.15-17)

1. What did Esther ask Mordecai to do?
 - 1.1. To assemble all the Jews in Susa and hold a three-day fast on her behalf.
 - 1.2. What is implied by her request?
 - 1.2.1. It is obvious that she wasn't asking the Jews to partake in a fast to lose weight.
 - 1.2.2. We noted (*Prayer*; Est 4.1-3) that prayer accompanied fasting among God's covenant people.
 - 1.2.3. Her request was that the Jews pray for her safety and that she would take the correct action.
 - 1.3. What was to characterize the fast?
 - 1.3.1. Abstention from all food and drink.
 - 1.3.2. In most instances in the Bible fasting appears to consist of complete abstinence from food and drink (probably not including water) for an entire day.
 - 1.3.3. But sometimes a fast may have consisted of taking only a small amount of bread and water

¹⁷² www.imdb.com/

¹⁷³ Mean rating prior to 1980 = 7.028; mean rating 1980 to current = 6.261; *p* .000.

¹⁷⁴ Drew Zahn, 'Left Behind' makes Romans 3:23 blunder, 2014-10-06; www.wnd.com/2014/10/left-behind-makes-romans-323-blunder/?cat_orig=faith

- (Dan 10.2, 3) so as to abstain from legitimate gastronomical pleasures for a time.
- 1.3.4. The fast that God delights in is the one that raises our souls to heaven, not one that causes physical pain (e.g., a headache) and makes us irritable (Is 58.4-5).
- 1.3.5. Her request for full abstention from food and drink indicates the seriousness of this fast.
- 1.4. How long did she request that they fast?
- 1.4.1. Three days.
- 1.4.2. This fast was not to be a spontaneous display of mourning (Est 4.3), but a planned event. In effect, she requested that Mordecai and the elders of the Jews organize a communal prayer meeting
- 1.5. What challenge or difficulty does this request appear to present?
- 1.5.1. A total fast for three days would have been severe (and extreme) and may actually have hindered people's abilities to stay focused on prayer.
- 1.5.2. However, Esther may not have been requesting a 72-hour fast. Rather she may be understood to be speaking of 'until the third day' (compare 5.1). What she may have been requesting was that the Jews be assembled immediately, begin the fast that day through the evening and night, fast for the next full day, and end the fast with a break-fast on the third day. It has been suggested that the fast lasted for about 40 hours, coinciding with the ~40 hours that Jesus was in the grave—for *parts* of three days.¹⁷⁵
2. What did Esther indicate that she would do?
- 2.1. She would also fast.
- 2.1.1. Some commentators suggest that fasting for three days would have made her appear gaunt and less desirable to the king; and that from a practical perspective she might have pursued a different tactic—if it had not been for her wishing to devote time to prayer. However, as we noted, the length of her fast was probably less than 48 hours, which would likely not have had an adverse effect on her appearance.
- 2.1.2. Her fasting would have been accompanied by prayer, per the model of those who had preceded her in the history of her people (1 Ki 21.27-29; Ezra 8.21-23; Ps 35.13; Dan 9.3; Joel 1.14; Joel 2.12-13).
- 2.2. She would have her maids fast along with her.
- 2.2.1. She was going to ask her Gentile maids to fast along with her.
- 2.2.2. However, she likely would not have forced them to fast. Rather they would have done it out of solidarity with her, as a number of them had probably been with her for six years and loved her. Also, she may have introduced them to God's truth—through her humble demeanor and gentle words. Some of them may have become true believers and would have been quite willing to participate in the fast.
- 2.2.3. Her example brings to mind stories of believing members of the aristocracy or landed gentry who would conduct family worship with their immediate family members and household staff in attendance.
- 2.2.4. The apocryphal portion of Esther (chapters 13 and 14) purports to contain the words of Mordecai's and Esther's prayers at this time. This record could be based on extra-Biblical material handed down among the Jews, or it could be a late fabrication.
- 2.3. At the end of the period of fasting she would appear outside the king's audience hall and ask to be received so that she could present a petition on behalf of the Jews.
- 2.4. What does Esther's response to Mordecai tell us about her character?
- 2.4.1. She had listened to Mordecai's request that she act; indicating that she was still a humble person who had not let her pampered position as queen give her a swollen ego—she had been in the royal harem for over six years and queen for five years.

¹⁷⁵ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 171; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAAIAAJ

- 2.4.2. She was willing to take responsibility to act when the situation demanded her action.
- 2.4.3. She was a woman of strong faith. She believed that prayer was important and that God answers prayer (compare with, Ezra 9.5; Neh 1.4). She expressed faith that God would answer humble prayer on behalf of his people.
- 3. Why does Esther say that it would be against the law for her to go before the king?
 - 3.1. Esther had already explained the nature of the custom which did not permit anyone to appear before the king who had not been called (Est 4.11).
 - 3.2. Did she do something illegal by presenting herself to the king?
 - 3.2.1. This was not an act of civil disobedience. As she had explained (Est 4.11) there was an exception—if the king held out the golden sceptre the person would be permitted to live.
 - 3.2.2. So, her action was not illegal, it was just dangerous.
- 4. Why was it a dangerous proposition for Esther to go before the king?
 - 4.1. She was placing her life in the hands of tyrannical, capricious, petulant, and selfish person. If his bacon hadn't been crispy enough that morning, he could have been in a foul mood and had anyone appearing in the antechamber executed and no one would have dared to persuade him to do otherwise or he may have also lost his life.
 - 4.2. Much was not in her favour:
 - 4.2.1. The king may have been busy and not open to interruption.
 - 4.2.2. The king had not wanted to see her for the past thirty days (Est 4.11) and she may have offended him without knowing it.
 - 4.2.3. She would have to leave the harem without permission. No wife of the king should have left the harem without being called by the king to appear in his presence.
 - 4.2.4. She would have appeared to be self-willed. Vashti had lost her position as queen because she exercised her own will against the king's. Might not the same happen to Esther?
 - 4.2.5. She was a woman. Women had no standing in judicial matters and could not present cases before the king.
 - 4.2.6. Her petition would have been to have the edict annulled, which would have been to:
 - 4.2.6.1. Suggest that the king's favourite, Haman, had done something wrong.
 - 4.2.6.2. Suggest that the king had made a mistake.
 - 4.2.6.3. Ask that the irrevocable law of land be overturned (Est 1.19; Est 8.3; Dan 6.8, 12).
 - 4.2.6.4. Reveal her identity as a Jew; from among the people who were to be destroyed.
- 5. What consequence was Esther willing to experience by breaking the king's law?
 - 5.1. She was willing to die, if the king was unwilling to permit her to enter his presence and extend the royal sceptre. She was willing to risk her life for doing the right thing—defending the lives of the Jews.
 - 5.2. "Esther's courage is heightened by Josephus' remark that around Ahasuerus' throne stood men with axes ready to punish those who approached the throne without being summoned."¹⁷⁶
 - 5.3. Esther presents an example of a person who is fully committed to God. Like Ruth (Ruth 1.16) she was willing to go wherever God was leading. Like Ruth, her obedience became a factor in the preservation of the line leading to the Messiah.
 - 5.4. Some have likened Esther's willingness to sacrifice her life for her people as a type of Christ's willingness to die for his people (Rom 5.6-9).
- 6. What attitude does Esther display with the words, "if I perish, I perish"?
 - 6.1. Do her words present an unbelieving resignation or pagan fatalism? Was she telling Mordecai,

¹⁷⁶ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The archaeological background of Esther: archaeological backgrounds of the exilic and postexilic era, pt 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April-June 1980): pp. 99-117; www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bsac/1980_099_yamauchi.pdf

- “Well, you commanded me to do this, and I’ll obey you.”? This is likely not the case.
- 6.2. Her words are those of a person who is submitting trustfully to God’s explicit commands and unrevealed (or hidden) will.
 - 6.3. Mordecai and Esther display loyalty to God over loyalty to man (Acts 5.29). They give an example of how to live for God in a pagan society, where principle must prevail over pragmatism.
7. What did Mordecai do in response to Esther’s message?
- 7.1. He did as Esther requested and assembled the Jews for a concentrated time of prayer and fasting.
 - 7.2. He presented to the Lord Esther’s plan to appear before Ahasuerus; as Hezekiah presented Judah’s situation before the Lord, when Sennacherib’s armies were besieging Jerusalem (Is 37.14-20).
 - 7.3. It has been noted that the words translated “went away” are from the word (עָבַר) which means to ‘cross over’, rather than the usual word (נָסָה) translated ‘went away’ (Gen 4.16; Gen 9.18). The term ‘Hebrew’ may come from this word, referencing Abraham (Gen 14.13) who ‘crossed over’ the Euphrates (Gen 12.5); although it could also be derived from Eber, the son of Shem (Gen 10.21).
 - 7.3.1. Mordecai may have crossed over the Ulai (Eulaeus) canal (Dan 8.2) or the Choaspes (Karkheh) River, when he left the courtyard outside the gate to the palace in Susa. The canal flowed around Susa and connected the rivers Choaspes and Coprates (Dez) which flowed to the west and east of the citadel. The Jewish quarter was likely to the west of the citadel.
 - 7.3.2. Benjamin of Tudela, a Jew from Castile in Spain in the 12th century (commencing around 1165), travelled through much of southern Europe and the Middle East (including sailing from the Persian Gulf around the Arabian Peninsula), about a hundred years before Marco Polo (1254-1324) made his more famous journey to the east. In his account of his journey, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, he states, “In the midst of its ruins is Shushan (Susa), the capital, the site of the palace of King Ahasuerus. Here are remains of a large structure of great antiquity. The city contains about 7,000 Jews and fourteen synagogues. In front of one of the synagogues is the sepulchre of Daniel of blessed memory. The river Tigris divides the city, and the bridge connects the two parts. On the one side where the Jews dwell is the sepulchre of Daniel.”¹⁷⁷ (51-52)
 - 7.3.3. This consideration of the word translated “went away” may seem to be pedantic. However, it has more relevance than might first appear. The author (ultimately the Holy Spirit) deliberately used this word over an alternative. It indicates that the author had an intimate knowledge of the layout of the city of Susa and where the Jews lived relative to the citadel. This, again, confirms that the book of Esther was written by someone (Mordecai, as we observed in the section entitled *Prophet*) who was intimately familiar with the events, and not centuries later by someone attempting to account for the introduction of Purim or to encourage Jews to stand against Seleucid domination.
8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 4.15-17)
- 8.1. *Revival* – God uses crises to bring about revival among his covenant children.
 - 8.1.1. This crisis which precipitated from Haman’s edict was used by God to draw his people closer to him. Some of the Jews scattered throughout the Persian Empire may have become lax in their obedience to God’s law (particularly to the ceremonial observances). However, at this point, anyone who could be identified as a Jew would have been compelled to renounce his heritage or turn to God for help. There could be no middle ground when Haman’s edict called for total annihilation of the Jews.
 - 8.1.2. What are some aspects of revival that are implied by the response of Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews to the crisis created by Haman?

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, translated by Marcus Nathan Adler (Oxford University Press, 1907), pp. 51-52; www.teachittome.com/seforim2/seforim/masaos_binyomin_mitudela_with_english.pdf

- 8.1.2.1. Christians humble themselves before the Lord and become more aware of the truth that their lives depend on God's mercy and grace (Acts 17.28; Rom 9.16).
- 8.1.2.2. Christians who are true believers, living by faith in Jesus Christ, are differentiated from nominal professors of faith who are unwilling to face the consequences of standing on the side of Christ and his church.
- 8.1.2.3. Christians in a congregation (and across multiple congregations) became more united. A common external enemy reduces internal squabbles. Christians should stay focused on defeating Satan (Eph 6.11; 1 Pt 5.8) and proclaiming Christ instead of arguing among ourselves on inconsequential matters.
- 8.1.2.4. Christians become more self-sacrificing and giving (Rom 12.10; 1 Pt 4.8).
- 8.1.2.5. Christians gather more readily in the common assembly. Attendance at the stated assemblies (e.g., Lord's Day services or the mid-week meeting) falls off as people become complacent and intrigued by the world's offerings. When revival arrives, Christians display a greater commitment to being with others in the congregation (Ps 122.1).
- 8.1.2.6. Christians commit to praying for others. We need to be more committed to praying for our brothers and sisters locally and throughout the world (e.g., for those being persecuted; Col 4.18; Heb 13.3).
- 8.1.2.7. Christians request prayer for themselves. Esther asked for prayer for herself. Esther and Paul (Eph 6.18-19; Col 4.3, 8) set an example for us by asking for prayer. Asking for prayer from other believers, and offering prayer on their behalf, is a privilege and an obligation.
- 8.1.3. God also uses crises (e.g., economic collapse, pestilence, famine, virulent diseases, and war) to bring about reformation in society. However, often these disasters also harden hearts against God, as with Pharaoh and his people experiencing the ten plagues.
- 8.2. *Resistance* – There may be times when we are called upon to participate in actions of civil disobedience or other forms of resistance or protest for the cause of Christ.
 - 8.2.1. Although Esther did not explicitly break a Persian law, because there was a provision that accommodated her action—if the king held out the golden sceptre—her action was close to being illegal.
 - 8.2.2. We considered a lesson on participating in acts of civil disobedience when we addressed Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman (*Provocation*). We noted that it is a serious matter to disobey the law, and that the reasons for our civil disobedience must be Biblically based.
 - 8.2.3. Both Mordecai and Esther were willing to risk their positions and even their lives to do what was right. It is a sad state of affairs when those in the church compromise their principles because they are afraid of losing their positions, power, or payment—for example, pastors who remain silent when un-Biblical changes are introduced in their denominations because they are a few years away from retirement and do not want to lose their pensions.
 - 8.2.4. Esther's example teaches us that some acts of civil disobedience will focus on protecting the rights and lives of the weak and helpless. In her case, it was the lives of her fellow Jews. In our case, it may be defending the rights of the unborn. We may have to break invalid laws (e.g., a law requiring a nurse or doctor to refer for an abortion) to carry out our resistance.
- 8.3. *Responsibility* – Esther's willingness to take action when God presented her with a clear opportunity to act, reminds us that when God presents us with opportunities we must also act. It was clear, as Mordecai indicated (Est 4.14), that she had been placed in her position by God. We may at times not have as clear an indication of how we should act. However, when we are presented with an opportunity, appear to have *some* of the required resources and skills—we should not make too much of this as God may be challenging us to grow, and we have to step out in faith—and our Christian brothers and sisters are encouraging us to act, then we must grasp the opportunity. Our lives can never be spent better than in service for Christ's kingdom, with a willingness to lose our temporal lives if that is what he requires of us (Mt 16.25; Acts 20.24; Acts

21.13). If God opens doors, go through them! It is easy to say this, but hard to put it into practice and it requires courage—which Esther exhibited.

8.3.1. The ancient world considered courage a key virtue. For example, Plato (427-347 BC), who lived about 100 years after Esther, listed the four chief virtues of his day as: wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage.¹⁷⁸ And, Aristotle (384-322 BC): spoke of the golden-mean in which virtues are a mean between two extremes, each of which is a vice. To the Greeks, courage was a mean between cowardice and rashness; liberality, between prodigality and meanness; proper pride, between vanity and humility; ready wit, between buffoonery and boorishness; modesty, between bashfulness and shamelessness; truthfulness, between boastfulness and mock modesty.

8.3.2. Courage is not one of the virtues listed among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5.22, 23; 2 Pt 1.5-7; Mt 5.3-10).

8.3.3. However, the virtue of courage is not confined to the worldly philosophers. A believer is expected to act courageously (Dt 31.6-7; Josh 1.6, 7, 9), founded on God's faithfulness and support.

8.4. *Reliance* – Esther displayed an implicit and explicit trust in God (Rom 8.31). With her words, “if I perish, I perish” she shows that regardless of what happened she believed that God was working all things according to his great plan, for his glory, and for her good. We should renounce anxiety (Mt 6.25-34) and display an absolute confidence that God works all things for our good (Rom 8.28). We should wholeheartedly say with Job, “Though he slay me, I will hope in him.” (Job 13.15); with the three young men being condemned to the fiery furnace, “We will do what God requires, even if it costs us our lives!” (Dan 3.16-18); and with Paul, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20.24)

Prepared Dinner (Est 5.1-8)

1. As we noted in the section *Play*, Esther is a highly structured story, which appears to use chiasms for overall stylistic structuring. One commentator has proposed that the sub-section 5.1-7.10 can be structured with a chiasm, with some of the elements as *antitheses* of their antecedents rather than synonyms, as follows:

A: The king spares Esther (Est 5.1-2)

B: Esther requests the king and Haman come to a banquet (Est 5.3-a)

C: Esther requests that the king and Haman come to a second banquet (Est 5.5b-8)

D: Zeresh counsels Haman to kill Mordecai (Est 5.9-14)

E: The king observes that Mordecai was not honored (Est 6.1-3)

F: Haman counsels the king on how to honor a benefactor (Est 6.4-9)

E': The king orders Haman to honor Mordecai (Est 6.10-11)

D': Zeresh counsels Haman that he cannot defeat Mordecai (Est 6.12-14)

C': Esther requests that the king spare her people (Est 7.1-6a)

B': Haman requests that the queen spare his life (Est 7.6b-8a)

A': The king condemns Haman (Est 7.8b-10)¹⁷⁹

2. What theme is repeated multiple times in verse 1? Why?

2.1. Royal majesty—'royal' (2X), 'king' (3X), 'throne' (2X), 'palace' (2X).

¹⁷⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1600/pg1600.txt; *Republic*, book IV; www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm#link2H_4_0007

¹⁷⁹ A. Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. (H. W. House & W. Barrick, Eds.), n.d., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Logos electronic ed.)

- 2.2. The author wishes to emphasize the seriousness of the situation which Esther will encounter in approaching the king. Her entering the throne room would not be equivalent to her speaking to her husband in the privacy of his bed chamber; she would be entering into a formal setting governed by formal procedures.
3. What is the ‘third day’ mentioned here?
 - 3.1. The third day of the fast, which Esther and the Jews had observed (Est 4.16).
 - 3.2. They had likely fasted from the afternoon of a first day, through an entire second day, and ended their fast on the morning of a third day, at *break-fast*.
 - 3.3. What had Esther been doing during the fast?
 - 3.3.1. She had been praying for guidance and support from God.
 - 3.3.2. In addition, she had probably been thinking of a strategy for dealing with her husband. She had been queen for five years and knew Ahasuerus’ personality, tastes, and temperament well. Thus, she worked out a means for approaching him which would appeal to him, allow her to preserve her life, and give her an opportunity to petition for the protection of her people.
4. How did Esther prepare for approaching the king?
 - 4.1. She ‘put on her royal robes’.
 - 4.1.1. The Hebrew does not have ‘robes’, this word (or similar) is added in the English translations. The Hebrew word (מלכות) should be translated as ‘royalty’ or ‘royal power’—i.e., she clothed herself with royalty. The word was selected by the author to indicate that she put on her symbol of royal authority, which was her *headdress* (Est 2.17) and its associated strings of pearls and jewels. Of course she would have worn an expensive garment, but all courtiers would have worn their best clothing to appear in the king’s presence. Therefore, the author’s emphasis is on the symbols of royal authority, not her robes *per se*.
 - 4.2. What was her purpose for doing this?
 - 4.2.1. She wanted to appear attractive to the king. She knew her husband’s sensual nature and was prepared to use it to her advantage. She had not been in his presence for over thirty days (Est 4.11), had been fasting for three days and thus wanted to present herself as attractively as possible—accentuating her natural beauty (Est 2.7).
 - 4.2.2. She wanted to subtly remind the king that she was the queen. The power of uniforms to express authority is well known. The iconic nature of a military uniform or of a police uniform carries with it the symbols of the authority in the role. I was a witness to an accident where a cyclist was run over by a car making a right-hand turn. At the time of the accident, the foot patrol officer to whom I gave my statement wore an open-neck blue shirt and slacks—a casual police uniform. At the time of the trial he wore a motorcycle uniform with knee-high boots and a bulletproof vest. He also had a shaved and polished head. I asked him about the difference, and he chuckled and told me that this was an intimidation tactic targeted at the accused—who was found guilty and sentenced with a suspended licence. Esther’s symbols of royal authority would normally have been worn only for special appearances—e.g., if she was seated beside the king in the royal audience hall or at a banquet. However, she knew that her husband was easily influenced by outward displays of power and used this as a means of commanding his attention.
 - 4.2.3. Another aspect may have influenced her choice to wear the symbols of royalty. She had just completed a fast in which she would have worn sackcloth. Before God she humbled herself as a penitent creature. Before the mightiest king on earth she stood with royal authority declaring that she was his equal.
 - 4.2.4. A number of commentators and expositors attempt to draw from Esther’s ‘royal robes’ a lesson that we should dress appropriately for the occasion—e.g., if we were to appear before the queen of England or the president of the United States we would dress in our best

garments, when we go to church we should dress well, and when we appear before God we must be dressed in the robes of righteousness. However, what Esther did—dressing to impress the gullible king—does not support the lesson they attempt to derive from Esther’s action.

5. Where did Esther go to meet with the king?
 - 5.1. The inner court of the king’s palace; the antechamber to the royal audience hall (the throne room). When the doors of the royal audience hall were open, a person standing or kneeling in the antechamber would be visible to the king sitting on his throne (Est 5.2).
 - 5.1.1. She did not go to him in his private residence at the close of the day’s business.
 - 5.1.2. She determined that the best means of making an impression was to appear in the royal audience hall during the peak period of royal business.
 - 5.2. Why does the text refer to him as just ‘the king’ and not by his personal name (e.g., as king Ahasuerus; e.g., Est 2.1; Est 3.1) or as Esther’s husband?
 - 5.2.1. The author builds suspense by creating a contrast. The abstract, impersonal king is confronted by the specific, personal Esther—he is like a dragon that has to be slain or a rock that must be rolled away, and she is the heroine who will be victorious.
 - 5.2.2. The author presents Esther as an equal to the king, by calling her *Queen* Esther (Est 5.2, 3, 12)— the first reference to her title since Esther 2.22.
 - 5.3. How did she present herself in the antechamber?
 - 5.3.1. She stood.
 - 5.3.2. We should not overlook this apparently unimportant reference. Supplicants before a Persian king would not have stood in the antechamber. They would have bowed prostrate on the floor and not lifted their eyes until the king bid them do so.
 - 5.3.3. Esther appeared, uncalled and unannounced, and stood before Ahasuerus. She publicly challenged the king by reminding him that she was his wife, the queen with royal authority (even if second hand and derived from him), and an equal as a person.
 - 5.3.4. This action was the defining moment of her entire strategy for gaining a hearing from the king. If he accepted her on these terms, her petition could go forward; otherwise she would be dismissed and possibly executed for her presumption.
 - 5.4. This is Esther’s second appearance before the king recounted in the story. What contrasts do you notice between the two encounters—between that described in Esther 2.15-17 and that described in Esther 5.1-2?
 - 5.4.1. She was called *vs* she went un-called.
 - 5.4.2. Into the king’s bedchamber *vs* into his throne room.
 - 5.4.3. As a submissive slave *vs* as the queen of the largest empire in the world.
 - 5.4.4. Humbly taking with her only what a eunuch suggested *vs* boldly taking her selected royal symbols.
 - 5.4.5. In garments of a concubine, prescribed by the Hegai, *vs* vesting herself with signs of royalty.
 - 5.4.5.1. The form of the statement “clothed herself with royalty” (Est 5.1) indicates that she outfitted herself as she chose.
 - 5.4.6. This contrast shows the dramatic change that has occurred in Esther’s circumstances, five years after she entered the harem and was appointed queen. She has moved from being a ‘victim of circumstances’ to being ‘her own woman’—a woman of courage with a divinely bestowed purpose and a mission to accomplish as an active agent for change.
 - 5.5. How does Esther’s appearance before the king compare or contrast with Vashti’s (Est 1.11-12)?
 - 5.5.1. Both queens went against the command of the king: Vashti was bidden to appear but she did not; Esther was not supposed to appear (unbidden), but she did.
 - 5.5.2. Vashti’s failure to appear enraged the king; Esther’s appearance was viewed favourably by

the king.

5.5.3. Vashti's action resulted in a decree which subjugated wives to their husbands (Est 1.22) and banishment; Esther's action resulted in a decree which freed her people and elevated her position and power within the kingdom (Est 8.7).

6. How did the king respond when he saw Esther?

6.1. She won favour in the king's sight. The Hebrew word (הִנָּחֵץ) translated 'won' comes from the root 'to lift' and can be translated 'carried'. We can understand the writer to be saying, that 'he looked on her with favour'.

6.2. He held out the golden sceptre, which she touched.

6.2.1. What was symbolized by holding out the sceptre?

6.2.1.1. He extended royal power and favour toward her as a suppliant. It was equivalent to his signalling with his hand for her to approach.

6.2.1.2. This indicated, in her particular case, that he was not angry with her for appearing in his royal audience hall unbidden.

6.2.2. What was symbolized by touching the sceptre?

6.2.2.1. By touching the sceptre, she indicated that she had a petition to ask of the king. He understood this and asked her what she wanted.

6.3. He asked her what was the nature of her request.

6.3.1. He asked her in two forms.

6.3.1.1. "What is it?" is literally, "What to you?" meaning "What is it that you want?"

6.3.1.2. "What is your request?"

6.3.1.3. The double form of his query emphasizes that he was fully open to hearing why she had come.

6.3.1.4. He knew that she had come into his presence at the risk of her life (if he had not wished to grant her an audience), so her petition must have been important.

6.4. He recognized her by name and title.

6.4.1. He called her by her personal name, which was a sign of endearment.

6.4.2. He prefixed her name with her title, by which he recognized her position and authority.

6.5. He offered her anything she wanted, up to half of the kingdom.

6.5.1. Whether the offer was genuine, literally offering half of the kingdom or a hyperbolic way of making a grand gesture, is immaterial. The point is that he was favourably disposed to her and wanted to please her by showing her a kindness.

6.5.2. Some interpreters suggest that this was standard practice among kings of the ancient Near East. They indicate that a king could show off, indicating that he had such wealth and power that he could offer half of his kingdom. However, the commentators do not reference any *previous* examples, which if they existed in the ancient literature would have been discovered by this time. An historical example, which is sometimes referenced, is from the time of Xerxes, the son of Darius I (Ahasuerus). So it appears that Ahasuerus' offer was unique to that point in history. It is suggested that Herod Antipas followed the example of Ahasuerus (Mk 6.23).

6.6. Why was Ahasuerus so favourably disposed toward Esther?

6.6.1. He hadn't seen her in over a month and seeing her in her natural beauty and fine garments and adorned with the symbols of royalty, he was reminded of how beautiful she was (Est 2.7).

6.6.2. His curiosity was piqued. As a pampered and spoiled person, he would have become bored easily. The mystery of her appearing would have intrigued him almost as if she were playing a game with him.

6.6.3. The sovereign God was in control of the situation and moved his heart (Prov 21.1). So, instead of commanding her to tell him what she wanted he went along with her request. This set up the eventual revelation of Haman's wicked plot (Est 7.1-6). The king was at the Lord's

disposal, like clay in potter's hand.

7. What was Esther's request of the king?
 - 7.1. She requested that the king attend an immediate ("today") banquet/feast she had prepared.
 - 7.2. She asked the king to invite Haman to attend also.
 - 7.3. Why did she invite Haman to the banquet?
 - 7.3.1. Not, as has been suggested, for purely literary reasons (e.g., to build suspense in the story).¹⁸⁰
 - 7.3.2. She planned to flatter Haman to put him off-guard of any pending danger to his position.
 - 7.3.3. She used the strategy of "keeping your friends close and your enemies closer", attributed to Sun-tzu, a Chinese general and military strategist, ~400 BC.
 - 7.3.4. She planned to spring the trap on him at an appropriate moment when the king was the only other person present (other than slaves).
 - 7.3.5. Haman had not been present when Esther requested a royal audience (Est 5.5). She wanted him present when she made her accusation against him.
 - 7.3.6. Some ancient Jewish interpreters suggested that Esther planned to hint that she and Haman had had an improper relationship and thus she would sacrifice her life but bring down Haman at the same time. However, this shows a lack of an understanding of how closely guarded the harem was and the death of Haman would not have revoked the edict that he had issued in the king's name, since the law could not be repealed (Est 8.8). Also, an alternate suggestion, that Esther wanted to turn Haman into an ally when she asked to have the edict repealed, makes no sense since his hatred for the Jews would not have been assuaged.
 - 7.4. What do these requests indicate about Esther?
 - 7.4.1. She had faith that God had heard her prayers and was confident that the king would accept her request to attend the prepared banquet.
 - 7.4.2. She was a brilliant and careful strategist:
 - 7.4.2.1. She planned what she would do when she was received favorably after she presented herself to the king.
 - 7.4.2.2. She tested Ahasuerus's sincerity in receiving her by testing his patience. He would not have been accustomed to being told to wait for an answer. By his willingness to come to her banquet to obtain an answer, Esther knew that she was in proximate control of how events would unfold.
 - 7.4.2.3. She planned to put the king and Haman off balance by inviting them to a banquet that was to be held immediately. They would have had to drop everything else and revise their plans for the rest of the day and evening. This strengthened her position of control over Ahasuerus.
 - 7.4.2.4. She planned to use a strategy of increasing suspense by unveiling her request, rather than blurting it out in the throne room, so that she was able to control Ahasuerus and Haman.
 - 7.4.2.5. She reinforced the urgency of her pending request by proposing an immediate banquet and not one in a week's time.
 - 7.4.3. Esther was not only beautiful and humble, but also smart. She is one of the most inspiring women in history and in the Bible. She, along with Ruth (and Mary), are in a class of lovely and faithful women. It is no wonder that Esther and Ruth have books of the Bible which bear their names.
 - 7.5. What are elements of irony we can identify in this encounter between Ahasuerus and Esther in the royal throne room?
 - 7.5.1. To this point in the account, the words of Ahasuerus have been recorded twice—to establish the punishment for Vashti's disobedience (Est 1.13-15) and to promise Haman a vast sum of wealth (Est 3.11). In the second case the promise of wealth is associated with an evil action.

¹⁸⁰ L. B. Paton, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Book of Esther* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 234.

In this encounter, as the king speaks again to determine what Esther wants, his promise to reward Esther is, unbeknownst to him, associated with undoing evil.

7.5.2. Esther had previously been called into the king's presence (i.e., his bedchamber), now Esther is calling the king into her presence (her banqueting room).

7.5.3. Previously she had only the possessions of a concubine, now she could claim up to half the kingdom as hers.

7.5.4. After becoming a willing accomplice to Haman's request to destroy the Jews, Ahasuerus goes off to drink wine with the evil Haman. This time, the king goes off to drink wine with the evil Haman and to become an instrument for the protection of the Jews.

The contrast between these events reminds us again that God overthrows the foolish plots of men with an ironical sense of humour (Ps 2.4). These contrasts also indicate that the balance of power is shifting, under God's sovereign control, from Ahasuerus—the Devil's instrument to destroy God's covenant people—to Esther—God's instrument to protect his covenant people.

8. What are some of the particulars associated with Esther's first banquet?
 - 8.1. It was private; only Ahasuerus and Haman were present.
 - 8.2. It was a feast of good food. As the saying goes, "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Esther used the banquet as a means of softening up the king.
 - 8.3. It ended with drinking of wine—undoubtedly the best available.
 - 8.4. It was filled with mystery. The king realized that Esther had not requested a royal audience and had not prepared the banquet without a more significant purpose than just entertaining him and Haman. In spite of the good food and wine he did not forget that she had a request. Following the custom, he waited until the meal was over to begin discussing business.
 - 8.5. The king repeated his questions of Esther, asking what she wanted and offering to fulfill her request even to half the kingdom. Since Haman had not been present at Esther's appearance in the throne room, the king was able to appear magnanimous by repeating his offer in front of Haman.
 - 8.6. Esther did not reveal her petition, but instead invited the two of them to another banquet, heightening their suspense. The deepening mystery must have perplexed Ahasuerus and may have contributed to his inability to sleep that night (Est 6.1).
 - 8.7. Esther promised that she would reveal her request at the next banquet.
 - 8.8. Esther must have been a very good actor, being able to put on a pleasant smile and to maintain a calm appearance in the presence of her mortal enemy.
9. Why did not Esther immediately inform the king about Haman's evil plot, when she appeared in the throne room or during the first banquet?
 - 9.1. The time, place, and method of delivering a message are all important.
 - 9.2. Esther determined that making an accusation against the first minister and a king's favourite, in the throne room during the appointed time for the business of the empire, would not be effective:
 - 9.2.1. Although her petition was for the safety of all the Jews, it was based first on a petition for the preservation of her own life (Est 7.3). It would have been inappropriate for the queen to appear publicly before the king to beg for her own life and the lives of those sentenced to die by royal decree.
 - 9.2.2. The king might have attempted to save face and dismiss her accusation against Haman without consideration of the facts or evidence. She might even have been accused of committing an act of treason.
 - 9.2.3. Revealing her Jewish identity before the Persian nobles could have embarrassed the king. His having appointed a commoner as queen was problematic enough, without considering the fact that the queen was from a widely-despised people group.
 - 9.2.4. The king's guards would likely have been commanded to remove Esther before she could complete her petition if she had displayed a weepy, begging demeanour or had directed an accusation against Haman.

- 9.2.5. She understood the nature of ancient Middle Eastern custom and protocol—discussion, particularly after a meal, was an essential prelude to any important decision or agreement.
- 9.3. Esther wanted Haman's plot to be revealed only when Ahasuerus and Haman were both present.
 - 9.3.1. Haman was not in the throne room when she made her appearance (Est 5.5). She did not want Ahasuerus to dismiss her petition until he could consult with Haman and Haman could have an opportunity to manipulate the king with flattery and excuses. Then, it would be her word against Haman's; which would have made controlling the outcome of the revelation easier for Haman,
 - 9.3.2. She wanted Haman to be off-guard and overconfident when she presented her accusation against him. By inviting only Haman along with the king, she knew that Haman would become bloated with self-importance, even thinking that the queen valued his opinion. She understood how to apply the proverb, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov 16.18) She had an intuition that an overconfident Haman, when caught off-guard, would do or say something stupid and admit his guilt—which he did (Est 7.7-8).
- 9.4. Esther wanted to send up a 'trial balloon' and ensure that the king was aligned with her, before she announced Haman's treachery.
 - 9.4.1. Until she was received into the king's presence she had not been with or seen him for over thirty days (Est 4.11), so she did not know if he would be favourably disposed toward her. She wanted to be sure that he was receptive to her before she dropped the 'bomb' about his favoured counsellor.
 - 9.4.2. She also knew the king's personality well and wanted to increase his suspense by preparing a test of his patience. She thus increased his suspense about the nature of her petition and made it more likely that he would hear it and respond to it.
- 9.5. Esther was insightful. She understood human, and in particular male, psychology. She knew how to appeal to male pride and curiosity. She used her wiles as wisely as a serpent and as innocently as a dove (Mt 10.16).
 - 9.5.1. She displayed prudent patience, biding her time for the right opportunity to spring the trap on Haman. The text (Est 5.7-8) indicates that her action was deliberate—she associates the king's attendance at her subsequent banquet with his granting her anticipated request and by ensuring that Haman was present.
 - 9.5.2. She used a revealing strategy to obtain agreement, rather than presenting her petition in a blunt manner and expecting an immediate decision or resolution. This technique is often proposed as a means for winning acceptance of a new idea (process, technology, program, etc.) in business or politics.
- 9.6. God was ultimately controlling events.
 - 9.6.1. Esther did not know it at the time, but God's overruling providence was preparing another event which would contribute to Haman's downfall. Esther's planned delay for presenting her petition gave the king a restless night and resulted in his honouring Mordecai for his revelation of the assassination plot and Haman's humiliation.
 - 9.6.2. God is the master storyteller. The artistry of this story continues to be displayed. A first-time reader of the account would be held in suspense along with Ahasuerus.
 - 9.6.3. God's love of irony is displayed, as Esther invited Haman to his own downfall (Ps 2.1-4; Prov 26.27).
- 10. What risk did Esther take in *not* revealing her petition immediately?
 - 10.1. Ahasuerus' receptive mood could have changed to impatience during the night—too much salted pork might have upset his stomach or his concubine for the night might have been too coy. It has always been dangerous to participate in palace intrigues. One can never know for certain how to weather the winds of whim.
 - 10.2. One of her attendants who had participated in the fast with her, and knew that she was a Jewess could have attempted to relate this information to Haman in the hope of receiving a reward. Had

Haman known of Esther's national origin, he would have devised a means of silencing her (e.g., asking the king to confine her to her quarters).

- 10.2.1. The fact that Esther's retainers did not betray her, indicates that they loved her. If we knew little else about Esther, their silence tells us much about her kindness and humility, even though she was the queen of the world's most powerful empire at that time.

11. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 5.1-8)

11.1. Statesmanship

- 11.1.1. The paucity of great statesmanship is often lamented today. Larry Arnhart claims that the ethos of our modern age does not encourage the qualities which make for great statesmanship, the kind which would have been found in antiquity.¹⁸¹ The primary reason he gives is the influence of Christianity, which he claims considers the virtues of statesmanship to be a manifestation of pride, and has thus discouraged the cultivation of statesmanship.
- 11.1.2. Statesmanship is displayed by a person with experience in the art of government, who exhibits wisdom and an ability to deal with important public issues. We won't address Arnhart's, faulty, claim that statesmanship has only found sustenance in pagan cultures. Rather, on the basis of Scripture, we will state emphatically that only Christians can display truly great statesmanship—because those who reject Christian principles are moral and intellectual fools (Ps 2.1-3; Ps 14.1; Prov 9.10; Rom 1.21-23; 1 Cor 1.20).
- 11.1.3. Esther displayed the characteristics of a true leader and statesman:
- 11.1.3.1. She was modest and humble. These are certainly not characteristics we expect to find in politicians today, and they don't evoke an image of a heroine.
- 11.1.3.2. She did not consider her opinions to be superior to those of others, and was open to suggestions, counsel, and advice from others, as shown by her willingness to seek it from Mordecai and from God (Est 4.10-16).
- 11.1.3.3. She displayed self-control and patience. She was able to restrain her emotions in very difficult settings—in the royal audience hall standing before all the nobles of the Persian Empire and during the first banquet with her mortal enemy gloating at being the only one invited to attend with the king. She knew that proper timing is an important element of wise leadership.
- 11.1.3.4. She had a deep understanding of human psychology. People today do not really understand human psychology, despite having conducted more than a century of research, because they reject the Bible's teachings. They do not understand that:
- 11.1.3.4.1. Man has a soul; he is not just a bag of electrically charged chemicals.
- 11.1.3.4.2. Man's deeply rooted problems are spiritual due to the presence of sin, not intellectual or psychological due to a lack of education, a poor environment, or insufficient opportunities or equal treatment.
- 11.1.3.4.3. Man is innately sinful and inclined to extreme wickedness when constraints are removed, not naturally good
- 11.1.3.4.4. Man is not naturally industrious and productive; but lazy, covetous, and selfish, with an entitlement mentality. He would be happy to take anything he could get without being required to work for it.
- 11.1.3.4.5. Man is naturally a liar, following the example of his father, Satan (Jn 8.44); and cannot be trusted to keep promises or fulfill contracts.
- 11.1.3.5. She was willing to act on principle, in spite of her fears (Est 4.11) and regardless of what the potential consequences might be (Est 4.16).
- 11.1.3.6. She knew that her strength could only come from God through prayer (Est 4.16), and not from her patrons, position, power, or property (Est 4.14).

¹⁸¹ Larry Arnhart, Statesmanship as Magnanimity: Classical, Christian & Modern, *Polity*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Winter, 1983), pp. 263-283; www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3234607?uid=3739448&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=3737720&uid=4&sid=21104349901261

11.1.3.7. Esther was loyal to her people and to God (Est 7.3-4).

11.1.4. We need such Christian leaders and statesmen today in the Church and in government who have the strength of character of Esther.

11.2. Strategy

11.2.1. Esther was not Machiavellian, but she knew how to use strategy to plan and to achieve her goal. She understood the power of:

11.2.1.1. *Prayer* – She spent a full day, and more, in prayer before she acted.

11.2.1.2. *Preparation* – she displayed an applied understanding of the importance of planning and preparation; as shown by her having prepared the banquet (Est 5.4).

11.2.1.3. *Psychology* – As noted above, she had keen insight into the real character of man. Examples include her appearance in the throne room with the symbols of her royal position, as a declaration of authority (Est 5.1), and her strategy of unveiling her petition gradually.

11.2.1.4. *Pre-selling* – She knew how to unveil a new or unwelcome idea so that its reception would become welcome; as shown by her building anticipation in Ahasuerus (Est 5.4, 8).

11.2.1.5. *Patience* – She was able to control her emotions and withhold the revelation of her petition until the appropriate time.

11.2.1.6. *Prudence* – She was worldly and spiritually wise, but guileless.

11.2.1.7. *Persistence* – It would not have been enough that she was personally saved from the pending disaster. She considered it to be necessary that she continue working until all of her people were saved from the pending disaster (Est 7.3-4; Est 8.5-6, 9-14).

11.2.2. If Christians were more like Esther in their presentation of the Gospel, we might see more unconverted people receiving Christ as their saviour.

Puffed Despot (Est 5.9-14)

1. Why was Haman joyful and glad?

1.1. He was pleased that he had been honoured with an invitation to attend a private dinner with the king and queen.

1.2. He believed that he was in line for an even greater reward since he had been invited to a second banquet.

1.3. He believed that he was invincible.

2. What do we learn about his boast?

2.1. To whom did Haman boast?

2.1.1. His friends and his wife Zeresh.

2.1.2. Given the size of his ego, it is surprising that he had any friends.

2.2. What were the items about which he boasted?

2.2.1. *Property* – The splendour of his riches. We know that he was rich enough to offer the king a bribe of over \$1M for the right to destroy the Jews (Est 3.9). In addition, in his position as first minister, he had the opportunity to acquire even greater wealth through extortion, bribery, and gifts. [He had his house in ‘Malibu’.]

2.2.2. *Paternity* – The number of his sons. Later, we learn that he had ten sons (Est 9.7-10). Having many sons has been looked upon as a sign of great blessing in many cultures, including among the Persians. Herodotus, said, “After valor in battle it is accounted noble to father the greatest number of sons: the king sends gifts yearly to him who gets most. Strength, they believe, is in numbers.”¹⁸² [He had a ‘trophy wife’ and ‘celebrity kids’.]

¹⁸² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_I; see: Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 1, chapter 136;
www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D136%3Asection%3D1

- 2.2.3. *Promotion* – The king had honoured him and advanced him above the other officials (Est 3.1). He had been designated the second most powerful person in the kingdom—the first minister of the Persian Empire and had been granted the use of the king’s signet, which he used to enact the edict against the Jews. [He had received top billing as ‘producer’ in the horror movie, *Destiny of the Damned*.]
- 2.2.4. *Power* – Men love promotions because of their associated power and the right to command others. [He had personal retainers who had to cater to his whims, including providing him with pre-shelled pistachio nuts.]
- 2.2.5. *Pre-eminence* – He loved his promotion to the second highest position in the kingdom because men bowed before him and sought his favour so that they could gain an audience with the king through him. [The paparazzi followed him on their donkeys.]
- 2.2.6. *Prestige* – Being invited to attend the queen’s banquets with the king. [He had been invited to the ‘Whitehouse’ for dinner.]
- 2.2.7. *Patronage* – He had access to the king when he wanted it, had been invited to a private banquet with the king and his wife, and presumed that he was the one the king delighted to honour (Est 6.6). [He assumed that he deserved to win an ‘Oscar’.]
- 2.3. What do you notice about the way he recounts his blessings?
 - 2.3.1. The account uses seven personal pronouns in verses 11 and 12 (his, his, him, he, him, me, and I).
 - 2.3.2. Haman displayed the traits of a narcissist, being excessively preoccupied with personal adequacy, power, prestige and vanity, and unable to see the destructive damage he was causing to himself and to others.
 - 2.3.3. He typified those who belong to Satan’s kingdom: full of excessive pride in what he perceived to be his own accomplishments, and an over confidence.
- 2.4. What are some things that were clearly missing from Haman’s words, attitude, and character?
 - 2.4.1. *Chagrin* – He displayed no humility (1 Pt 5.5).
 - 2.4.2. *Constraint* – There was no limit to his excesses; no moderation in his life (Phil 4.5).
 - 2.4.3. *Credit* – He did not display any thankfulness or give the credit to God for the good things he had received (Eph 5.20).
 - 2.4.4. *Confession* – He did not acknowledge his sin and his need to repent of it (1 Jn 1.9).
 - 2.4.5. *Caution* – He had no fear of God (Rom 3.18).
 - 2.4.6. *Charity* – He did not display kindness toward others (Eph 4.32).
 - 2.4.7. Other things that were missing, include: charm, civility, consideration, clemency, courtesy, and conciliation.
- 2.5. What is the problem with overconfidence?
 - 2.5.1. It blinds a person so that he cannot see himself for what he really is.
 - 2.5.2. It blinds a person so that he cannot see his pending demise.
 - 2.5.3. Thus, Haman was a fool (Prov 28.26), who did not realize that within 24 hours he would be dead and all that he had been boasting about would be handed over to his enemies. God’s irony is delicious—Haman thought his invitation to Esther’s banquet was his crowning distinction, but instead it would be his consummate destruction.
- 2.6. What are some examples of the consequences of this kind of boasting and overconfidence?
 - 2.6.1. Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the great city he had built and was struck with insanity for seven years (Dan 4.28-33).
 - 2.6.2. King Belshazzar held a great feast during which he revelled in his worldly provisions and blasphemed God. That night he met his maker and was consigned to an everlasting hell (Dan 5.30).
 - 2.6.3. Jesus told a parable about a rich fool (Lk 12.16-21) who boasted that his possessions made him invincible. That night he met his maker and was consigned to an everlasting hell.
 - 2.6.4. A modern example: John Lennon (1940-1980) said in 1966, “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue about that. I’m right and I will be proved right. We’re

more popular than Jesus now. I don't know which will go first—rock n' roll or Christianity.” John Lennon went first with a premature death, when he was murdered by Mark David Chapman in New York City on December 8, 1980.

3. What made Haman angry? (Est 5.9, 13)
 - 3.1. Mordecai had returned to his station at the king's gate once the period of fasting was completed. He wished to determine what would be the outcome of Esther's petition before Ahasuerus. Thus, Haman saw him when he left the palace from having attended Esther's first banquet.
 - 3.2. Previously Mordecai had refused to bow before Haman (Est 3.4-5). Now he remained seated in the presence of the first minister, and thus did not acknowledge his presence. It has been considered common courtesy to stand (or bow) when a person of authority enters a room or passes by. For example,
 - 3.2.1. When a judge enters a courtroom, everyone rises and remains standing until the judge is seated.
 - 3.2.2. Younger people are expected to stand when an elderly person enters (Lev 19.32).
 - 3.2.3. Soldiers click to attention and salute when an officer passes them.Whether or not we like the persons in authority we are expected to show respect for the office or position which they hold.
 - 3.3. The open contempt that Mordecai showed for Haman would have been galling and exasperating since it would have shamed Haman before the other court officials, making him look powerless. It is similar to what we might feel if we saw a child mouthing off to a teacher or parent and had no authority to intervene.
 - 3.4. Was Mordecai's behaviour at this time excusable?
 - 3.4.1. We noted (Est 3.4-5) that Mordecai had refused to bow before Haman on principle. Haman was an Amalekite and Mordecai considered it to be abhorrent for a Jew to bow before a God-cursed enemy of the Jews. Mordecai did not believe that he was refusing honour to whom honour was due (Rom 13.7), and thus he did not believe he was in the wrong.
 - 3.4.2. At this point, since Mordecai had already declared his position by refusing to bow before Haman, and had brought upon the Jews their pending annihilation, it would have been unprincipled for Mordecai to have shown any respect for Haman—it would be akin to someone, after being caught doing something really stupid, saying, “I was just kidding.”
 - 3.4.3. Also, Mordecai probably thought that he was a dead man if God did not intervene, and nothing could make his situation worse. And, he may have also felt that by provoking Haman he might elicit a rash outburst from him which would reflect badly on him and reach the ears of the king.
 - 3.5. God used Haman's exasperation with Mordecai as a means for bringing about the means of his own death (Est 5.14; Est 7.10).
4. Why did Haman restrain his anger against Mordecai, at this time? (10)
 - 4.1. Haman believed that he was going to be rid of Mordecai soon because his destructive decree had been broadcast widely; but he would have wished that he could dispose of Mordecai sooner. However, what restrained Haman from dealing with Mordecai sooner was not his patience but his fear:
 - 4.1.1. Haman feared the fates. They had predicted a propitious date for the destruction of the Jews, eleven months hence, and he did not wish to tempt fate by executing Mordecai sooner.
 - 4.1.2. Haman feared Ahasuerus. He knew that it would be unwise to arrange for the assassination of Mordecai. If it was discovered (Haman likely had many enemies who would be quick to report his actions), Ahasuerus would be furious with him—not because the life of Mordecai was of any particular value to Ahasuerus, but because the absolute and arbitrary right over life and death belonged to the 'semi-divine' king. Any subordinate who assumed the prerogative for himself would be viewed as a traitor who was attempting to usurp the rights

- of the king and would himself be executed.
- 4.2. Haman did not consider the pleasure of being rid of Mordecai to be worth the potential risk to his position and power.
5. What advice did Haman's wife and friends give him?
- 5.1. To have gallows built on which to execute Mordecai.
- 5.1.1. The gallows were to be 50 cubits, or ~23m high (the height of a seven-story building). Many commentators suggest that this is an exaggeration for effect (i.e., 'a tall gallows'). It is possible that the gallows were placed on top of a building or hanging from the city wall and that the gallows was placed 50 cubits above the ground.
- 5.1.2. The word translated 'gallows' can also be translated as 'tree' or 'wood'. It could have been a frame from which to hang a rope for strangling a person. Some suggest that alternatively it could have been a stake for impalement—although a 23m long stake is unlikely.
- 5.1.3. Whatever the actual form of the gallows, it was available the next day (Est 7.9). This indicates that Haman had significant resources (financial and manpower) and authority to have the structure built or assembled so quickly.
- 5.1.4. The objective was to make the execution of Mordecai the Jew into a spectacle to set an example and warn other Jews not to be disrespectful of the Persian nobility—and of Haman, in particular. The height would be a symbol either of Haman's importance or of the degree of disrespect shown by Mordecai.
- 5.2. To ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai.
- 5.2.1. The ESV has Zeresh suggesting that Haman 'tell' the king to hang Mordecai, as if he had so much influence that he could virtually order the king to comply. Other translations have 'suggest', 'ask', 'speak unto'. It is unlikely that Haman, as powerful as he was, could *tell* the king to execute Mordecai. Rather he would have had to ask for permission.
- 5.2.2. Haman could have produced a false charge against Mordecai, and no one would have dared to contest it.
- 5.3. Then to go and join the king at Esther's banquet.
- 5.3.1. He was advised to arrange a murder and then go with a 'happy' spirit to a party.
- 5.4. How did Haman feel about this advice?
- 5.4.1. He was pleased with it.
- 5.5. What does Haman's acceptance of his wife's advice tell us about him?
- 5.5.1. Haman was under the influence of his wife and friends as Ahasuerus was under the influence of his advisers—neither was a principled man. Unprincipled men can be easily influenced by wicked women. Ironically, he isn't portrayed as being a "master in his own household" (Est 1.22).
- 5.5.2. Both Haman and Zeresh were callous—suggesting and agreeing to the arrangement of a murder which would be followed by attendance at a banquet. Zeresh was callous like Jezebel who arranged for the murder of Naboth in order to steal his vineyard (1 Ki 21.1-16). Haman had already displayed his callousness when he issued the edict to slaughter the Jews and then drank wine with the king (Est 3.15). A similar callousness is shown by abortionists, and many of the women who have abortions, who after performing/having the abortion go out to dinner as if they had just completed a routine day as bank tellers rather than murdering a child.
- 5.6. What contrasts are established by this incident?
- 5.6.1. Zeresh is portrayed as ambitious and diabolical with the ability to influence her husband for evil. In contrast, a good wife (Prov 31.10-31) is portrayed as one who through her honesty and industry helps her husband to gain true honour.
- 5.6.2. Haman's plotting actions may outrun Esther's planning. Haman was persuaded to present his petition against Mordecai first thing in the morning, before Esther could present her petition at the banquet. The drama is heightened as events head toward a climax.
- 5.6.3. The decisive actions of men to commit evil can quickly be turned against them by God.

Haman was to capitalize on his good position with the king to gain favour—as the proverb says, ‘strike while the iron is hot’. It would seem that Mordecai would have only a few hours left to live—the gallows were ready—but, in less than a day the king’s favour would turn to fury (Est 7.7) and the evil plotters would all be dead on their own instrument of destruction (Ps 7.15-16; Prov 26.27).

5.6.4. Mordecai demonstrated the root of his happiness—a faith in God (Est 4.14); Haman demonstrated the root of his ‘happiness’—a fatal greed (Est 5.14). They were representatives of the two great streams of humanity—the spiritual children of Christ and Seth who live by mercy, and the children of Satan and Cain who live by murder.

6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 5.9-14)

6.1. *Vanity* – This section illustrates the greatness of the vanity of the human heart.

6.1.1. Why does God hate pride (Prov 6.16; Jam 4.6)?

6.1.1.1. It leads us to believe that we are our own masters, can provide for ourselves, and don’t need God’s supporting goodness or his saving graciousness.

6.1.1.2. It makes us unthankful.

6.1.1.3. It gives the praise and honour due to Creator to a creature.

6.1.1.4. It causes us to think we are better than other people and to have no regard or concern for them.

6.1.1.5. It leads to viciousness (see the next lesson).

6.1.2. What do we really have, of which we can be proud?

6.1.2.1. *Ancestry*? We are all descended from despicable criminals (Adam and Eve) who robbed God and committed genocide on the human race.

6.1.2.2. *Accomplishments*? Our very existence is dependent on God (Job 12.10; Acts 17.28); everything we do successfully is because of God’s giving us abilities (Jam 1.17).

6.1.2.3. *Acts*? Even our outwardly good acts are steeped in sin (Prov 21.27). Our hearts would be desperately wicked (Jer 17.9) if it were not for the converting work of the Holy Spirit.

6.1.2.4. *Acquisitions*? We have nothing but what God has given to us (Jn 3.27; 1 Cor 4.7).

6.1.3. What is the ultimate outcome of pride?

6.1.3.1. God will humble all who are full of pride (Prov 16.18; Prov 29.23; Mt 23.12).

6.1.3.2. The bigger our pride, the harder will be our fall.

6.1.4. What must be our method for dealing with pride?

6.1.4.1. Don’t boast about anything—ancestry, accomplishments, acts, or acquisitions.

6.1.4.2. Let others praise you (Prov 27.2). But don’t let praise go to your head—don’t feed the greedy monster.

6.1.4.3. Don’t dig for praise with apparently subtle little tricks, such as, “What did you think of x ...” For example, a preacher looking for praise might ask, “Do you agree with the way I dealt with ...? Or, an athlete might ask, “So, how do you think I could have improved my game last night?”

6.1.4.4. Ask God to help you suppress your pride; pray for humility. Someone wrote this prayer: “Father, give me the humility which realizes its ignorance, admits its mistakes, recognizes its needs, welcomes advice and accepts rebukes. Help me always to praise rather than criticize, to encourage rather than to disparage, to build rather than to destroy, and to think of people at their best rather than at their worst.”

6.1.4.5. Focus on God and his glory (through worship), it will remind you that you are a sinful creature.

6.2. *Viciousness* – Pride leads to viciousness.

6.2.1. Pride, like greed, is insatiable. Once pride gets a taste of recognition, it demands more. Pride is an addict that needs its next fix or rush induced by psychological ‘cocaine’ or ‘alcohol’.

- 6.2.2. It is probably not an exaggeration to state that the root of *all* other sins is the sin of pride. Pride is what caused Adam and Eve to rebel in the Garden—they wanted to be like God, and they believed that their feelings were more important than obedience to God. Pride is what leads people to introduce false worship, to claim that their works are good and should be sufficient to save them, to lie to cover their shame, to lust and covet in order to have what others have, and to hate and murder because their egos have been abused.
- 6.2.3. In order to feed the beast of pride, men are compelled to undertake deeper and darker sins. Haman's pride led him to plot the assassination of the Jews and build gallows for hanging Mordecai. Pride causes every intention of the thoughts of man's heart to be only evil continually (Gen 6.5). Pride leads to many things, including:
- 6.2.3.1. Intense worship of self.
 - 6.2.3.2. Immoderate ambition.
 - 6.2.3.3. Intemperate behaviour.
 - 6.2.3.4. Inconsiderate conduct.
 - 6.2.3.5. Indescribable evil.
- 6.3. *Values* – Haman's reaction to events demonstrates a contrast between the ultimate value system of pagans and that of Christians.
- 6.3.1. What did Haman's happiness depend upon?
- 6.3.1.1. His happiness depended on his immediate *circumstances*—what Mordecai had done that aggravated him, what Esther had done that pleased him, and what he anticipated doing by destroying Mordecai and attending Esther's banquet.
 - 6.3.1.2. The happiness of pagans can only depend on circumstances which are derived from events which transpire in the spatial-temporal realm during their short miserable and hopeless life (Eph 2.12).
 - 6.3.1.3. Pagan values are, at base: to gain recognition from men and maximize physical and psychological pleasure. Since a pagan can never have enough recognition or pleasure, his life is empty with no satisfaction (Prov 27.20). Consider Haman, who had much wealth and the recognition of many, but the disregard of *one* person made him so miserable that he complained bitterly.
- 6.3.2. In contrast what does the Christian's happiness depend upon? A Christian's happiness is based on:
- 6.3.2.1. *Conscience*, a good one (1 Tim 1.5, 19); knowing that our sins have been confessed and covered by the blood of Christ
 - 6.3.2.2. *Chief end*; knowing our primary purpose, which is to “glorify God and to enjoy him forever”.¹⁸³
 - 6.3.2.3. *Contentment* (1 Tim 6.8). The more that we have learned to be content with what God has provided for us, the happier we are (Phil 4.11, 12).

Pride's Downfall (Est 6.1-13)

Perusal (Est 6.1-3)

1. What apparently simple event in this account changed the course of history?
 - 1.1. The king's sleepless night.
 - 1.1.1. “in that night the king's sleep fled away”
 - 1.2. Based on what we know about Ahasuerus, why might this be a surprise?
 - 1.2.1. As an absolute monarch who believed that he ruled by divine right and who believed that he was a demigod, he would have believed that he could do as he pleased. He lacked for nothing, lived in a fine palace, and had unlimited access to the materialistic pleasures of gastronomic delicacies, alcohol, entertainment, and concubines. He also ruled the largest territory that any

¹⁸³ *Shorter Catechism*, Q. 1.

man had ever ruled over (127 provinces; Est 1.1). Also, after agreeing to Haman's request to wipe out a people, he went to a party (Est 3.15), and he could call for the execution of a noble in an instant (Est 7.10). So, there does not appear to be much that could have aroused his conscience and made him lose sleep.

1.3. What, then, could have caused him to have a sleepless night?

1.3.1. A moral stirring? Not likely, as we have just noted that he had a conscience which was hard to arouse.

1.3.2. An affair of state that worried him? Shakespeare wrote, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." (*Henry IV*, Part II) However, at this time the empire had unprecedented peace—Babylon and Egypt were not in revolt and there were no battles being waged against the Greeks or in the eastern provinces.

1.3.3. The rich food at Esther's banquet? But he was probably used to such fare.

1.3.4. Esther had charmed him, and he realized he missed her? Unlikely as he had a harem full of beautiful women, and if he had wanted Esther that night, he would have called her into his bedchamber.

1.3.5. Esther's teasing ploy of not revealing her request had aroused his curiosity. Possibly, but likely not enough to cause him to lose sleep.

1.3.6. The fact that his sleepless night is reported seems to imply that this was not a common occurrence for Ahasuerus, and an indication that something unusual happened.

1.3.7. The explanation must lie in an extraordinary providence. God, who could turn the king's heart like a stream of water wherever he willed (Prov 21.1), caused Ahasuerus to have a sleepless night. God shows the irony of man's situation—a king who could command one hundred satrapies could not command one hour's sleep.

1.4. Why was it important that Ahasuerus was unable to sleep this night?

1.4.1. The God who does not sleep (Ps 121.4) determined that this earthly king would be kept awake on this particular night—between Esther's two banquets, before Haman would arrive to ask for the head of Mordecai—so that he could communicate something to him.

1.4.2. This night was to be the turning point in the account, and a key juncture for all of history.

1.4.2.1. An apparently unremarkable circumstance—a king's sleepless night—initiates a reversal of circumstances for Haman and Mordecai, determines the rest of the story for the Jews, and ensures that all of mankind could have a hope-filled future through the arrival of the Messiah.

1.4.2.2. If Satan and Haman had had their way, the Jews throughout the Persian Empire would have been destroyed. The line descending from Seth, through Noah, Shem, Eber, Abraham, Jacob, and David would have been terminated and the Messiah could not have been born as a fulfilment of the promises of God (Gen 18.17-18; Is 11.10; Jer 23.5-6; Mic 5.2).

2. What did Ahasuerus do in response to his sleeplessness?

2.1. He ordered someone to read to him from the chronicles of his reign.

2.1.1. The structure of the Hebrew (the participle) indicates that the reading was a continuous action, lasting for some time—possibly through much of the later portion of the night since Haman appeared while the reading was in progress (Est 6.4).

2.1.2. We are informed here that the Persian kings kept a record of their acts. We also know this from the extensive collection of writings which were inscribed on monuments in the palaces at Susa and Persepolis and from the numerous tablets discovered in the Persian ruins.

2.2. He did not do what we might have expected, ordering entertainment or a midnight snack, or seeking comfort in the arms of one of his concubines. If his objective had been merely to provide entertainment for himself, then it is unlikely that he would have chosen the activity of listening to a slave read historical chronicles.

2.3. Why might he have called for this activity when he was experiencing a sleepless night?

- 2.3.1. Possible suggestions include:
 - 2.3.1.1. There is nothing like reading a bit of history to put people to sleep. However, this would have been his own history and not boring to hear recited by others.
 - 2.3.1.2. He wanted to hear the soothing voice of one of his most articulate scribes so that he could fall asleep—like some people need to leave the TV or radio playing in order to fall asleep. However, he could have selected something else to be read, such as a mythological adventure story.
 - 2.3.1.3. He wanted to revel in his victories and reflect on the might of his empire (compare, Dan 4.30). However, he would have received constant adulation and praise as a god from his sycophantic retainers during the day and did not need this at night also.
 - 2.3.2. His primary objective was not to fall asleep. He had already been awake much of the night—his sleep had ‘fled away’. There was something going on below the surface. It appears that he had a nagging sense that something important had happened or was going to happen and he couldn’t crystalize his thoughts around it. His request to have the chronicles read was to bring his mind into focus in case he had missed something. It is like the situation when a person feels he has forgotten something and goes back into a room to see if he can bring back the memory.
3. What was read to the king from the chronicles?
- 3.1. What portion was read?
 - 3.1.1. We don’t know how much of the chronicles was read, but the account of the assassination plot and Mordecai’s part in reporting it was included in the reading.
 - 3.1.2. Ancient Jewish scholars reported a myth which claimed that the hand of the scribe could not open the scroll or reach for a tablet other than by going to this account. It was as if each time you open a book, no matter what page you try to open, it always opens at a particular page. There was no magic, but God was clearly directing the scribe’s actions so that the account of the assassination plot would be read that night.
 - 3.2. What did the king discover from the chronicles?
 - 3.2.1. He was reminded of his indebtedness to Mordecai, who had saved his life (Est 2.22).
 - 3.2.2. He discovered that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai for his actions.
 - 3.2.3. He realized that he was unaware and uninformed of what had been done to reward Mordecai and had to ask about what had been done for Mordecai. This reflected poorly on him, a god to the Persians who did not even know what had happened in his palace when his own life had been threatened.
 - 3.2.4. He may have wondered if there had been a deliberate disregard for Mordecai. The good deed had been written in the chronicles, and while recognized had gone unrewarded. Ahasuerus may have thought that his court officials were prejudiced against Mordecai because he was not a native Persian or a member of the nobility.
 - 3.2.5. The neglect of giving recognition to Mordecai was inexcusable.
 - 3.2.5.1. It was a discourtesy, a breach of royal court etiquette, and a dishonour on Ahasuerus, portraying him as an ungrateful benefactor.
 - 3.2.5.2. At least Mordecai should have received a note of thanks. Consider a recent example: When an Islamic terrorist, who had just killed a Canadian soldier standing ceremonial guard, entered the Canadian parliament buildings with the intent to kill. The Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Vickers, came out of his office in his robes and shot the assailant (2014-10-22). The next day, when Vickers entered the House of Commons he was greeted with a standing ovation and the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, went over to him and shook his hand and hugged him.
 - 3.2.5.3. Ahasuerus was so concerned about the discovery of the neglect of protocol and recognition for Mordecai that he became, uncharacteristically, focused and

determined, and did not let the distraction of the arrival of his favourite retainer distract him from rectifying the situation (Est 6.4-6).

- 3.3. Why is the timing of this discovery so important?
 - 3.3.1. If Mordecai had been recognized and rewarded five years previously, he would have been long forgotten and it could not have been used to initiate the downfall of Haman and the reversal of his evil plot.
 - 3.3.2. God always rewards and recognizes his people, but at the right and best time. For most believers, that time may be delayed until their entrance into glory (Mt 25.21; 2 Tim 4.8).
 - 3.3.3. At this point, the drama intensifies, and the great reversal of blessings and curses begins.
4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 6.1-3)
 - 4.1. *Remarkable Coincidences* – The circumstance of Ahasuerus being unable to sleep during the night before Haman came to request the execution of Mordecai appears to be a remarkable coincidence. However, the author of Esther intends for his readers to understand that apparently small events are not left to chance. Rather all things are being worked for the glory of God, the good of his people, and the destruction of his enemies.
 - 4.1.1. However inconsequential a king's (or any person's) sleepless night might appear it is not merely a trivial event, since there is no such thing as a chance circumstance. Every event has been planned in detail by God—no event has been left to chance; no event is an afterthought. Every event in God's plan is interconnected to every other event through an unbreakable chain of secondary causes and effects. Through all events, God is unfolding his plans as he fills heaven with the elect.
 - 4.1.2. We create an artificial distinction between apparently trivial events and momentous events; God does not. For example, we might think that the assassination of a ruler (e.g., of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria) is important because it leads to a major war, but that a person having a restless night is not important. We cannot be the judges of what is trivial or important because we do not see all the interconnections nor do we know what is going on in the spiritual realms (e.g., angels protecting us [Ps 91.11] or spiritual wars being waged [Eph 6.12]).
 - 4.1.3. A seemingly slight occurrence may result in what we call a momentous event. In the introduction to this study of Esther (*Purpose*) we quoted the proverb about the lost horseshoe nail resulting in the loss of a kingdom. We could illustrate this form of interconnectedness with numerous examples, but will provide only a few:
 - 4.1.3.1. God directed Ahasuerus to ignore Esther for over a month, to be in the throne room at Susa on the day Esther began her appeal for her people, to receive Esther, to attend her banquet, and to be stricken with insomnia that night. He directed the servant to read from the particular account which recorded Mordecai's service to the king five years earlier. He directed Haman to appear in the palace courts moments after Ahasuerus had enquired about what had been done for Mordecai.
 - 4.1.3.2. God led Joseph's brothers to sell him into Egypt as a slave for a later purpose of saving lives (Gen 50.20). God directed Caesar Augustus to call a census of the Roman world so that Mary and Joseph would have to return to Bethlehem so that Jesus would be born there (Mic 5.2; Lk 2.1-7).
 - 4.1.3.3. "In 1858, Robert Fallon was shot dead, an act of vengeance by those with whom he was playing poker. Fallon, they claimed, had won the \$600 pot through cheating. With Fallon's seat empty and none of the other players willing to take the now-unlucky \$600, they found a new player to take Fallon's place and staked him with the dead man's \$600. By the time the police had arrived to investigate the killing, the new player had turned the \$600 into \$2,200 in winnings. The police demanded the original \$600 to pass on to Fallon's next of kin – only to discover that the new

- player turned out to be Fallon’s son, who had not seen his father in seven years!”¹⁸⁴
- 4.1.3.4. On March 4th, 1916 God directed C. S. Lewis to “purchase and read the Everyman edition of George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*. Lewis was at the time an atheist who found the darker paths of Romanticism deeply attractive. It was his discovery of *Phantastes* that was to lead him away from these dangerous by-ways and into the clear sunlight. A light that was to find full expression in his subsequent, imaginative, writings.”¹⁸⁵
- 4.1.4. God doesn’t *react* to events and intervene. He *plans* all events over millennia, centuries, and years to unfold his remarkable providences; such as placing Mordecai in proximity to the potential assassins so that he overheard their plot and reported it years before his involvement in preventing the assassination came under consideration on the King’s sleepless night. Likewise, our presence here today is not a mere lucky happenstance. For example, assume that a person from a previously ‘unreached’ native tribe in the jungle hears a Gospel presentation, believes in Christ, and repents of his sin (Acts 13.48). His presence at the moment he heard the Gospel is connected to a long chain of events including his being rescued from a canoe accident the week before, the day of his conception, and the year in which his distant ancestors began their migratory trek from the vicinity of the tower at Babel. Likewise, the presence of the missionary at that moment is linked to a similar chain of events, which includes his parents taking him to Sunday School, the Protestant Reformation, a liaison between Charlemagne and a milkmaid, and Noah’s son Japheth moving north-west from Shinar.
- 4.1.5. Mordecai and Esther may have wondered why God had permitted the promotion of Haman and the issuing of Haman’s evil decree against the Jews. However, as they were soon to discover, God had not made a mistake and was working out his plans with exquisite attention to detail. Nothing occurs by chance, nothing falls outside of God’s glorious plan.
- 4.1.6. God’s timing continues to be impeccable today. We do not see all the ways that God is unfolding his plan—every moment. But since his providential control is illustrated in this account it provides us an encouragement to trust him throughout our lives.
- 4.2. *Restless Condition* – We need sleep in this life because of the curse on the created realm (Gen 3.17-19). Our bodies need rest and restoration from the painful toil of the day. Adam and Eve may have slept in the Garden of Eden before the fall since there was a time of night (Gen 1.5). However, they probably did not spend much time in Eden since Eve probably ate the fruit and gave to her husband shortly after she was created, and Cain would have been conceived after their expulsion from the Garden. We likely will not need to sleep in the new creation, since there will not be any night (Rev 21.25). Regardless, needing sleep and sleeping are not sinful in themselves, since Jesus needed sleep (Mt 8.24).
- 4.2.1. It is ironic that the mightiest king on the earth, who could command a million-man army could not command a night’s sleep. Yet a labourer working on the construction site of the citadel in Susa would have been blessed with a night of sweet sleep (Eccl 5.12).
- 4.2.2. The psalmist tells us that God “gives to his beloved sleep” (Ps 127.2). Thus, when a sleepless night comes upon a person, it is because God is withholding sleep from him.
- 4.2.3. Experiencing a sleepless night is the result of sin, but not necessarily a direct result of a particular sin. Sleeplessness could be the result of an illness or of legitimate excitement (e.g., the thought of spending time with a returning friend or relative from a long journey). But often sleeplessness is a direct result of a sin—from abuse of the body or from worry or a nagging conscience.
- 4.2.4. God often uses a night of sleeplessness to awaken people to spiritual realities.
- 4.2.4.1. The night can be a psychological terror for people who are plagued with fears,

¹⁸⁴ listverse.com/2007/11/12/top-15-amazing-coincidences/

¹⁸⁵ www.george-macdonald.com/resources/cs_lewis.html

- worry, regrets, and guilt. A common thought which passes through the minds of the sleepless is ‘if only’.
- 4.2.4.2. When leisure activities are shut out at night (sometimes difficult today with the availability of electric lights and electronic gadgets like ‘smart’ phones and TVs), companions have gone to bed, and the demands of the day have diminished, God may use the empty time of a sleepless night to awaken serious reflection on eternal questions—“Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? What will happen to me when I die?”
 - 4.2.5. How we deal with sleeplessness is an important test of character.
 - 4.2.5.1. Some resort to drugs to induce sleep; others fill the time with vapid entertainment such as watching pornography or info-commercials.
 - 4.2.5.2. In contrast, it is good to follow the example of the psalmist and to meditate on God’s works and to pray (Ps 63.5, 6). Reading may also help us to relax and regain our sleep.
 - 4.3. *Recorded Chronicles* – The king could have done far worse than to request that the chronicles of his reign be read to him. Reflecting on the accomplishments and disappointments of one’s life can have merit if it leads to improvement. Also, the keeping and review of history is important. As one person has said, “Books record what men forget.”¹⁸⁶
 - 4.3.1. The study of history, even in the Church, is despised in our day—it is viewed as being boring and irrelevant. It is neither; although it is often taught in such a way that it appears to be boring.
 - 4.3.2. Why do (should) we study history? The study of history:
 - 4.3.2.1. Helps us understand people and societies,
 - 4.3.2.2. Helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be,
 - 4.3.2.3. Contributes to moral understanding,
 - 4.3.2.4. Provides identity,
 - 4.3.2.5. Is essential for good citizenship, and
 - 4.3.2.6. Develops critical thinking skills (assess evidence, weigh interpretations, and extrapolate from one situation to another).¹⁸⁷
 - 4.3.3. What are some of the problems which can arise when we don’t study history?
 - 4.3.3.1. We cannot correctly interpret the Bible in its historical context. For example, modern interpreters make absurd claims about Paul’s instructions about women being excluded from the ruling-teaching office in the Church (1 Cor 14.34-35; 1 Tim 2.11-15) because they have imbibed a post-modernist outlook on the past; or claim that Paul encourages us to use mere human compositions (‘hymns’) in praise rather than the Psalms only (Eph 5.19; Col 3.16) because they ignore the historical context in which Paul is referring to compositional types in the Psalter.
 - 4.3.3.2. We cannot understand why the Church has come to its position on many doctrines (e.g., regarding the deity of Christ or the trinity) and end up making the same mistakes that the heretics made in the past.
 - 4.3.3.3. We cannot fully appreciate and understand God’s providential governance of the world and of mankind’s journey, and how God has preserved his Church throughout the ages, unless we are able to reflect on the past.
 - 4.3.3.4. We cannot put our life into a proper and humble perspective so that we understand that “We are dwarfs mounted on the shoulders of giants.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Ed.), *Esther* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), p. 117.

¹⁸⁷ Adapted from: Peter N. Stearns, *Why Study History?* American Historical Association, www.historians.org/pubs/free/WhyStudyHistory.htm

¹⁸⁸ Bernard of Chartres, quoted in: P. Schaff and D. S. Schaff, *History of the Christian church* (Vol. 5), (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, (1910), p. 538.

- 4.4. *Recompensed Consideration* – Ahasuerus's (or his courtier's) oversight in not rewarding Mordecai for saving his (the king's) life from the plotting assassins reminds us how important it is for us to be grateful towards those who are gracious to us.
 - 4.4.1. Gratitude to God is a duty (Ps 103.2). How can we show gratitude to God?
 - 4.4.1.1. Prayers of thanks (Eph 5.20; Col 3.17).
 - 4.4.1.2. Praise in Psalms (Ps 47.7; Ps 147.1; Eph 5.19; Heb 13.15).
 - 4.4.1.3. Particular obedience to his commands (Dt 8.11-14; Ps 119.60; Jn 14.15, 23).
 - 4.4.1.4. Practical works of love (Rom 12.9-12; Rev 2.19).
 - 4.4.2. Gratitude to men is also a duty (Phil 4.14-19). The king had rewarded an evil and worthless favourite but had ignored a righteous and faithful citizen and civil servant.
 - 4.4.2.1. Gratitude can take many forms. At minimum, it should start with a sincere voice of thanks. It can also extend to other forms of recognition such as sending a formal note of thanks (e.g., a card) and giving public recognition or a gift.
 - 4.4.2.2. Showing gratitude to others, particularly those who have what people consider to be a lower station in life, reminds us that we are no better than they are by nature and that we are dependent upon them. God recognizes the humblest of his servants (Mt 25.21-23), and so should we. For example, we should show gratitude to those who serve us in stores or provide technical support on a help desk.
 - 4.4.2.3. It is better to reward someone late for his faithful service than to ignore the obligation—in Mordecai's case the recognition came five years late.

Plummet (Est 6.4-11)

- 1. What did the king want to know?
 - 1.1. Who was in the court; likely meaning the courtyard outside the living quarters or throne room.
 - 1.2. Why did not he ask, "Is anyone in the court?"
 - 1.2.1. He assumed, based on common practice, that there would be a senior advisor always available to undertake the king's business at a moment's notice.
 - 1.2.2. In effect, he was asking who from his staff of advisors was currently present.
 - 1.3. What was he told by his servants?
 - 1.3.1. That Haman was present.
 - 1.3.2. As the second highest official in the kingdom (Est 3.1), his name was mentioned, even if there were other advisors present.
 - 1.4. The king commanded them to let Haman into the royal residence or throne room; depending on where the reading of the chronicles was being conducted.
- 2. Why had Haman arrived at the palace?
 - 2.1. To request that Mordecai be hanged on the gallows.
 - 2.2. He had arrived early, at the start of the day, which means that the king had been awake much of the night.
 - 2.3. What indicates that the king considered the matter of dealing with a reward for Mordecai was urgent?
 - 2.3.1. The abruptness of Ahasuerus' question.
 - 2.3.2. The fact that he did not give Haman an opportunity to speak (i.e., to indicate why he was in the court so early), but directed an immediate question to Haman.
 - 2.3.3. His demand that the action of rewarding Mordecai, and remedying the neglect, be done at once (Est 6.10; 'hurry').
- 3. What advice did the king seek from Haman?
 - 3.1. He wanted to know what should be done to honour a person whom the king wished to honour.
 - 3.2. How is the king's question phrased?
 - 3.2.1. As an abstract question, with no indication of whom the king might have in mind for receiving

the honour.

3.2.2. He doesn't mention the name of the person he is thinking of honouring.

3.3. Why did the king not mention Mordecai's name, when speaking to Haman?

3.3.1. The king appears to have had more insight into Haman's (or, in general, his advisors') character that we might suppose and was not prepared to give an indication of whom he might be considering for an honour so as not to allow for a biased response from Haman.

3.3.2. Ultimately the reason the king did not mention Mordecai to Haman is that God was providentially intervening to ensure that Haman was surprised when the king revealed his plan to honour Mordecai. God did not give Haman time to come up with a less generous plan for an honour.

3.4. This is another example of the irony found throughout Esther. The king is asking for advice about honouring Mordecai from the person who hates him the most.

4. What course of action did Haman propose for honouring a person?

4.1. He recommended a royal treatment which consisted of:

4.1.1. Wearing a robe which had previously been worn by the king.

4.1.2. Riding a royal horse (one fitted with a royal headdress or crest) which the king had previously ridden. There have been questions raised about whether the king's horses were adorned with headdresses, but relief sculptures from the general era seem to support this conclusion.



[Bishapur V relief of Bahram I \(273-296 BC\)](#)

4.1.3. Being paraded through an open square (a place of public assembly near a major gate) or the wide streets in the city, with a crier declaring the man's honour.

4.2. What was special about these honours?

4.2.1. They would normally not have been given to anyone; not even to a courtier.

- 4.2.2. To wear a robe previously worn by the king or to ride on one of his horses, without his express permission, would have been considered a usurpation of the king's royal position.¹⁸⁹
5. Why did Haman propose 'the royal treatment'?
- 5.1. Because of his inflated ego (Est 5.11), he had a mistaken notion of his own importance and believed that the king had him in mind and wanted to honour him (Est 6.6).
- 5.2. What is noteworthy about what is recorded in this verse?
- 5.2.1. We are informed of Haman's thoughts—"Haman said to himself."
- 5.2.2. Haman probably had not told anyone of his thoughts; and even if he had, it is unlikely that the report reached the ears of the author of this account. Therefore, the inner thoughts of Haman were revealed to the author by the Holy Spirit—the author may have inferred, correctly, what Haman had thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- 5.2.3. The expression 'said to himself' (Heb: 'said in heart of him'), or the equivalent with 'I', 'you', 'her' occurs only a few other times in the OT (for example, Gen 8.21; Gen 17.17; Gen 27.41; 1 Sam 27.1; Ps 10.6, 11, 13; Ps 14.1; Ps 53.1; Is 14.13; Is 47.10). In most cases it is in a negative context—of proud hearts, wicked schemers, and fools.
- 5.3. Haman did not lust after money, as he had more than enough money (Est 3.9; Est 5.11), nor for power as he was second highest in the kingdom (Est 3.1; Est 5.11). What he lusted for was to be respected by his peers and the public (Est 5.13). What Haman did not understand was that true respect is not the same as popularity or notoriety. Someone can be popular (e.g., because of throwing extravagant parties or giving large gifts) but be despised or be widely known but considered to be a fool.
- 5.4. He likely had secret ambitions to exceed his present station, if that were possible. He probably believed that if what he proposed had happened, the residents of Susa would have believed that he had been appointed as the incumbent successor to Ahasuerus.
- 5.5. His mistaken notions led him to propose a program of recognition for himself, which he would have proposed for no one else.
6. What action did the king require of Haman?
- 6.1. To give the royal treatment Haman had just proposed (thinking it would be for himself) to Mordecai.
- 6.1.1. To do it exactly as he had proposed.
- 6.1.2. To do it immediately, in a hurry, with no time to ask for a reason, to question the suitability of the proposal, or to propose an alternative course of action.
- 6.2. How did Haman respond to the king's command?
- 6.2.1. Although the king's request would have been a jaw-dropping surprise for Haman, he was carefully guarded in his outward response. As a master of practiced duplicity, he did not show astonishment or surprise, or he would have been caught in the web of his own devious deceit. He did not dare ask for a reason if the king did not offer one. And, he could not have invented an excuse to decline the king's command without threatening his station. He also could not have asked about hanging Mordecai, whom the king had just commanded him to honour.
- 6.2.2. Haman had no choice but to comply with the king's command. So, reluctantly, he carried out the king's orders exactly as he had proposed and as the king had ordered, without questioning the king's motives or revealing any chagrin.
- 6.3. How does Ahasuerus refer to Mordecai?
- 6.3.1. As "the Jew, who sits at the king's gate". He likely had just been informed that Mordecai was a Jew during the recitation of the history of the discovery and reporting of the assassination attempt.

¹⁸⁹ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, para 5; classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/artaxerx.html; Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 7, chapter 17; www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D7%3Achapter%3D17%3Asection%3D1

- 6.4. What facts may the king have been unaware of, or have been kept in the dark about them?
 - 6.4.1. That Haman's edict, issued in the king's name (Est 3.12, 13), specifically targeted the Jews. Ahasuerus appears not to have made a connection between the nationality of those affected by the destructive edict and the nationality of Mordecai.
 - 6.4.2. The protests of the Jews, and that Mordecai was sitting outside the gate in sackcloth.
 - 6.4.3. The animosity which Haman harboured towards Mordecai.
- 6.5. What ironies are exhibited as Mordecai is honoured?
 - 6.5.1. Mordecai was wearing sackcloth (Est 4.1), now he is clothed with royal robes.
 - 6.5.2. Mordecai had refused to bow to Haman (Est 3.5), now Haman is forced to bow to Mordecai.
 - 6.5.3. Haman was expecting to be honoured, now he is the one doing the honouring.
 - 6.5.4. Haman had wished to humiliate Mordecai, now he is honouring him.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 6.4-11)
 - 7.1. *Events Controlled* – Experts in many domains say that “timing is everything”—in buying stocks, releasing a new product, delivering a punch line in a comedy routine, executing a ballet move, hitting a homerun, or delivering bad news.
 - 7.1.1. God created time (Gen 1.1; Titus 1.2) and controls time (Job 14.5; Ps 31.15).
 - 7.1.2. God's timing of all events is perfect (Rom 5.6; Gal 4.4). From our perspective, the conjunction of some events appears to be an amazing coincidence; but ultimately there is no such thing as a coincidence, as we considered in the lessons in the previous section (*Remarkable Coincidences*).
 - 7.1.3. In this section of the account, we see another illustration of God's magnificent mastery of time, through the conjunction of events, which outshine the brightest of every celestial conjunction:
 - 7.1.3.1. A courtier arrives to place a petition; a potentate delivers a command.
 - 7.1.3.2. The haste of one man to destroy another man is overruled by the hurry of a greater to reward the same man.
 - 7.1.3.3. A haughty man is humbled; a humble man is honoured.
 - 7.1.3.4. Revenge is reversed.
 - 7.1.4. When we contemplate how God controls events we should be in awe of his providential governance of mankind and rejoice in it. Predestination should not be considered a debilitating doctrine, as many suggest—because they believe that it undermines human responsibility. Rather, it should be viewed as a confidence building doctrine—because we know that God is working all things for his glory and for our good (Rom 8.28-31), as he makes his enemies serve him (Phil 2.10-11).
 - 7.2. *Enemies Chagrined* – God laughs at his enemies and at their petty plans to overthrow his anointed and his kingdom (Ps 2.4; Ps 33.10-11; Prov 21.30).
 - 7.2.1. The world doesn't revolve around any mere human—no matter how great he may seem to be in his own eyes or how much honour he may receive from his fellow men. Yet most men of high station are blinded by their own arrogance and believe that they are important. But God has no regard for their haughtiness and vanity and eventually humbles each one of them (Prov 16.18).
 - 7.2.2. He often humbles them in spectacular ways, as he began to do with Haman by having the honour, he presumed was his bestowed up his mortal enemy:
 - 7.2.2.1. They climb the ladder of success and fall off and break their backs.
 - 7.2.2.2. They banquet at the expense of others but end up choking on dirt.
 - 7.2.2.3. They step into the propeller of their own plane.
 - 7.2.2.4. The knife they sharpen against an enemy pierces their own throat.
 - 7.2.2.5. They dig a pit to trap another but fall into it themselves (Ps 7.15).
 - 7.2.3. Knowing this, what should be the manner of our response?

7.2.3.1. We should humble ourselves before God (Prov 16.19; Prov 29.23) and men (Lk 14.7-11).

Pessimism (Est 6.12-13)

1. How did the king's command to reward Mordecai affect Mordecai? (11-12)
 - 1.1. Did Mordecai know the reason for his being the honoured?
 - 1.1.1. We are not told whether the reason for the honour was explained to him at the time. We are also not told whether Haman know the reason. All that we are told is that Mordecai was to be honoured. It is possible that Mordecai had an idea about the reason, since he would have remembered that he reported the assassination attempt. But Haman may have been completely ignorant of the reason, and had not dared to ask the king for a reason. However, the reason may have been provided quickly to them by one of the king's attendants who had been present when the chronicle was read to the king.
 - 1.2. Why did Mordecai accept the honour?
 - 1.2.1. He did not think that it was wrong to accept an honour the king wished to bestow upon him. If he knew the reason he was being honoured, then he would have believed that it was deserved—saving the life of the king was worth some form of recognition.
 - 1.2.2. It is not morally wrong to accept honours given by others. Since God honours his faithful people (1 Sam 2.30; Lk 10.7), then it is not wrong to receive honour from men. It is wrong to *expect* to receive honours or to *demand* them. We are not to seek them through pride, but we also are not to shun them from a false humility
 - 1.2.3. Mordecai may have also found satisfaction in the irony of seeing the proud Haman being humbled. However, we can hope that he did not gloat over Haman's humiliation.
 - 1.3. What did Mordecai do after receiving the honour?
 - 1.3.1. He returned to his place at the king's gate. This probably means that he returned to his administrative duties (Est 2.21), rather than to his station of mourning (Est 4.2, 4).
 - 1.3.2. If he had still been wearing sackcloth when Haman came to get him to put on him the king's robe, it is unlikely that he resumed wearing sackcloth as he would have had a sense that God had heard his prayers and had begun to reverse the situation for the Jews.
 - 1.3.3. The fact that Mordecai returned to his station and duties, indicates that he had not let the recognition swell his head. He would have viewed it as a passing "15 minutes of fame" (Andy Warhol). The world's accolades will not tempt a truly humble person whose prime directive is to glorify and serve the Creator and not the creature (Mic 6.8).
2. How did the king's command to reward Mordecai affect Haman?
 - 2.1. Haman had entered the palace with the plan to ask for Mordecai's head as the first business of the day. Instead he was sent out to execute the king's command to honour Mordecai. Instead of elevating Mordecai in harm, he elevated him in honour; rather than giving him to the gallows, he gave him glory. A modern equivalent would be someone arriving at a new job expecting to receive a corner office, and instead being sent to clean the toilets used by the shippers.
 - 2.2. He hurried home humiliated. He had had pretentious aspirations of becoming a revered ruler and he had just been demoted and treated as a lackey
 - 2.2.1. All of the king's advisors and servants were probably snickering at his situation. They knew of his hatred for Mordecai and of his pompous vanity. Given the nature of court-intrigue and Haman's haughtiness, they were delighted to see him getting his comeuppance.
 - 2.2.2. The author of Esther also expects us to laugh at how Haman's over-the-top vanity trapped him. He had built high gallows on which he planned to display Mordecai's death. Instead he had to parade Mordecai, sitting on a horse, around town. Haman is forever remembered as a ridiculous buffoon.
 - 2.2.3. He was so embarrassed by having had to lead his mortal enemy around the city, that he vacated the palace precincts as quickly as possible.

- 2.3. How did he display his humiliation?
 - 2.3.1. He covered his head. We are not told how he covered his head, so might suppose that he sprinkled ashes on his head (Est 4.1) to accompany his mourning. However, it is more likely that he covered his head with a robe or shawl (2 Sam 15.30; Jer 14.3) to hide his face from those whom he passed. This kind of behaviour—i.e., covering the face—is often seen today when a prominent individual has been arrested (e.g., for sexual improprieties or a financial swindle) and is led from the courthouse under police escort.
- 2.4. Was Haman's mourning a legitimate response to circumstances?
 - 2.4.1. Haman did not appear to have a valid reason to mourn. He hadn't been deposed from his position and still retained favour with the king. In fact, he could have used his willingness to carry out the king's will so efficiently as a means of currying favour later. However, his mourning and humiliation are an outward display of a deep-seated guilt. In the recesses of his mind he knew that his hatred of Mordecai was unjust and that his plan to annihilate the Jews was evil. He recognized the hand of God in the reversal of his circumstances and knew that his demise had begun.
3. What happened when Haman arrived home?
 - 3.1. What did Haman report to his wife and friends?
 - 3.1.1. Everything that had happened to him—meaning that he was unable to ask Ahasuerus for permission to execute Mordecai and his humiliation at having to lead Mordecai dressed in the king's robe, on the king's horse, and calling out before him.
 - 3.1.2. This is probably the only commendable thing said about Haman—he had a sincere and open relationship with his wife and friends and was able to share with them what had happened to him.
 - 3.2. What counsel did Haman's wife and friends give to him?
 - 3.2.1. They did not encourage him to do something to rectify the situation and to avoid a disaster, such as asking Mordecai to forgive him for his animosity toward him.
 - 3.2.2. Rather they presented him with a discouraging message: "You are destined for a certain downfall." This would have reinforced the fear which had caused him to mourn and hide his face in shame. Like Job's wife and friends, they were miserable comforters (Job 16.2).
 - 3.3. Why did they give this discouraging message?
 - 3.3.1. They were superstitious.
 - 3.3.1.1. The reference to Haman's wise men indicates that some from among his friends or household staff were fortune-tellers (astrologers, Chaldeans, or Magi), and may have been the ones who cast lots (the *pur*) for him to pick an auspicious date for the slaughter of the Jews (Est 3.7).
 - 3.3.1.2. They read into the events a bad omen and a presentiment of impending calamity in Haman's future. They were steeped in fatalistic beliefs and held to the idea that people had streaks of good or bad luck, and that Haman's luck had turned. It is similar to a person today suggesting that he had bad karma. Thus, they viewed Haman's bad morning—his having to honour his enemy—as the beginning of the end for him.
 - 3.3.2. They observed that Mordecai was a Jew.
 - 3.3.2.1. They already knew this, as Haman had informed them of this (Est 5.13). Therefore, it is probably better to translate the verse as, 'since' (as in the NIV) rather than 'if'.
 - 3.3.2.2. It is likely that they knew of the longstanding animosity between the Jews and the Amalekites and understood that the LORD had placed a curse on the Amalekites (1 Sam 15.3).
 - 3.3.2.3. They were probably familiar with God's covenant promise to Abraham (Gen 12.1-3) and knew of Cyrus' earlier pronouncement which had allowed the Jews to

return to their own land. Thus, they may have believed that the Jews, as the favoured descendants of Abraham, had a special charm placed on them.

- 3.3.2.4. They may have had a general knowledge of how God preserved the Jews over the centuries and had worked miracles on their behalf. They would have been like Rahab who had a general knowledge of the true God and his relationship to his covenant people (Josh 2.9-11).

- 3.4. What ironies are found in their statement regarding Haman's future?

3.4.1. They were the ones who had boldly advised Haman to build a gallows on which to destroy Mordecai. Then, when they are called 'wise men' they are shown to have changed their opinion and claim that Mordecai has the upper hand and would destroy Haman. The author of Esther likely used the term 'wise men' as a deliberate slight and ridicule against the superstitious, pagan Persians—they are only called wise after Haman's downfall had begun.

3.4.2. They did not say that Haman might fall, but that he would "surely fall" and could not overcome Mordecai. What they stated as fact, due to their fatalism, was in reality true because God was watching over the Jews and had predestined the downfall of Haman. Haman could not stand, not because of bad luck but because he had raised himself in opposition to the governor of the universe.

4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 6.12-13)

4.1. *Speedy Change* – The state of affairs for individuals, nations, and even entire civilizations can change very quickly. God controls all events and can change their apparent course in ways that we don't expect. As he changed Saul, the pagan persecutor of the Church, into Paul, the active apologist for truth, so he can change the heart and mind of anyone he chooses—for blessing or cursing. In the situation described in this account, Haman's life appeared to be floating upward like a released helium-filled balloon. However, within minutes of his arriving at the palace, his ego-balloon had been deflated with only a few words from the king and he was falling rapidly to earth. In contrast, matters had looked darker than a moonless night for the Jews, but the first light of dawn appeared as Mordecai was clothed in the king's robe. We might think that many matters today can only get worse—e.g., Muslims terrorizing Christians, homosexual activists suing Christians, abortionists extending their slaughter to post-birth victims—yet God can miraculously change the trajectory of events so quickly that his providence will dazzle us and we will fall on our knees and proclaim, "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just." (Rev 19.1-2)

4.2. *Stifling Conceit* – Mordecai was given a high temporary honour. Yet the moment it was over, he returned to his previous station. We can be certain, from a consideration of the brief statement which the author makes, that although Mordecai may have been pleased to receive the honour he did not let the recognition affect his view of himself. Accolades cannot change a truly humble person because he knows that his purpose in life is to serve God and that the best and most lasting rewards are those which come from God (Is 40.10; Is 62.11; Rev 22.12). We need to ensure that we heed God's command to stifle conceit and remain humble when we receive recognition from others (Phil 2.3-8; Jam 4.6; 1 Pt 5.6), otherwise God will humble us (Lk 14.11).

4.3. *Stupid Counsellors* – Evil men surround themselves with stupid counsellors. When kings, presidents, and prime ministers, show an inclination toward calling good evil and evil good, they will generally obtain poor advice from their counsellors because the people they appoint reflect their own stupidity. We observed previously that Ahasuerus fell into the trap set by his counsellors (e.g., to banish Vashti), and then came to regret his actions afterwards. Likewise Haman had foolish counsellors who advised him to make a gallows for the destruction of a righteous man. Paul informs us that in the last days men, "having itching ears ... will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." (2 Tim 4.3-4) Examples abound not only in government, but in business, academic institutions, and denominations; such as:

- 4.3.1. Creating gender-neutral washrooms, in which perverts can indulge their lusts.
 - 4.3.2. Redefining freedom of speech to exclude intolerant language.
 - 4.3.3. Ignoring the truth that you get more of what you subsidize—e.g., dependence on welfare payments or unemployment insurance.
 - 4.3.4. Government spending stimulates the economy.
 - 4.3.5. Raising the minimum-wage helps the poor.
 - 4.3.6. Governments need to ban fossil fuels because burning them causes global warming.
 - 4.3.7. Ordaining woman or practicing homosexuals in the ministry will increase a denomination's relevance and increase attendance.
 - 4.3.8. You can expect truth in negotiations with an Islamic terrorist state.
 - 4.4. *Superstitious Credulity* – Belief in superstitions destroys people's livelihoods and lives. Superstitions create fears, sap energy and result in people making stupid decisions. Superstitions encourage people to expend resources of time, money, and energy for no return. Examples:
 - 4.4.1. Every five years Hindus in Nepal sacrifice hundreds of thousands of animals to appease the goddess Gadhimai.
 - 4.4.2. Controversies over using enhanced plant breeding techniques have caused millions to starve because some national governments have prohibited the use of more robust crops which can be used to address food scarcities in some locales.
 - 4.4.3. Conspiracy theories have led many (especially among Muslims in Africa) to reject vaccines (e.g., for polio) which has permitted eradicable diseases to become endemic. Anti-vaccine campaigns in the US and UK have led to increased cases of measles, mumps and whooping cough.
- Haman was deceived by his superstitious beliefs, because God blinds those whom he intends to destroy (Rom 1.21).

Plaintiff's Declaration (Est 6.14-7.6)

Piqued (Est 6.14-7.2)

1. What happened as Haman was being informed of his pending fate by his 'wise' men?
 - 1.1. Staff from the palace arrived to escort Haman to Esther's second banquet.
 - 1.2. Why were the servants sent?
 - 1.2.1. It appears that it was a common practice throughout the ancient Middle East to send messengers to call invitees when the banquet was ready (Mt 22.2-3).
 - 1.2.2. A polite host would send senior servants to escort important guests.
 - 1.3. Whose servants were sent?
 - 1.3.1. The servants (eunuchs) who were sent to fetch Haman are referred to as the 'king's' eunuchs. This may mean that the king sent some of his direct staff out of courtesy to Haman (the second highest-ranking individual in the kingdom), rather than general palace servants.
 - 1.3.2. Some commentators suggest that Esther wanted to ensure that Haman showed up for her banquet. They say that she had probably heard about Haman's humiliating experience that morning when he had had to parade Mordecai through the main streets of Susa, and wanted to make sure that he did not skip the banquet. However, they were not Esther's own servants who were sent to fetch Haman.
 - 1.4. What demonstrates that events in the story are moving quickly toward their climax?
 - 1.4.1. The messengers showed up at the moment when Haman was commiserating with his wife and wise men.
 - 1.4.2. The messengers hurried Haman along to Esther's banquet.
 - 1.4.3. The actual events were happening quickly, and the author wants to show this through his choice of words 'while they were yet talking' and 'hurried'. Time was catching up with Haman.

2. Why did Esther hold her second banquet?
 - 2.1. Her purpose was to ‘test the waters’ a second time, to determine if Ahasuerus’ attitude toward her remained favourable, before she unveiled her accusation against Haman. She had been his wife for five years and had a good sense of how fickle and temperamental he could be. This would be her third test—the first was when she appeared in the throne room, the second was at her banquet the previous day.
 - 2.2. The word ‘feast’ (ESV) is translated from the word which means ‘to drink’. Only the NASB (among widely used Protestant translations) translates it as ‘drink wine’. The king and Haman came to Esther’s banquet to drink (compare, 3.15).
 - 2.3. How many feasts, banquets, or meals are mentioned in Esther?
 - 2.3.1. Eleven:
 - 2.3.1.1. A feast for the king’s officials, over a 180-day period (Est 1.2).
 - 2.3.1.2. A weeklong feast for the residents of Susa (Est 1.5).
 - 2.3.1.3. Vashti’s feast for the women (Est 1.9).
 - 2.3.1.4. Esther’s coronation feast (Est 2.18).
 - 2.3.1.5. Haman’s victory feast when Ahasuerus agreed to the annihilation of the Jews (Est 3.15).
 - 2.3.1.6. Esther’s first banquet, to which she invited Ahasuerus and Haman (Est 5.5-8).
 - 2.3.1.7. Esther’s second banquet, to which she invited Ahasuerus and Haman (Est 7.1-6).
 - 2.3.1.8. The celebration at which the Jews rejoiced over the Mordecai’s edict which allowed them to defend themselves against their enemies (Est 8.17).
 - 2.3.1.9. Celebration of a feast on Adar 14, by rural Jews (Est 9.17).
 - 2.3.1.10. Celebration of a feast on Adar 15 by Jews in (Est 9.18)
 - 2.3.1.11. The feast of Purim to be perpetually celebrated (Est 9.22-32).
 - 2.3.2. Esther’s second banquet was the seventh banquet recorded in the Book of Esther. This may be significant, since the seventh feast brought about the deliverance and rest for the Jews. It was also Haman last meal—before his execution.
 - 2.3.3. The eighth feast is a feast of ‘new world’. This may point toward the deliverance which Jesus provided on the 8th day—the day of the resurrection, which is now commemorated as the Lord’s Day and the NT Sabbath and will be commemorated as the wedding supper of the Lamb.
3. What facts about Esther do Ahasuerus and Haman *not* know?
 - 3.1. Neither the king nor Haman knew that Esther was a Jewess. They also had not heard of her communications with Mordecai, or had not made a connection about her nationality from their relationship.
 - 3.2. What does this tell us about Haman?
 - 3.2.1. Haman’s lack of knowledge about the queen’s background and communication with Mordecai indicates that he wasn’t as informed about court intrigue and gossip as he thought he was. He likely treated many of the court servants with disdain, and since he was not liked by them they were not inclined to provide him with information voluntarily. They would have preferred to receive a bribe to divulge information which would have been of use to Haman
 - 3.2.2. If Haman had known that Esther was a Jewess or of her relationship with Mordecai, he would have come to her banquet with a humble and begging attitude.
 - 3.2.3. He had selective hearing. He did not listen to God, who had warned him through the events of the morning with Mordecai, or to the warning of his wife and advisors (Est 6.13).
 - 3.3. Mordecai had instructed her to keep her nationality a secret (Est 2.10); and, to this point, she had generally done so—her servants may have known by this time because of her communication with Mordecai through them (chapter 4), but since they loved her they had not revealed this fact. This unknown fact about Esther is going to become a crucial factor when she presents her case in

the prosecution of Haman.

4. What was the query Ahasuerus addressed to Esther?
 - 4.1. It was the same as before—the same thing he had asked twice. He asked her what her wish or request was and informed her that it would be granted to her, up to half the kingdom.
 - 4.1.1. As we noted previously, the offer of half the kingdom was likely a hyperbolic politeness and not literal.
 - 4.2. We can imagine that by this point, Ahasuerus was anxious to know what it was that Esther wished—his curiosity was piqued. He was likely not a patient man, having been spoiled as a child and as an adult being surrounded by fawning sycophants, so he was not used to having to wait for his will to be fulfilled. It is possible that having to wait to hear her petition was a contributing factor in his being unable to sleep during the preceding night.
5. What did the king's query demonstrate about his attitude toward Esther?
 - 5.1. Even from within his self-centred viewpoint on life, he had not forgotten that Esther wanted to place a petition before him. Even after losing a night's sleep, he showed a friendly interest in her welfare.
 - 5.2. Thus, he demonstrated that he continued to be favorably disposed toward her and wanted to please her by showing her a kindness.
 - 5.3. This recognition and reception strengthened and encouraged her so that she was now ready to place her petition before him.
6. What else would have encouraged Esther as she prepared to set her petition before the king?
 - 6.1. She likely had heard that her husband had commanded Haman, her mortal enemy, to parade Mordecai through the main streets of Susa. From this news, she probably came to the conclusion that Haman was not as important as his self-opinion would have suggested. Rather, he was just another servant who could be commanded by an autocratic king to do his bidding. His position as first minister was not as secure as it might be supposed—he could be deposed at the whim of the king, in an instant.
 - 6.2. In addition, this news demonstrated that Ahasuerus had no particular grievance against the Jews, since he showered high honours upon one. It may have also alerted Esther to the possibility that Ahasuerus had not been informed by Haman about the people group he was planning to annihilate, and that Haman was carrying out his plot against the Jews without the full knowledge of the king. This would have strengthened her resolve to have Haman exposed and brought to justice.
 - 6.3. Esther would have seen God's hand at work in her positive reception by Ahasuerus and the humbling of Haman. This would have provided a ray of hope in the darkness of the pending annihilation for her people.
7. Why was this banquet so important?
 - 7.1. The lives of an entire nation were hanging precariously, pending Esther's success in having Haman exposed.
 - 7.2. But the importance of this banquet goes well beyond the safety and lives of the Jews living in the Persian Empire in 510 BC. It was a defining moment for all future civilizations and for all of mankind (past, present, and future). If Haman had been able to carry out his plan to annihilate the Jews, the Messianic line, extending from Seth, would have been cut off and God's promise—of a redeemer, made to Adam and Eve (Gen 3.15)—would have failed.
 - 7.3. Satan would have been dancing on 'pins and needles' as Haman was heading toward Esther's banquet, trying to find a way to derail this planned meeting of a king and his wife and one of his courtiers. There have been a few other key points in history where Satan thought he had the upper hand, including the murder of Abel who was replaced by Seth; the slaughter of the

brothers of Ahaziah by Athaliah, but the baby Joash was hidden by his aunt (2 Ki 11.1-3); the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness; and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. In each case, God thwarted Satan's plans and demonstrated that *all* things work together for the glory of God and the good of his people.

7.4. This banquet was pregnant with irony:

7.4.1. The king was sitting with a trusted official who would turn out to be a traitor—a Judas.

7.4.2. The king, who had spent a night thinking of how to reward a loyal subject, is happy at his wife's banquet; his minister, who had spent the night plotting how to kill the same loyal subject, is miserable at the same banquet.

7.4.3. The king was willing to grant material blessings of great worth to his wife, but what she was seeking would cost him nothing of material value.

8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 6.14-7.2)

Both of our lessons for this section have a spiritual application through analogy. We should:

8.1. *Tremble* – God sends warnings to men to repent of their sins through a variety of means, including the preached word. In the case of Haman, God sent him a warning to repent of his haughtiness and hatred through the circumstances of his carrying out the reward for Mordecai and through the voice of his wife and 'wise' men. He should have trembled before God when he saw that Mordecai was being honoured, begged Mordecai for forgiveness, and rescinded the planned pogrom against the Jews. Instead he ignored the warnings, attended Esther's second banquet, and assumed that the slaughter of the Jews would go forward unhindered.

8.1.1. What are some ways God sends warnings to men today to repent of their sins, or be held eternally accountable for them; in addition to putting them into situations where they hear the Gospel proclaimed?

8.1.1.1. Health or financial issues.

8.1.1.2. Confrontations with authorities.

8.1.1.3. Sensible advice from friends, family, or coworkers.

8.1.1.4. News of disasters which have befallen others because of their sin (e.g., being caught stealing or committing adultery).

8.1.2. When we encounter God's warnings against sin we need to listen to his voice and repent. Sadly, many people today are like Haman. They believe that they are invincible and that fate will always rule in their favour.

8.2. *Trust* – The king was so curious about the nature of his wife's petition that he asked her three times to let him know what she wanted. If a selfish, spoiled, earthly king can show this level of concern for the desires and welfare of his wife, how much more will, the King of kings, our holy father in heaven, show concern for our lawful petitions—the petitions of his children? Jesus uses this kind of comparison when he speaks of the unjust judge who heard the widow's plea, and indicates that God will vindicate his people (Lk 18.1-8). Similarly, Jesus taught that if an earthly father would not give a serpent instead of a fish or a stone instead of an egg, then our heavenly father will heed our petitions which we send to him through prayer (Lk 11.10-13). If Esther could trust Ahasuerus to hear her petition, then how much more so should we trust God?

Petition (Est 7.3-5)

1. What did Esther do, upon being asked by the king, for the third time, to state her request?

1.1. She had indicated that she would make her petition known at her second banquet (Est 5.8), so she kept her word, and presented her petition.

1.2. We have reached the climax of the account of the conflict between Haman and Mordecai and the Jews. A first-time reader of Esther senses that Haman's plot is going to be undone, but does not know how it will be accomplished by Esther. Only Esther knows what is required to bring to an end Haman's evil scheme, and she is about to reveal her request.

2. What is the structure of Esther's petition?
 - 2.1. *Polite positioning* – Esther begins with a humble, polite statement by which she places herself at the mercy of the king.
 - 2.2. *Preservation plea* – She asks the king to preserve her own life.
 - 2.3. *People's problem* – She expands her request to include her people's desperate need.
 - 2.4. *Potentate's peace* – She indicates that she wishes to do nothing which would be a bother to the king or disturb his peace.
 - 2.5. *Political philanthropy* – She appeals to the king's self-interest by suggesting that the destruction of the Jews would be a loss to the king and his kingdom.
3. How did Esther preface her petition?
 - 3.1. She made herself dependent on her husbands' favour.
 - 3.2. She appealed based on his apparent affection for her. In modern terms, someone might say something like, "If you want to demonstrate your love for me, you will let me live ..."
 - 3.3. Her approach is not one of false modesty or cynical; she isn't just using words to make the king feel magnanimous in responding to her request. She is sincere, appealing to the king based on his demonstrated past and present affection for her and the fact that she has been his wife and queen for the past five years.
4. What are the specific requests which make up the core of her petition?
 - 4.1. Appeal for her own life.
 - 4.1.1. Since the king has demonstrated an interest in her welfare by asking about her petition, she appeals to him to be sympathetic to her and to spare her life.
 - 4.1.2. This request must have been a major surprise to Ahasuerus. Esther did not ask him for jewels and clothing or for the advancement of a favoured friend, rather she asked for continuance of life. It is surely a strange thing for a queen at a royal banquet, and to whom her husband is demonstrating affection, to ask that her life should be spared.
 - 4.2. Appeal for her people.
 - 4.2.1. She extends her request from her own life to the lives of her people; asking the king to have pity on them.
 - 4.2.2. She demonstrates that she cares for others as much as for herself (Lev 19.18).
5. How does she describe the danger she is in and the plight of her people?
 - 5.1. She says that she and her people have been sold to be destroyed, killed, and annihilated.
 - 5.2. What does she mean by 'sold'?
 - 5.2.1. Not that they were sold into slavery, which would have been better ("If we had been sold merely as slaves"), but that the 'right' to destroy, kill, and annihilate them had been procured at a proposed price—of 10,000 talents of silver (Est 3.9; Est 4.7).
 - 5.3. To what does she allude, when she uses three synonyms for the disaster which was to come upon her people?
 - 5.3.1. She uses the exact words, in the same order, that were included in Haman's decree (Est 3.13).
 - 5.3.2. She gives Haman and Ahasuerus a hint of the source of the trouble for her and her people, without yet explicitly declaring Haman to be the culprit.
 - 5.3.3. Haman would have recognized these words as they had come from his own mouth as he dictated the decree against the Jews. At the time, he likely had relished the completeness implied by the use of these three synonyms and had congratulated himself on his use of such a well-turned expression. But now, he must have had a premonition that something unexpected was about to be revealed by this interview between the king and the queen. If anyone ever felt a pit in his stomach, it would have been Haman at the moment Esther repeated back to him his own words.

5.3.4. If the king was aware of the contents of Haman's decree, he would also have had a sense of what was going on. However, he may not have been informed of the exact wording of the decree or, even if the decree had been read to him, he may not have remembered the exact words. Regardless, with Haman being present at this banquet and interview, Ahasuerus may have had a sense that Esther was talking about Haman's decree against a particular scattered and dispersed people in the kingdom (Est 3.8).

6. How does she position her petition so that addressing it would be to the king's advantage?
 - 6.1. She states that if her petition were a mere triviality (e.g., for jewels, clothing, or honour) she would not have wasted the king's valuable time or disturbed his peace with her vain request. Rather, her petition has a direct bearing on the king's interests, and if he does not address it, he will suffer great loss.
 - 6.2. She states that if she and all of her people had been sold merely as slaves there would have been no loss to the king. However, killing her and all her people would result in the loss of a valuable asset to the king and his kingdom. This asset consisted of:
 - 6.2.1. *Herself, as his wife and queen.* By placing her own case first, and through the use of the personal pronoun ("I"), she appeals to the king's benevolence toward her, rather than appealing on the basis of justice. She knew that the arbitrary autocrat would be more influenced by what was in his own self-interest (the preservation of a cherished and lovely object that was being threatened and that he might lose) than what would be required by objective standards of justice. She implied that since he had already lost one queen (Vashti), and that had caused him considerable inconvenience, he did not need the difficulties of replacing a second queen.
 - 6.2.2. *Her people.* We considered previously how many Jews there might have been in the Persian Empire at this time (Est 3.12-15). If we assume that there was around 1,000,000 Jews at the time of Esther, then the king would suffer a great loss of human capital. The Jews were not like a number of the other people groups in the empire. They were educated, moral, hardworking and loyal. Many of them would have had administrative roles within the civil service, like Mordecai. In relative terms, they probably would have contributed a value to the empire that was significantly greater (e.g., two or three, or even ten, times) than their headcount.
- Esther suggests that even if Ahasuerus did not consider the productivity value of the Jews, he should at least consider the value of selling them as slaves as an alternative to having them destroyed. Assuming that the slave market could have absorbed 1,000,000 Jews, the treasury could have been enriched by more than the 10,000 talents Haman was offering—possibly as much as 100 times more, if each Jew were sold for about half a labourer's annual wage.
- 6.3. The last clause of verse 4 is difficult to translate.
 - 6.3.1. Some of the renderings are:
 - 8.2.1.1. ESV: "for our *affliction* is not to be compared with the loss to the king".
 - 8.2.1.2. NIV: "because no such distress would justify disturbing the king".
 - 8.2.1.3. NIV (alternate): "but the *compensation our adversary offers* cannot be compared with the loss the king would suffer".
 - 8.2.1.4. NASB: "*for the trouble* would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king".
 - 8.2.1.5. NKJV: "although the *enemy* could never compensate for the king's loss".
 - 8.2.1.6. KJV: "although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage".
 - 6.3.2. The Hebrew word (אֹיֵב) is usually translated (in the ESV) as 'enemy', 'adversary', or 'foe'. However, in this instance it has been translated, in the ESV and other modern translations, as 'affliction', 'distress', and 'trouble'. Thus, it appears that in this case (Est 7.4) the modern versions translate the sense rather than the usual literal meaning of the word.
 - 6.3.3. The ESV occasionally translates the word differently; for example, as 'distressed' (Jer

48.5), ‘distress’ (Ezk 30.16; alternate); and ‘trouble’ (Ps 107.2; literally ‘hand of the enemy’). In one of these instances (Jer 48.5), the sense of ‘distress’ fits better than ‘enemy’ or ‘foe’, at least in the way the ESV has translated the verse.

6.3.4. In her subsequent statement (Est 7.6) Esther uses the same word to identify Haman as her ‘foe’ (Est 7.6). Thus, in this instance the older translation, e.g., of the NKJV, may be more accurate.

7. What does the structure and contents of Esther’s petition tell us about Esther?
 - 7.1. *Purposeful* – She demonstrated a determination. She is set on saving her people, who are innocent and do not deserve what Haman has planned for them. People often become determined when they have a personal stake in the outcome of events. For example, mothers who join MADD when they have had a family member killed by a drunk driver or people who contribute to cancer research because someone in their family has died from cancer.
 - 7.2. *Polite* – She is not demanding or shrill. She does not tell Ahasuerus what he must do. Rather, she clearly indicates that she is dependent on the good favour of her husband.
 - 7.3. *Patient* – She did not blurt out her petition when she first appeared in the throne room, nor at the first banquet. And during the second banquet she waits until the king has enquired again about her petition, before she voices it. She knew how important her request would be, so she was exceedingly careful not to put at risk a positive response through a premature disclosure.
 - 7.4. *Perspective* – She maintains a proper perspective about what is of ultimate importance. If she had kept quiet, she could have, theoretically (Est 4.13-14), lived out her life in pampered luxury. However, she knew that her purpose was to serve God and his people (Est 4.14). So, she dismissed the playthings of the rich and pleaded for life.
 - 7.5. *Prepared* – Her response demonstrates thoughtful preparation, with an economy of words. During the previous twenty-four hours, she had probably rehearsed multiple times what she would say so that it would have the impact intended. As someone has said, “there was art in it, but the art of artlessness, not of artfulness.”¹⁹⁰
 - 7.6. *Perceptive* – She demonstrates a masterful understanding of people and how to position an argument. She strove to position her request for the benefit of the selfish king and for her needy people, and not to pamper herself.
 - 7.7. *Prospective* – She demonstrates hope that the king would keep the promise he had made three times and grant her request, up to half the kingdom. She wouldn’t have asked for her life and the life of her people if she did not believe that there was a hope that would be met.
 - 7.8. *Peace* – She is at peace with her situation, need to act, and acceptance of whatever is the outcome. She knew that God was in control (Est 4.16).
 - 7.9. *Passionate* – The few words she uses display an intense emotional commitment.
 - 7.10. *Pitiful* – She uses a pathetic situation (the prospect of life lost for herself and her people) to appeal to the king.
 - 7.11. *Protective* – She unites herself with her people in a protective partnership. Even as queen of the most powerful empire in the world, she chose to identify herself with a persecuted people, even if this would result in her own death. She followed the example of Moses who chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin (Heb 11.24-26). In this, she also foreshadowed Christ, who chose to align himself with lost humanity in order to save many from Satan’s grasp.
8. What had Esther not done at the time she made her petition to the king?
 - 8.1. She hadn’t indicated who her people were—i.e., that she was a Jew.
 - 8.2. She hadn’t named the person who had sold her and her people into destruction.
 - 8.3. She hadn’t accused the king of any complicity in the matter.

¹⁹⁰ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, (Ed.), *Esther* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), p. 131.

- 8.4. She hadn't yet revealed her relationship with Mordecai (Est 8.1).
- 8.5. Why?
- 8.5.1. She wasn't sure of how much knowledge Ahasuerus had of the contents of Haman's decree.
- 8.5.2. She wasn't sure of how much of a favourite Haman was with the king and if his position with the king would take precedent over her life and the lives of her people.
- 8.5.3. She did not know how formidable an enemy Haman might be.
- 8.5.4. She wasn't sure if the king would be pleased to have his wife involving herself in the affairs of government—i.e., matters relating to the decree to annihilate a troublesome people.
- 8.6. At this point, we are still in suspense. How will the king react? Will he favour Esther? Will he save her life and the lives of her people?
9. What was the king's immediate reaction, on hearing Esther's petition?
- 9.1. He demands in a staccato of controlled fury ("who he this, and where this he") that the culprit who dared to do such a thing should be identified. He wants to know who the person is and where he is. He wants no more delays in the revelation associated with Esther's petition. He realizes that Esther has been leading up to revealing this information since she first appeared in the throne room. He is not angry with her. However, he is angry (Est 7.7) that someone would dare to threaten the life of his wife and queen and the lives of her people.
- 9.2. What is the evidence from his query that he is angry and appalled that such a thing had been done to Esther?
- 9.2.1. He asked who had dared to do such a thing. As the ESV footnote indicates, the Hebrew reads, "What has filled the heart of him to do this?" The king was appalled at the level of immorality indicated by Esther's revelation. He knew that from the heart of man proceeds all manner of evil (Gen 6.5; Gen 8.21; Prov 6.14, 18). He considered whomever would dare to threaten the life of his wife and queen to be a monster.
- 9.2.2. His query indicates that he knows that someone is guilty of a crime and that justice must be done to recompense the crime. In his judicial, and personal, capacity he was expressing anger that someone would dare to usurp authority over the life of his beloved queen.
- 9.2.3. The author indicates the subdued and seething solemnity with which Ahasuerus spoke with Esther, by stating that the "king said to the queen". He addressed her from his official capacity to her official capacity. Whoever would dare to do such a thing was a traitor to the empire.
- 9.2.4. The Hebrew text reads, "And he said, the king Ahasuerus, and he said to Esther the queen ..." We do not see the repetition of the 'he said' in our English translations. However, this repetition indicates a forcefulness in his words and that he is upset over what he has heard.
- 9.3. Did the king, at this point, have a suspicion that the culprit was Haman?
- 9.3.1. Some commentators suggest that Ahasuerus knew of the contents of Haman's decree and had connected Esther's plight with the decree when she had quoted from it. Thus, he was shocked to hear that the decree included his wife and queen and her people, and that he had sealed her death warrant. So, at this point he wanted to hear confirmation that it was true that Haman was the culprit.
- 9.3.2. However, it appears that Ahasuerus had not made the connection between Haman's decree and Esther's plight. If he knew of the contents of the decree, he seems to have forgotten it. But it is more likely that Haman had been duplicitous and had kept the exact contents of the decree from reaching the ears of Ahasuerus. Haman had not disclosed to the king the identification of the people who were affected by the decree (Est 3.8), had dictated the decree himself (Est 3.12), had sealed it with the king's signet (Est 3.10, 12), and had distracted the king's attention with a drinking binge (Est 3.15). These things seem to indicate that the king was not aware that the Jews were the threatened people. Also, the fact that Ahasuerus had rewarded Mordecai the Jew (Est 6.10) indicates that he had not made the connection. Thus, Ahasuerus was still oblivious as to whom the culprit was and

asked sincerely for Esther to identify him. His responsibility for Haman's decree is that he trusted Haman, did not review the contents of the decree, and allowed Haman to carry out his plan to satisfy his unchecked ambition.

10. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 7.3-5)

- 10.1. *Publicity* – Haman had kept the details of his edict against the Jews from Ahasuerus and thought that he could have Mordecai murdered. But God had planned that Haman's evils would be revealed and Haman's name would be remembered forever in infamy. Jesus warned many thousands who had gathered to hear him that they should beware of the false teachings of the Pharisees. Then he said that “nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.” (Lk 12.2; see also Prov 5.21) Likewise, Moses warned the eastern tribes that if they were unfaithful to their vows to help the other tribes, “be sure your sin will find you out.” (Num 32.23) The deception of those who speak falsehood, the private counsels of evil persons, and the supposedly secret sinful acts of every person will eventually be revealed. God arranges events so that all forms of evil are usually discovered in the temporal realm and recoil on their own heads (Ps 7.14-16; Prov 5.22). Although some people take their wicked secrets to the grave, God deals with them through the administration of everlasting justice. For example, entertainers, athletes, politicians, business leaders, and even church leaders, who commit adultery or rape think that their actions will be kept secret, but eventually someone squeals. Similarly, those who plot the ‘perfect’ crime, often discover that the weakest link is the loose lips of their partners. And, even when an evil action is known only to the perpetrator, he often inadvertently discloses it by boasting, through a misplaced word, or as he succumbs to the pressure of guilt. Haman's actions were exposed as evil; likewise, the evil actions of every person who is not in Christ, will be by publicly exposed.
- 10.2. *Petition* – Esther's petition to an earthly king provides an analogy for how we can structure our petitions before the King of kings.
 - 10.2.1. *Polite positioning* – We should be respectful when we place our petition before the creator of the universe (Mt 6.9).
 - 10.2.2. *Preservation plea* – We should ask the king to preserve our lives—physical and spiritual (Mt 6.11; Ps 3.7; Ps 6.4).
 - 10.2.3. *People's problem* – We should pray for the welfare of Zion—particularly for those who are suffering persecution (Col 4.18; Heb 13.3).
 - 10.2.4. *Potentate's peace* – We should pray that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6.10).
 - 10.2.5. *Political philanthropy* – We should pray for the advancement of God's reign and his glory (Mt 6.10).
- 10.3. *Preparation* – Jesus told his disciples to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16). Esther applied this principle and exhibited an advanced level of maturity, a sophisticated ability to define a strategy for achieving an outcome, and careful preparation for how she presented her petition to Ahasuerus. Likewise, Jesus was a master at communicating—not only through authoritative content but also through the use of varied means—story telling, parables, imagery, counsel, rebuke, etc. We need to follow their examples in how we communicate in our family, work setting, and congregation. We may have the correct motive and message, but if we don't use the right means, we may fail to achieve positive ends. How we structure a message is as important as what we say. Peter reinforces this lesson with his exhortation on how to communicate truth, “... always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Pt 3.15-16).

Prosecution (Est 7.6-7a)

1. How did Esther identify the perpetrator who wished to see her and her people annihilated?
 - 1.1. By his *position* relative to her and her people—as a foe and enemy. She used synonyms to emphasize the degree of his animosity toward the Jews
 - 1.2. By his *character*; which she described as being wicked.
 - 1.2.1. The Hebrew reads ‘the evil, the this’; using the article before the word ‘evil’ seems to indicate a specific kind of evil—i.e., the wickedness of selling a people into genocide.
 - 1.3. By his *personal name*, Haman.
 - 1.3.1. The name ‘Haman’ was probably a Persian word transliterated into Hebrew. It may have been derived from the Persian word for ‘illustrious’. However, its use in Hebrew would have brought to mind the Hebrew words (המון, רעש) which mean ‘noise’, ‘uproar’ or ‘tumult’, etc. To the Jewish reader it would be a great joke that his name fit so well his evil character.
 - 1.3.2. Some interpreters have tried to associate Haman with the beast in Revelation (Rev 13.18). Using the numbers associated with Hebrew letters they calculate 666 from ‘Haman evil’. However, this kind of numerology can produce many ‘hits’—as we see when others attempt to map Latin or Greek names to the numerals 666.
2. How can we characterize Esther’s prosecution?
 - 2.1. It was explicit. She did not provide qualifiers like prosecutors do today, when they say things like, ‘the purported murderer’, ‘suspect’ or ‘accused’. She declared him guilty on the evidence of the report of the decree he had issued, which she had received from Mordecai.
 - 2.2. It was bold. Esther charged (more than accused) Haman with his crime before his face. This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible—with the same emotional impact of Nathan accusing David of being an adulterer (2 Sam 12.7) and Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss (Mt 26.49).
3. What was Haman’s reaction on hearing the charge against him?
 - 3.1. He was terrified. The charge against him came like a thunderbolt from the nimbus cloud that had been gathering since the day’s events—parading Mordecai through the city, hearing his wife and wise men warn him that his downfall had begun, and hearing Esther make her petition (quoting exact words from his own edict).
 - 3.2. We can imagine that his blood ran cold, he had a pit in his stomach, and he began to sweat and tremble.
4. Why was Haman terrified?
 - 4.1. He knew that the charge against him was true—he, like the king, had just learned that Esther was a Jew and was aware that his plot to destroy all the Jews would have included her and her friends and family.
 - 4.2. He knew that he had made a tragic mistake—his plot to destroy the Jews was unravelling. He did not care that he had been intent on destroying a people. Rather he realized that he hadn’t done his research properly to discover that his plot included the king’s favourite wife.
 - 4.3. He knew that he could not present an acceptable defence or excuse before the king because he (the king) had declared that the person who would harm Esther was a monster.
 - 4.4. He knew that he had been caught perpetrating a crime—he was like a stupid burglar who locks himself in the bank vault he is robbing.
5. What was the king’s reaction on hearing Esther’s charge against Haman?
 - 5.1. He was seething with anger—a character trait of his appears to have been a short temper (Est 1.12). If Esther’s revelation was a thunderbolt, Ahasuerus’ reaction was volcanic. He was so angry that he could not speak and got up from the table to walk it off in the palace garden (Est 1.5), organize his thoughts, and prevent Haman from mounting a whining defence—he had no interest in hearing Haman attempt to defend himself.
 - 5.2. He would have believed Esther’s words, particularly with Haman present to hear her charge

against him; but he still would have been thinking that it was unbelievable or incredible that his trusted first minister would have devised a scheme which would have destroyed his wife.

6. Why was the king so angry?
 - 6.1. He had been duped by one of his officers, whom he thought he could trust.
 - 6.2. He had made a fool of himself by promoting Haman and giving him unfettered power.
 - 6.3. He had not been fully informed about the extent of the edict and was caught by surprise—no king wants to be ignorant of events in his realm.
 - 6.4. The life of his wife and queen was threatened. Haman had committed a treasonous act.
 - 6.5. He realized that his first minister was a wicked man—as Esther had indicated.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 7.6-7a)
 - 7.1. *Treachery* – Natural man, born in the depravity of original sin, has only one objective in life—to advance his own temporal pleasure. No *unconverted* man can be trusted. He will be a false friend if an opportunity arises to advance his own cause—everyone has ‘his price’ and would sell his family and friends if he thought he could get away with it. Sycophants with smooth tongues and flattering lips abound and can fool even the most astute and worldly wise.
 - 7.2. *Terror* – Haman was terrified when Esther identified him as wicked. His response is indicative of what will be the response all men on the Day of Judgement, when God calls them by name, reveals the extent of their sins, and calls them wicked foes and enemies of Christ. They will recoil in an everlasting terror (Rev 6.15-17).

Perpetrator’s Demise (Est 7.7b-10)

1. What did Haman do on hearing Esther’s accusation against him?
 - 1.1. He begged Esther to save his life.
 - 1.1.1. He likely dropped to his knees and held her feet, kissing them, and begged for mercy.
 - 1.1.2. He saw the king’s explosive anger (Est 7.7a) and suspected that he might be executed if he did not appeal for mercy.
 - 1.2. What ironies are exhibited in Haman’s action?
 - 1.2.1. The haughty rooster had become a worm—while he had the king’s backing and was rich and powerful, he strutted about boasting, commanding others, and demanding respect; in defeat he was spineless and whimpering.
 - 1.2.2. He who had no mercy on those whom he wanted to kill now asked for mercy to avoid being killed.
 - 1.2.3. He had become angry because a Jewish man would not bow before him, now he bowed before a Jewish woman!
2. Why did not Haman run after the king and plead ignorance or beg him for mercy?
 - 2.1. He did not have a lot of time to think about what to do next, so his response was spontaneous. However, what thoughts ran quickly through his mind would have convinced him that the best course of action was to approach Esther for leniency.
 - 2.2. He knew that the capricious king was unapproachable when he was angry (Prov 16.14; Prov 19.12). Begging the king for mercy would only compound his guilt and the king’s anger against him.
 - 2.3. He knew that the charges Esther had made against him were true and provable, and it would be difficult to present a viable defence.
 - 2.4. He likely thought that Esther, a woman, would show sympathy toward him when he cried before her.
 - 2.5. He saw that the king had already decided against him and that a sentence would shortly follow. He knew that only Esther could intercede with the king on his behalf.

3. Should Esther have interceded with the king on Haman's behalf, since he begged for his life?
 - 3.1. It is unbelievable, but a number of commentators refer to passages such as Matthew 18.21-22 and suggest that Esther should have shown leniency toward Haman. They suggest that she showed an OT spirit that was not reflective of the NT spirit taught by Christ. It is clear that these commentators have no concept of mercy and justice. They also do not know their NT very well (e.g., Mt 25.41; 1 Cor 16.22; Jude 14-15).
 - 3.2. There is no evidence that Haman repented of his sin of planning a genocide. He did not ask for forgiveness, but that his life be spared despite his sinful action.
 - 3.3. Esther was not acting in a private capacity (e.g., dealing with someone who had insulted her), but in a corporate capacity as the queen of Persia (Est 7.1, 2, 3, 5-8) and as the advocate for the Jewish nation. In her representative capacity, she was required to see that justice was done.
 - 3.4. Esther considered Haman also in a representative capacity and not just as an individual. Haman was Satan's servant who was attempting to annihilate the line leading to the Messiah, and an Amalekite, a condemned and cursed enemy of the Jews, who must be executed according to God's explicit command (Dt 25.17-19).
4. What sealed Haman's destiny?
 - 4.1. When the king returned from his angry walk in the palace garden, he found Haman leaning on the queen's couch.
 - 4.1.1. Haman was probably kneeling in front of Esther. He had likely been kissing her feet and was, at the moment the king returned, holding on to one of the arms of Esther's couch or leaning on the seat cushion beside her.
 - 4.2. The king interpreted Haman's action as an assault on his wife, the queen.
 - 4.2.1. The king's perception was distorted by his anger; but even if Haman was not assaulting the queen, he was being excessively forward coming close to the queen without the king's permission.
 - 4.2.2. The king was incredulous that Haman would attempt to take advantage of his wife. Everyone knew that even if Haman hadn't done what Esther had accused him of doing, it was a crime to approach the queen so closely. For that action alone, he deserved punishment.
5. What did the servants do with Haman?
 - 5.1. As soon as Ahasuerus accused Haman of assaulting Esther, his servants covered Haman's face.
 - 5.2. The text does not say, "as the words" but, "as the word". This is not a reference to the rhetorical question he had just asked, but rather to his passing sentence on Haman. The narrative is concise and does not provide every detail. Nevertheless, the reference is to be understood as a judicial sentence and decree for Haman to be executed.
 - 5.3. Thus, they covered his face.
 - 5.3.1. Haman no longer had the king's permission to look at the face of the queen. Since she was unveiled for the dinner, he had to have his eyes covered.
 - 5.3.2. He was considered a criminal who was sentenced to death and was no longer worthy of seeing the light of day. Covering the head of condemned prisoners was a common practice throughout the world in ancient times and until modern times.
 - 5.4. What irony is found in Haman's face being covered?
 - 5.4.1. After escorting Mordecai through the city, Haman had covered his head in humiliation (Est 6.12); now the king's guards covered his face for his final humiliation—execution. If Haman had covered his head with humility instead of pride, he would have had his head lifted up, like Mordecai's would shortly be (Est 8.1).
6. What did Harbona report?
 - 6.1. That Haman had built a gallows fifty cubits high (Est 5.14; Est 7.9) at his house, which was to be used for executing Mordecai.

- 6.1.1. During the morning, Haman's servants must have reported at the palace that Haman planned to kill Mordecai.
- 6.1.2. What macabre fact is reported?
 - 6.1.2.1. That the gallows were standing at Haman's *house*.
 - 6.1.2.2. This demonstrates that Haman was not only filled with bombastic pride and boundless passions, but also with barbaric perversity— with a desire to execute someone near (or inside the courtyard) of his own home. His design was similar to the record of Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431-1476/7) of the House of Dracula in Transylvania, Romania. He is reported to have impaled his enemies and displayed their impaled bodies in his dining hall. His reputation for excessive cruelty reached the rest of Europe.
- 6.2. Why did Harbona mention the gallows?
 - 6.2.1. Probably not because he was servile and looking for favours from the king. He likely knew that he had no possibility for advancement, beyond his current station.
 - 6.2.2. The king's servants likely despised Haman and were glad to see him getting his comeuppance. Haman had likely treated him and the other servants (Est 1.10) with haughty disdain, so they were no friends of his and were happy to see his destruction.
 - 6.2.3. He likely loved Esther. Whether or not Harbona was one of Esther's eunuchs, her reputation for kindness and consideration would have been known throughout the palace staff. Discovering that Haman's plot would have destroyed Esther was enough of an incentive for them to facilitate a quick end to Haman.
 - 6.2.4. He likely respected Mordecai—even if he did not particularly like the Jews—and was appreciative of his role in saving the king's life (Est 7.9) and humility when honoured for it (Est 6.12). He was pleased to see that Haman's plot against Mordecai (and the rest of the Jews) had been exposed.
- 7. What was the king's response to Esther's presenting the prosecutor's case?
 - 7.1. Immediate sentencing.
 - 7.1.1. The king did not wait for a defensive explanation of what Haman was doing at the side of the queen. Rather, he passed sentence immediately and condemned Haman to death.
 - 7.1.2. The administration of sentencing in the Persian Empire was not always just, but it was rapid. The king may have been fickle, capricious and tyrannical, and at times had people executed who did not deserve to die. However, no one was ever sentenced so justly as Haman.
 - 7.2. Immediate execution.
 - 7.2.1. Haman was hanged, or impaled, on his own gallows, and his body buried, all within the day on which he had planned to execute Mordecai.
 - 7.2.2. He received just retribution for what he had planned to do to Mordecai and to the Jews. This outcome is what is often referred to in literary analysis as 'poetic justice', in which a character's virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice punished, often with an ironic twist related to the character's conduct.
 - 7.2.3. Haman's wife, Zeresh, his ten sons, and his servants would have witnessed the execution; as would have many of the Jews of Susa. For the Jews, it would have been viewed as an immediate answer to their prayers and as a great encouragement, to see their avowed enemy removed from the world.
 - 7.2.4. This is the end of Act II, and climax of the story of Esther—from this point forward the account ties up loose ends.
 - 7.3. Immediate abatement of wrath.
 - 7.3.1. The king's wrath subsided ('drained away') and he was pacified.
 - 7.3.2. On hearing of Haman's plot to destroy Esther, Ahasuerus' anger was like an inflated balloon. The execution of Haman deflated his anger as quickly as the air leaves a pricked balloon.

8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 7.7b-10)
- 8.1. *Recoil* – Haman attempted to avenge himself against Mordecai for his wounded pride and plotted to destroy Mordecai and God’s covenant people. Those who plot evil inevitably find that the evil they planned or practiced recoils on their own heads (Ps 7.14-16; Prov 11.29; Prov 22.8; Prov 26.27; Prov 28.10). What are examples from Scripture and from recent news?
- 8.1.1. Jacob killed an animal and lied to his father, pretending to be his brother, Esau (Gen 27.1-29). Later his sons killed an animal and lied to him, pretending that their brother, Joseph, was dead (Gen 37.31-35).
- 8.1.2. Pharaoh boasted, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.” (Ex 15.9) Instead he and his army were overcome by a large wave.
- 8.1.3. David coveted his neighbour’s wife and committed adultery with her (2 Sam 11.1-27) and ended up with a dead son and dysfunctional family (2 Sam 13.1-30; 2 Sam 16.20-23).
- 8.1.4. Jian Ghomeshi, the CBC radio-show host, and Bill Cosby were exposed as sexual deviants and shamed before their audiences who previously adored them, even if the evidence was not sufficient to find them criminally liable.
- The psalmist says that God sits in the heavens and laughs at the foolishness of men who think that they can get away with their rebellion against him (Ps 2.4). Instead they are caught in their own snares and the righteous are delivered from trouble (Prov 1.8).
- 8.2. *Rejoicing* – What is your reaction when you hear that Haman was executed?
- 8.2.1. Most of us inwardly cheer. We rejoice that he was caught in his sin and was sentenced and executed by the king. Our response is similar to that displayed across the West when it was announced that Osama Bin Laden had been killed by a US Navy Seal. Many people who otherwise would have spoken out against capital punishment, were nevertheless pleased to hear of his demise. There is a similar response when people hear that leaders of ISIS have been killed in a bombing raid.
- 8.2.2. All men know in their hearts that wickedness must be dealt with through retributive justice. They retain an element of indignation against evil, particularly when it has a direct impact on their lives (e.g., a family member is hurt, or their possessions are destroyed). What they don’t like is being the recipients of punishment.
- 8.2.3. Likewise, we should rejoice over God’s judgement of all the wicked. It is a false piety which claims that God should not judge and punish them or should give them a second opportunity to behave. We come to a faulty conclusion about the nature of men because we judge by outer appearances, and say things like, “He isn’t that bad, is he?” or “He doesn’t deserve to be sent to hell, after all no one went and told him about Jesus.” However, we cannot see how desperately wicked the heart of men really is (Gen 6.5). All men know God’s righteous decrees and requirements and choose to suppress the truth and rebel against the only God (Rom 1.18-23).
- 8.3. *Retribution* – Mordecai and the Jews did not form an assassination squad and attempt to deal with the evil as vigilantes. Instead, they appealed to God for justice. God responded quickly by removing Haman. The moral lessons are:
- 8.3.1. The ultimate right of retribution is reserved for God—as he states, “Vengeance is mine,” (Dt 32.35). Notwithstanding that, God delegates retributive justice to civil magistrates (Rom 13.4). Thus, we are not to take personal vengeance.
- 8.3.2. God will administer retributive justice against all who break his laws, as summarized in the Ten Commandments. Sometimes this administration will be carried out in the temporal realm (as it was in Haman’s case). God’s timing does not defer punishment. Even if people appear to have gotten away with their crimes in this life, retributive justice will *always* be administered in the eternal realm. At the final judgement, God will punish his enemies for all their wicked deeds performed during their lives on earth (Rev 20.11-15).

Protection [Act IIIa] (Est 8.1-9.19)

Pre-emptive Defence (Est 8.1-17)

Prominence (Est 8.1-2, 15)

1. What day ('that') is mentioned in verse 1?
 - 1.1. The same day as Haman's death.
 - 1.2. What happened on that day, in Susa?
 - 1.2.1. In it, the king was unable to sleep and had the chronicles read to him, Mordecai was rewarded for saving Ahasuerus' life from assassins, Esther pleaded for her life and the life of her people, Haman was exposed as a genocidal maniac, Haman was sentenced to death and executed.
 - 1.2.2. Yet more would happen before the day was over: the granting of Haman's wealth to Esther, the promotion of Mordecai in Haman's place, and Esther's successful intercession on behalf of the Jews.
 - 1.3. This was a most eventful day; a day approaching the Friday of the crucifixion, in terms of the number of significant events which transpired in the history of redemption.
2. What did Ahasuerus give to Esther?
 - 2.1. Esther was *Provisioned*.
 - 2.1.1. Haman and his family forfeited his house to the crown because he was a condemned criminal (compare: 1 Ki 21.7-16; Prov 13.22; Prov 21.18). 'House' in this case would have been more than his dwelling in Susa. It would have included his estates, financial assets, and household servants.
 - 2.1.2. As possessions of the crown, Ahasuerus could dispose of them as he pleased; and he decided to bestow them upon Esther. He likely gave this gift to Esther to display his generosity but also because he may have felt guilty for being so careless in not vetting Haman's request to execute the Jews and for putting his beloved wife through the agony of fearing for her life and the lives of her people.
 - 2.1.3. She, who had had little or nothing of possessions or recognition and had been a slave girl in a harem, had been promoted to queen, and now had vast wealth given to her at the expense of her enemy (Gen 24.60).
 - 2.2. What designation is given to Haman?
 - 2.2.1. Esther had called him an enemy (Est 7.6). He is now referred to as the "enemy of the Jews" (Est 9.10, 24). He goes down in history as being in a class with other aggressively genocidal men such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin.
3. What happened to Mordecai?
 - 3.1. *Presented*.
 - 3.1.1. Since her nationality was now known to the king, Esther presented Mordecai the Jew to the king as her first cousin who had raised her as a daughter.
 - 3.1.2. Mordecai was already known to Ahasuerus by name because of the earlier events that day, when he had discovered that Mordecai had saved his life and had required Haman to reward Mordecai by parading him through the city squares.
 - 3.1.3. Mordecai had not divulged his relationship with the queen, probably to protect her from anti-Jewish sentiments which were present in the Persian court. In addition, he had not taken advantage of his relationship with her to advance his own position—even though she had been queen for five years.
 - 3.2. *Promoted*.
 - 3.2.1. Then something happened, which may appear amazing. The king promoted Mordecai to the position of first minister and gave him his signet. Some suggest that this could not have happened in real life, but is purely a Jewish fairy tale.
 - 3.2.2. What facts may have led Ahasuerus to promote Mordecai?

- 3.2.2.1. Mordecai had raised Esther, and Ahasuerus could see what an excellent job he had done.
- 3.2.2.2. Mordecai had never taken advantage of his position relative to the queen (i.e., as her adopted father) to advance his own position—a rarity among courtiers who were always attempting to gain advancement.
- 3.2.2.3. Mordecai had saved his life and had not sought a reward.
- 3.2.2.4. Mordecai had divested himself of the earlier recognition and gone back to work as a clerical administrator (Est 6.12).
- 3.2.2.5. Ahasuerus probably discovered during the introductions and interview that Mordecai was of a prominent Jewish family.
- 3.2.2.6. Ahasuerus would have also learned that Mordecai had served faithfully, although unrecognized, in his administrative corps (Est 2.19; Est 6.12).
- 3.2.3. Why is it not really that surprising that Ahasuerus promoted Mordecai?
 - 3.2.3.1. Ahasuerus could be impetuous.
 - 3.2.3.2. He felt obligated to Mordecai for saving his own life and felt some guilt for allowing Esther's life to be threatened and may have overcompensated.
 - 3.2.3.3. Mordecai was a relation of the queen, and nepotism was commonly practiced in the Ancient Middle East.
 - 3.2.3.4. Ahasuerus would have heard of Daniel who, had served both Babylonian and Persian kings, and he may have heard of Joseph and Moses serving in the Egyptian royal administrations; so, he was aware of how good Jewish administrators could assist him.
 - 3.2.3.5. The king wasn't anti-Jewish *per se*, he had been duped by Haman into permitting the planned annihilation of the Jews. The Persian kings were also not anti-Jewish.¹⁹¹ Cyrus had Daniel Serving in his administration and had made the decree permitting the Jews to return to their own land, and later Nehemiah would serve the Persian king Artaxerxes.
 - 3.2.3.6. Ahasuerus wasn't stupid, just spoiled. He knew whom he could really trust—his queen and her adopted father.
 - 3.2.3.7. Good and faithful men will usually eventually be recognized (Prov 22.29).
 - 3.2.3.8. God was superintending events, and ensured that a righteous man was in a position of importance at a critical time for the Jews.
- 3.2.4. Mordecai was given the king's signet.
 - 3.2.4.1. We noted (Est 3.10-11) that the signet may not have been a ring, but a small cylinder. The text does not indicate that the king removed the signet from his finger. Rather he may have had the cylinder hung around his neck in a pouch. Regardless, the same signet that had been given to Haman, and retrieved from him earlier in the day, was now delivered into Mordecai's hands giving him access to a symbol of great power, since the king's seal gave royal decrees the authority of the king (Est 8.8)—which he would be able to wield on behalf of the Jews.

3.3. Placed.

- 3.3.1. Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of the house which had been Haman's. This was likely one of the finest houses in Susa.
- 3.3.2. Why did she do this?
 - 3.3.2.1. She lived in the palace and had little use for Haman's house.
 - 3.3.2.2. She needed someone to manage the estate.
 - 3.3.2.3. It was a suitable abode for the first minister of Persia. She did not give it Mordecai. This would have insulted the king and belittled the gift he had given her. However,

¹⁹¹ James D. Purvis, revised by Eric M. Meyers, "Exile and Return: From the Babylonian Destruction to the Reconstruction of the Jewish State", *BAS Ancient Israel. Biblical Archaeology Society* (2002), www.cojs.org/pdf/exile_return.pdf

by making Mordecai the master of the estate she effectively gave it over to him. By this action she showed her gratitude to Mordecai for his having adopted her and advised her with respect to entry into the harem and how to deal with events relating to Haman's wicked decree.

3.4. *Proclaimed.*

3.4.1. Mordecai was dressed in royal robes of blue and white (likely a blue/violet base with white stripes) and a royal crown (likely a turban or headdress) at his investiture to the office of first minister. We noted previously (Est 1.3-9) that the standard colours of the Persian kings were blue and white. Thus, the term 'royal' is applied to the garments. Mordecai was not vested with royalty, as Esther was, but he was given the privilege of permanently wearing the royal colours. Daniel, before him (at the end of the Babylonian Empire), had been given a similar (short-lived) privilege (Dan 5.29).

3.4.2. Wearing these robes, he went out from the king's presence and was proclaimed to be the highest official in the kingdom. [Note: this proclamation did not occur on the same day as the exposure and hanging of Haman. Some time passed as Mordecai planned the issuance of a decree which could protect the Jews.]

3.4.3. As he stepped forward in the royal robes and with the crown of authority, it would have shown that he had the king's favour and his position would have been secured in Susa, and throughout the empire. Contrary to popular thinking, clothes do not make the man; however, clothes do symbolize what a man is or has—e.g., wealth, power, office, or official status.

3.5. What ironies can we observe in the promotion of Mordecai?

3.5.1. Haman had dreamed up a charade hoping that he would get to wear the royal robes (Est 6.7-9). But he never had the opportunity to wear them, even for a moment. Instead Mordecai was rewarded with them temporarily, and then permanently. What Haman desired, Mordecai was given.

3.5.2. Haman had planned to plunder the Jews' property (Est 3.13), instead his own property was confiscated and given to Jews.

3.5.3. Haman had acquired power and wealth by his schemes; Mordecai acquired them because he was an honest man and had no aspirations to earthly greatness (Est 6.12).

4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.1-2, 15)

4.1. *Promoted Righteous* – God's covenant people, in this spatial-temporal realm, will always be persecuted by other people who hate the Trinitarian God, the God-man Jesus, and Jesus' bride, the Church. However, eventually, the persecuted righteous, from every level of society (1 Cor 1.26-30), will triumph and become the promoted righteous; they will go from being victims to victors. Some believers will see their enemies humiliated and defeated in this life, but many may have to wait until they pass through the veil between this reality and the next before they experience their 'happily ever after' ending—but it is assured. Just as Esther and Mordecai inherited the possessions of Haman the enemy of the Jews, so all believers will inherit the earth (Ps 37.11, 34-36; Mt 5.5). Weeping may last for a night (Ps 30.5); but a new, glorious day will dawn in the new created order (Rev 21.4).

4.2. *Power's Responsibility* – "With great power comes great responsibility." (Stan Lee). Both Esther (as queen) and Mordecai (as vizier) had great power in the Persian Empire, and they used it for the advancement of God's people and his kingdom. Like the fictional Katniss Everdeen, the winner of the 74th Hunger Games, neither Mordecai nor Esther allowed their personal rewards and positions to adversely affect their understanding of their responsibility—they did not pursue a life of ease or a course of evil.

4.3. *Personal Rewards* – Personal rewards were received graciously—by Mordecai when he was recognized for saving the king's life and then when he was promoted to vizier, and by Esther when she was given Haman's estate. Similarly, Joseph and Daniel received great personal rewards from their respective king's but used them for the advancement of God's kingdom. Their example

teaches that it is not wrong for Christians to receive personal rewards. However, how we respond to the receipt of the rewards is the essential question. Our attitude toward personal rewards must be tempered by:

- 4.3.1. A spirit of true thankfulness, rendered to God (Ps 116.12–14) who is the ultimate giver of all good gifts (Jam 1.17),
- 4.3.2. A selfless willingness to share with others from the bounty which we have received (Prov 21.26; Gal 6.10; Eph 4.28).
- 4.3.3. A sense of the impermanence of temporal rewards (Mt 6.19-21).
- 4.3.4. A suppression of the worldly love of money (1 Tim 6.10).

Plea (Est 8.3-6)

1. What significant problem remained?
 - 1.1. Even with the presence of a Jewish queen and a Jewish vizier, a disaster loomed over the heads of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire. The evil plot and decree of Haman still stood as the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians.
 - 1.2. Haman's evils did not follow him to the grave. Rather the consequences of his evil intentions and actions continued to live on. It is little different today. Many people suffer because of previous evil actions undertaken by politicians or family members who are now dead.
 - 1.3. Unless someone intervened on behalf of the Jews, they would be annihilated within nine months by those who, out of jealousy, hated them.
 - 1.4. The king thought the problem had been solved, Esther was safe, Haman was dead, and a new vizier had been appointed. He had no idea of the extent of the problem had been created by his folly in appointing Haman as vizier.
2. What names are used to refer to Haman? Why?
 - 2.1. Haman is called 'the Agagite' (Est 8.3) and 'the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha' (Est 8.6). This is in addition to the epithet he was given earlier; 'enemy' (Est 8.1).
 - 2.2. The reference to Haman's origin alludes to the animosity which existed between the Jews and the Amalekites from the time of the Jews' exodus from Egypt and the imperative that the Jews were supposed to have destroyed the Amalekites (Est 3.1-2a).
3. What action did Esther take to address the problem?
 - 3.1. *Bowed* – She appeared again before the king (in the royal throne room) and bowed before him at his feet. She showed deference and submission (even though she was the queen). By her action she acknowledged that the king held the power over the lives of her fellow Jews. One word from him could undo the damage done by Haman.
 - 3.2. *Bawled* – She wept before the king. Stating that she wept may seem to be inconsequential. Or, it could be thought that the writer wanted to portray Esther as a silly woman who broke down in tears to get her way with men. Esther was not given to the vapours (hysteria) and did not use tears to manipulate. She had not cried before when presenting her case before the king. In addition, weeping before the king in his throne room would generally have been frowned upon, if not punished, within the Persian court context. As the earthly representative of Ahuramazda, the king could not let the evidence of mourning enter his courtroom, as he fought the powers of Ahriman's darkness. Nehemiah hints at the prohibition on showing sadness before the king (Neh 2.1-2). Esther was truly distraught when thinking about the pending annihilation of her people and could not control her passionate plea.
 - 3.3. *Begged* – She pleaded for the life of her people by requesting the overthrow of the evil plan devised by Haman.
 - 3.3.1. How did Ahasuerus respond when Esther appeared a second time in the royal throne room and fell at his feet?
 - 3.3.2. He held out his sceptre, indicating that she could stand up (compare, 5.2), and that he was

willing to hear her petition.

- 3.4. *Braved* – Once she had been received by the king and had been permitted to speak, she stood boldly before him.

3.4.1. Since Mordecai had already been promoted to the position of vizier, it might seem that it would have been more appropriate for him to propose a reversal of Haman's decree. He and Esther may have even discussed the matter of who should approach the king with the proposal. It is possible that Mordecai did not feel that he yet had enough influence and demonstrated acceptance with king to propose the radical step of reversing the decree of the previous vizier. However, it is probably more likely that Esther believed that it was her responsibility to finish what she had begun and to see the work of reversing Haman's wicked plan completed. She may have told Mordecai that she needed to do this and could present a persuasive case before the king.

3.4.2. It was a bold act her part, since she was a woman, not a Persian, not of the nobility, speaking to a proud man (who it was claimed was a demigod). It would have been unprecedented for someone in her position to propose policy to the king—even more so in the presence of his advisors, and not in the privacy of the royal bedchamber.

- 3.5. *Bargained* – She again (see, Est 7.3) uses her relationship with the king, and his affection for her, as the 'bargaining chip' in her position. She uses a lengthy preface with:

3.5.1. Two explicit 'ifs' (the ESV adds the third about her proposal seeming right, by implication). The 'ifs' do not display her doubt about the king's affection for her—she knew after the earlier events that he cared greatly for her. Rather, they appear to demonstrate doubt about how her suggestion for reversing Haman's wicked word would be received.

3.5.2. Two reinforcing references to her own distress ('how can I bear') over the pending calamity on her own people.

3.5.3. Two reinforcing references which associate the Jews with herself—"my people" and "my kindred".

Thus, she effectively says, "If you won't revoke Haman's decree for their sake, do it for mine." The structure of this preface indicates, again (see, Est 7.3-5), that Esther was a brilliant strategist who thought about the best way to achieve her goals.

- 3.6. *Broached* – She proposed the idea that the king could rescind Haman's decree. She was careful to position the former decree as the work of Haman ('letters devised') and not to accuse of the king of being complicit in the action of issuing the decree—even though it had gone out under his seal. His surprise and anger over what Haman had done, and his swift action in dealing with Haman, had assured her that her husband had been duped into accepting Haman's proposal and was negligent but not malicious.

4. What was Esther's suggested approach for protecting the Jews?

- 4.1. She suggested that the king could revoke the decree that Haman had issued, if such an action seemed right (קָשָׁר; advisable, advantageous) to him, and she was pleasing in his eyes. She probably figured that since he had promised (three times; Est 5.3, 6; Est 7.2) to give her up to half of the kingdom, that asking to have an unjust and barbaric edict cancelled should be an inconsequential matter.

4.1.1. Esther chose her words carefully. She referred to the previous decree as 'letters' not as a law, edict, or decree.

4.1.2. She treated Haman's decree as a non-law, issued by a sectarian person (Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha) which could therefore be revoked.

4.1.3. By avoiding the use of the word 'law' she implied that the king could have Haman's decree treated as something other than the law of the Medes and Persians.

- 4.2. From one perspective, her request was simple. She wanted a new decree written which would override or cancel the previous decree. To us this might appear to be a logical approach. However, such thinking is naïve:

- 4.2.1. In the Persian context the king's decrees could not be revoked (Est 1.19; Dan 6.8, 12, 15).
- 4.2.2. Making such a suggestion, implied that the king had made a mistake in allowing the previous decree to be issued under his signet seal. However, the king could not be charged with making such a mistake because he was considered to be a demigod. She was effectively asking him to divest himself of his 'divine' glory and undermine the people's confidence in him.
- 4.2.3. To allow the revocation of one decree (edict/law) could lead to requests for other revocations and lead to chaos and the undermining of the supposed rule of law.
- 4.2.4. Historical precedence and experience demonstrates how difficult it is to undo legislation, even stupid and harmful examples, such as banning the use of plastic grocery bags (supposed to reduce garbage in landfills¹⁹²), SOX (supposed to control false financial reporting¹⁹³), Freddie Mac (supposed to stabilize the mortgage market and increase home-ownership levels¹⁹⁴), environmental regulations (supposed to protect the environment¹⁹⁵), Obamacare (supposed to make healthcare generally more affordable¹⁹⁶). Obama understood the difficulty of undoing 'legislation'; as he demonstrated with his independent executive actions, such as providing amnesty for children of illegal immigrants (in DACA).
5. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.3-6)
- 5.1. *Supportive Work* – Esther used her position and power, and her skills and gifts, for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. She acted unselfishly, with no regard for her own life or station, as long as the lives of her people were threatened. She continued to work on behalf of the Jews, doing what she could, until their safety was assured. She was willing to make sacrifices for their wellbeing. In contrast, as someone has said, "The only thing most of us know about sacrifice is how to spell the word."¹⁹⁷ She was a true heroine. A hero is a person who displays noble qualities such as courage, selflessness, humility, patience, caring to accomplish great things on behalf of a nation or an oppressed or disadvantaged people. Without doubt, Esther was a great heroine. She joins the gallery (Heb 11.1-40) of those who lived by a great faith.
- 5.2. *Spiritual War* – The account does not tell us that Esther prayed before she approached the king for a second time. As we have noted, the book of Esther does not explicitly mention prayer—although it is implied by the reference to fasting (Est 4.16). Nevertheless, we can infer that Esther prayed again before she appeared a second time in the presence of the king. She prayed for the peace of the spiritual Jerusalem (Ps 122.6). Esther understood that she was engaged in a great spiritual battle between Satan and his demons and earthly pagan hordes, and the eternal God and the citizens of heaven (Eph 6.12). The words chosen by Esther in her statements to the king hint at this spiritual battle. For example, she used the word 'wicked' (Est 7.6) when referring to Haman—implying spiritual depravity, in addition to bad behaviour. She took advantage of the king's superstitious, dualistic beliefs and implied that Haman as the representative of Ahriman, the evil god, was the enemy of the king, who was supposedly a representative of the good god, Ahuramazda. God's people are always threatened by the same spiritual and temporal enemies that faced Esther and the Jews. Therefore, we must use the power of prayer to engage in the spiritual battle (Eph 6.18) and call on God to protect his persecuted Church.
- 5.3. *Secular Watching* – Esther was confronted by the difficulty of undoing a foolish decree. The same

¹⁹² All about bags; www.allaboutbags.ca/wastediversion.html

¹⁹³ Tracy Coenen, *Has Sarbanes-Oxley Really Done Anything to Curb Fraud?* www.allbusiness.com/professional-services/accounting-tax-auditing/5220240-1.html

¹⁹⁴ Norbert J. Michel and John L. Ligon, Fannie and Freddie: What Record of Success? www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/fannie-and-freddie-what-record-of-success

¹⁹⁵ Kendra Alleyne, *Oregon Man Sentenced to 30 Days in Jail -- for Collecting Rainwater on His Property*, cnsnews.com/news/article/oregon-man-sentenced-30-days-jail-collecting-rainwater-his-property

¹⁹⁶ Matthew Harper, *ObamaCare Raises Health Insurance Premiums, Especially For The Young*, www.forbes.com/sites/matthewharper/2013/12/05/obamacare-raises-health-insurance-costs-especially-for-the-young/

¹⁹⁷ Attributed to Jacob Stam by Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Spring, CO: David C. Cook, 2007) p. 818.

problem confronts the Church today when Christians attempt to undo foolish human legislation or judicial action—consider, for example, how difficult was the challenge to reverse *Roe vs Wade* in the US, or the difficulties which confront Christians when they attempt to challenge laws which require them to endorse homosexual practices. History demonstrates that it is much easier to breach a dyke holding back depravity than it is to build one; much easier to facilitate evil than to hold it in check. In general, Christians are not good at challenging secular evil, because:

- 5.3.1. We are often naïve about how intent the wicked are on perpetrating wickedness (Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9; Eccl 9.3; Rom 1.21-23). We think that people generally want to do good things and only are occasionally sucked into doing evil. In reality, men without Christ are consumed by the desire to do evil, and it is only because of the general grace of God that evil does not destroy everything before it—like a hand grenade thrown into a jewelry store.
- 5.3.2. We often cannot see the threat associated with nascent forms of evil—for example, “We need to accept the fact that some people struggle with their sexuality since God made them that way.” eventually becomes, “What is the problem if a congregation allows homosexuals in a committed relationship to be members? Isn’t that just showing love to sinners?” soon becomes, “What is wrong with ordaining practicing homosexuals to the pastoral office, after all we all have our own sexual preferences?” and then it quickly becomes, “You are evil if you suggest that homosexuality is unnatural or a sin!”
- 5.3.3. We do not understand how pernicious a single act of corruption can be—like a small scratch that can become infected with a tetanus or streptococcus bacteria—and how much effort is required to undo the evil results. For example, a book (e.g., *On the Origin of Species*), a rumour (e.g., Apple stock price fell on a rumour¹⁹⁸), or an open mike comment¹⁹⁹ can all destroy relationships and reputations and cannot be retrieved or undone.

Therefore, Christians must be watchful and wise and battle evil in its seed and bud forms before it blossoms and bears its poisonous fruit.

Permission II (Est 8.7-8)

1. What context does Ahasuerus provide when addressing Esther’s request?
 - 1.1. He mentions the favours which he had already shown toward Esther: hanging Haman and giving Haman’s house to Esther.
 - 5.3.4. How does he misrepresent his benevolence? He claims that he had Haman executed “because he intended to lay hands on the Jews”. In fact, Ahasuerus would have had no qualms about destroying the Jews, and had authorized it, if it were not for the later discovery that his wife, and queen, was a Jewess and that she care for her people. The more direct reason Haman was executed was that he would dare, “even assault the queen in [Ahasuerus’] presence, in [his] own house” (Est 7.7).
 - 1.2. Why does he mention the favours he has bestowed on Esther? Two different perspectives could be provided on his response:
 - 5.3.5. Ahasuerus may indicate his good will toward Esther, and that he is willing to do what he can—in effect, “I have done a lot for you, and I am willing to do even more—you may write as you please”
 - 5.3.6. Ahasuerus may indicate that he is reaching the limit of his willingness to do more on behalf of Esther and the Jews—in effect, “I have done a lot for you already, so don’t push your luck—but you may write as you please”
 - 1.3. The fact that he addresses both Esther and Mordecai seems to indicate that he is prepared to look for a means of addressing Esther’s request—he engages his vizier in the attempt to find a means of addressing Esther’s request.

¹⁹⁸ Steve Hargreaves, *Apple’s stock hit by Web rumor*, money.cnn.com/2008/10/03/technology/apple/

¹⁹⁹ *Microphone gaffe*; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microphone_gaffe

2. What problem stands in the way of providing protection for the Jews?
 - 2.1. Ahasuerus apparently would not allow any decree which went out with his signet seal to be reversed. He did not want his will or a law of the Medes and Persians to become an object of derision. Therefore, he appears to have rejected Esther's proposal that Haman's decree be reversed. However, he indicated that instead Mordecai and Esther could do anything they wished to protect the Jews, short of sending a decree to reverse Haman's decree, which had been sealed with the king's signet.
 - 2.2. We cannot fully understand this dilemma, because in our democratic context a subsequent government administration can, in theory, while often difficult in practice, change the laws of a previous administration. However, in ancient Persia, the king's edicts were considered to be irrevocable, as the will of a demigod.
 - 2.3. Thus, the problem Esther and Mordecai faced was how to deal with the fact that the king could (would) not cancel the first edict by simple fiat—simply, how to change the unchangeable. The challenge was to come up with a means of making it appear that the edict had *not* been revoked, in order to save the king's honour, and yet to provide a means of countering the effect of the edict.
 - 2.4. The author of Esther shows the silliness of Persian law, and of any human law system, which claims to be absolute. Allowing a law to be overridden but not allowing it to be revoked is acting by the letter and not the spirit of the law. It is simply dealing with unprincipled expediency and pragmatic sophistry.
3. What does Ahasuerus permit Esther and Mordecai to do?
 - 3.1. He gives them permission to issue a second decree with his seal of authority, but not one that would revoke the first decree.
 - 3.2. However, he goes beyond permission. The ESV translates the Hebrew as “but you may write”, using the subjunctive potential mood. However, the Hebrew uses an imperative. The NIV translates the opening of verse 8 as, “Now write another decree” (the KJV, NKJV, and NASB also incorporate the imperative). It is probably better to understand the account as showing that Ahasuerus challenges them to be creative and write another decree which seems good to them, renders Haman's decree harmless, but at the same time does not revoke the previous decree.
4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.7-8)
 - 4.1. *Craftiness* – Ahasuerus made the claim that his laws were irrevocable. This claim speaks to the folly of human pride which pretends to know what is best for one's self and others. The laws of Persia were not irrevocable, because Persia was not an eternal kingdom—it was overrun by Alexander's armies and was removed from the scene about 2,350 years ago. This should warn all would-be legislators, with their extremely limited knowledge, that they should create laws with great care and be tentative about their assertions about how important their laws are. They should be quick to repeal laws which are not producing expected beneficial results. However, there is a deeper issue than the pride of human legislators. It is the craftiness of Satan. Satan used the pagan Persians in his attempt to destroy God's covenant people—Haman and Ahasuerus were foot soldiers in Satan's war against Messiah's Kingdom (Ps 2.2). In the same way, today, Satan uses legislators to rule against human life, personal responsibility, and Christian morality and religious observance. Christians must be ever vigilant, watching out for the wiles of their enemy, Satan (1 Pt 5.8).
 - 4.2. *Creativeness* – Because of the claim that Persian laws were irrevocable, Esther and Mordecai were pushed to come up with a creative solution for how to counter Haman's wicked decree. Although we haven't yet seen how they will accomplish this, but we anticipate that they will come up with a solution. God created mankind as his image bearers (Gen 1.26), which means that we have many of the attributes of the Divine, including a degree of temporal creativity. God challenges us to use this creative skill to overcome problems introduced by the curse on creation and to counter the craftiness of Satan. God set the example by working out amazing means of preserving the line

leading to the Messiah—for example having his parents carry him into Egypt before Satan’s henchman Herod slaughtered the infants in Bethlehem. Satan undoubtedly confronted God with the same claim that he used with respect to the law of the Medes and Persians. He challenged God by saying that the law of the Kingdom could not be revoked; and thus, the soul that sins must die (Ezk 18.20). With glee Satan waited to fill hell with the souls of all mankind. But God would defeat Satan with a creative counter strategy—his own son would die as a perfect substitute for sinners. Thus, the law of the Kingdom could stand as irrevocable and meanwhile his covenant people could be saved.

Proclamation (Est 8.9-10, 13-14)

1. What did Mordecai do?
 - 1.1. He prepared to issue a new decree regarding/concerning the Jews (Est 8.8-9), to counter Haman’s decree. So, he summoned the king’s scribes to whom the new decree would be dictated.
 - 1.2. He used his authority as vizier to issue a command concerning the Jews to all the other rulers in the Persian Empire (Est 8.9). It did not take Mordecai long to demonstrate that he was a man of rank who knew how to exercise authority. He likely had served as a lower-level administrator in the Persian government and had gained some experience exercising authority. He also likely served among the elders in a synagogue in Susa and had learned how to exercise authority wisely.
2. How much time passed between the issuance of Haman’s decree and the issuance of Mordecai’s decree?
 - 2.1. From the 13th day of 1st month (Est 3.12) to the 23rd day of 3rd month (Est 8.9)—a total of two months and 10 days.
 - 2.1.1. The name of the third month, Sivan (from the Jewish calendar), occurs only here in the OT.
 - 2.1.2. Mordecai would not have been superstitious as was Haman, but the issuance of his decree would probably have been viewed by the superstitious Persians as fateful. In Zoroastrianism, the month of Tir (Sivan) was viewed as being ruled by Mithra (equivalent to Hermes or Mercury), the god of judicial action and the protector of truth. And, the 23rd day (Dai-pa-Daena / Dai-pa-Den / Dai-pa-Din²⁰⁰) was the day that Persians apparently prayed for the expulsion of evil.²⁰¹ Thus in their month of justice, a decree was issued to expel evil from their land.
 - 2.2. What happened during the period between Mordecai’s appointment as vizier and the issuance of his decree?
 - 2.2.1. Esther and Mordecai arranged the time of Jewish fasting, Esther gave her feasts for Ahasuerus and Haman and presented her case against Haman, Esther petitioned her husband again for the preservation of the Jews.
 - 2.2.2. Mordecai, likely spent some time learning court protocol for exercising his new role as vizier and consolidating his position among the other administrators. He may have had to fire a few who had had sycophantic loyalties to Haman. He probably believed that it was important for him to establish himself in his new position before he took action to counter Haman’s decree.
 - 2.2.3. Also, Mordecai, in consultation with Esther, likely spent time praying about how best to counter Haman’s decree and for developing a solution which would respect Ahasuerus’ wishes that the decree issued under his signet seal would remain in force.
 - 2.2.4. Mordecai likely called on the elders of the Jews to also pray that he would be given wisdom in his new role and how to deal with the challenge.
 - 2.3. There was still time for Mordecai to resolve matters on behalf of the Jews. From the time he issued his decree until the proposed date for the slaughter of the Jews (13th day of 12th month; Est 3.13; Est 8.12; Est 9.1) was 8 months and 20 days.

²⁰⁰ zoroastrian.ru/files/eng/zoroastrian-calendars-1379-ay-1400-ay-fasli.pdf

²⁰¹ Paulus Cassel, *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*, in Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, new series, Vol. XXXIV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), p. 237; books.google.ca/books?id=I3IAAAIAAJ

3. To whom was Mordecai's decree directed?
 - 3.1. To all 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia (Est 1.1)—i.e., to the entire Persian Empire.
 - 3.2. To the provincial leaders; satraps and governors, and their officials.
 - 3.3. To all peoples. The content of the decree was to be made known to all people groups and all people individually.
 - 3.4. A copy of the decree was also issued in Susa the citadel.
 - 3.5. The language used to describe the issuance of the decree mirrors that used in Esther 3.12, 14-15.
 - 3.6. The decree was to be broadcast universally to every person in the empire.
4. What difference is noticeable about the issuance of Mordecai's decree compared with Haman's?
 - 4.1. It was also specifically directed to the Jews in their script and language (Est 8.9). Haman would have had no interest in making his decree available to the Jews since he hated them and wanted them destroyed. In contrast, Mordecai would have been particularly concerned about making the contents of the decree available to the Jews, since it explicitly concerned their future wellbeing (Est 8.8, 11-13).
 - 4.2. The mention of the 'script' of the Jews is interesting. Around this time the Jews appear to have been switching their proto-consonantal characters developed from Egyptian hieroglyphs²⁰² (adopted also by the Phoenicians, Moabites, and Ammonites), to the squarer alphabetic script used to write Aramaic. However, we cannot determine what script (quasi-hieroglyphic or abstract) Mordecai used to communicate his decree to the Jews.
5. How was the decree authorized and made official?
 - 5.1. As with Haman's decree, Mordecai's was sealed with the king's signet-seal.
 - 5.2. Mordecai's decree became part of the official law of the Medes and Persians, with the authority of the king supporting it.
 - 5.3. This action mirrors what is recorded in Esther 3.12.
6. How was the decree distributed to the people?
 - 6.1. With urgency. Although there was 8 months and 20 days left before Haman's decree could be acted upon, Mordecai wanted to get his decree to the people as quickly as possible.
 - 6.2. What, in the text, reinforces the sense of urgency?
 - 6.2.1. The use of terms: 'mounted couriers' (2X, 10, 14), 'riding', 'swift horses used in the king's service' (2X, 10, 14), 'rode out hurriedly', and 'urged by the king's command'.
 - 6.2.2. The horses (פָּרָסִים vs סוּסִים) used in the king's courier service, were specifically "bred from the royal stud" to be fast and durable for carrying the royal mail quickly from one way-station to the next. Persian horses from West Iran (different from the thoroughbred Arabian, from farther west), may be descendants of these horses. They are known for their ability to tolerate being ridden hard for long distances in difficult climates. Alternatively, the horses may have been the smaller Caspian Horse which was a favourite of Darius I (of which there are fewer than 1,000 known today).
 - 6.3. The author emphasizes that the expensive royal courier service was used for the advancement of the Jews' welfare.
 - 6.4. Why was it important to get the message out quickly?
 - 6.4.1. The Jews were dispirited and discouraged by the former decree (Est 3.15; Est 4.3) and needed to hear a message of hope and obtain relief from their worries.
 - 6.4.2. The enemies of the Jews would have already begun to abuse the Jews, thinking that the Jews could not resist and that soon they would be able to possess their homes and goods.

²⁰² Douglas Petrovich, *The World's Oldest Alphabet – Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script* (Jerusalem, Carta Jerusalem, 2016).

- 6.4.3. The Jews needed time to prepare (e.g., to arm themselves and train) for the coming defensive action.
- 6.4.4. Good news needs to be sent far and fast.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.9-10, 13-14)
- 7.1. *Power's Use* – Mordecai and Esther used the power and infrastructure (the scribes and courier systems) of the Persian Empire to advance the cause of God's covenant people. The idea of using the power of the civil magistrate for the advantage of a particular religious group is considered anathema in today's North American (Western) pluralistic hegemony. The supposed idea of the religious neutrality of the State has become a cherished doctrine of the West. So, instead of advancing the cause of Christianity, the governments of the West do what they can to suppress the advance of Christianity.
- 7.1.1. However, the concept of religious neutrality is a myth akin to believing in the tooth fairy:
- 7.1.1.1. 6,000 years of human history (e.g., Babel, Rome, late Medieval Spain, Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, Ottoman Turks, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea) shows that kings and governors, parliaments and senates, and government bureaucracies cannot tolerate the advancement of any religion which challenges the power of the state, and they will go to extreme lengths to suppress religious challenges to their establishment. In particular, Christianity is viewed as the biggest threat because it declares that all civil magistrates must bow before King Jesus (Ps 2.10-12; Phil 2.10-11) and the laws of every nation must be derived from and be consistent with his commands (Mt 28.19-20)—as summarized in the Ten Commandments.
- 7.1.1.2. It is impossible for pluralism to work in practice or even in theory because no 'fair' means of adjudicating between the conflicting systems and priorities can be defined. The only means of deciding who is in the 'right' is to cater to those who scream the loudest, have the most political influence, buy elections, or are the favourites of those who are in power.
- 7.1.1.3. The idea that multiple opinions must be allowed to co-exist in the 'marketplace' fails when challenged by the clash of two conflicting beliefs that are diametrically opposed. One view eventually has to prevail over the other (or both fail); and generally, it is the majority's view (whether or not it is valid) that wins out. When reduced to its simplest form, the end of 'pluralism' is that man's *opinion* becomes supreme and we become subjected to the tyranny of the masses.
- 7.1.1.4. Religious neutrality can last at most for only a short time and then it turns into intolerance against Christianity. It is impossible for pluralism to long endure because if men are not for Christ, they will be against him (Lk 11.23).
- 7.1.1.5. Where falsehood is permitted, truth will be suppressed and driven out.
- 7.1.1.5.1. False religions cannot co-exist with the true religion, Islam, etc. will drive out Christianity.
- 7.1.1.5.2. Secular Humanism is a false religion and it will drive out Christianity. For a time, Secular Humanism and Islam can work together because they both hate Christianity.
- 7.1.2. The only supportable Biblical position is the establishment principle—that the civil magistrate is to establish Christianity as the foundation of the state.
- 7.1.2.1. There is no room for pluralism in God's world. Truth and error cannot co-exist. Ultimately men have to have a standard for law, and it must be God's law.
- 7.1.2.2. Even though it has proven to be impossible to execute the establishment principle effectively, because of sinful human natures, that does not mean we are not to continually strive for the ideal.
- 7.1.2.3. Any Christian in a government administrative position should use the power of the state for the advancement of Christianity, wherever feasible. God will present

opportunities as he did for Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra, and Mordecai and Esther.

- 7.2. *Planned Undertaking* – When Mordecai was granted a high level of power within the government, he did not use it immediately on behalf of the Jews. At least a month passed from his appointment to the point where he took action, even though the Jews' position was precarious. He spent time consolidating his position of power, learning how to use it effectively, and planning his strategy for saving the Jews. His approach teaches us that we must be wise stewards of any power that we are granted and think carefully about how we will use that power for the good of the Kingdom of Christ (Mt 10.16).
- 7.3. *Provided Utilities* – Mordecai's use of the Persian infrastructure (scribes and couriers) to deliver a message of hope to the Jews, provides an example for how Christians are to use the infrastructure available to us today to disseminate the Gospel. We have access to a vastly improved infrastructure today which includes tools such as websites, blogs, Facebook, and Google; video streaming, YouTube, texting, and e-mail; and continually improving machine translation. If scribes and couriers, using manual copying and horses, could quickly disseminate Mordecai's decree to the vast empire, how much more easily should we be able to use the powerful utilities which we have been provided to take the good news of salvation to the world.

Provision (Est 8.11-13)

1. What did Mordecai's decree allow the Jews to do?

1.1. Assemble

- 1.1.1. The Jews had been scattered throughout the empire during the Babylonian captivity. However, most lived in cities. The decree allowed them to assemble within the cities in which they lived or lived near.
- 1.1.2. Assemblies would have occurred during market days or when a city's citizens were called together to hear a decree or to witness an execution. These assemblies would have been closely monitored by soldiers. In addition, the Jews would have gathered in synagogues or homes. These assemblies would have been tolerated in most cases as long as the crowd did not become too large or demonstrate unruly behaviour.
- 1.1.3. Assembly of crowds has always concerned civil magistrates as crowds are difficult to control and can quickly erupt into violence (Acts 19.29-34). Recent examples of the challenge of crowd control include the Occupy Wall Street movement and the 2010 G20 Summit in Toronto. The US *Bill of Rights* explicitly guarantees the right to all US citizens to peaceably assemble and to petition the government. This right is usually called the "freedom of assembly". The fact that the US founding fathers felt it necessary to include this right in the *Constitution* indicates that it is not a right that is readily accepted by totalitarian governments.
- 1.1.4. Mordecai's decree permitted the Jews to publicly assemble and become a united force.

1.2. To openly bear weapons

- 1.2.1. In order to defend themselves it would be necessary for them to be permitted to take up weapons.
- 1.2.2. Crowd control is difficult enough, but when they have weapons it becomes even more challenging.
- 1.2.3. Again, the US *Bill of Rights* permits citizens to bear arms, although this right is highly contested and controlled by many state and local governments.

1.3. Proactively kill (in self-defence) their enemies

- 1.3.1. The decree gave the Jews the right to use weapons to kill any of their enemies who might have taken up weapons to attack them on the 13th day of 12th month.
 - 1.3.1.1. The words from Haman's earlier decree ('destroy', 'kill', and 'annihilate'; Est 3.13) are repeated in Mordecai's decrees to equalize the force of the self-defence.
 - 1.3.1.2. The 'might' in the ESV is supplied (other translations have 'would' or 'which'). A literal translation is: "the ones attacking them". This could lead to the idea that the

Jews could only exercise self-defence if attacked. However, the decree caused the enemies of the Jews to be afraid of the Jews and Mordecai's power (Est 9.1) and they did not attack the Jews. Rather, the Jews took offensive action against their enemies who hated them.

1.3.2. We will address the topic of legitimate self-defence later. We only note now that this decree makes many commentators uncomfortable. As a result, many of them claim that verse 11 is difficult to translate and commonly misunderstand.

1.3.2.1. They claim that an alternate interpretation should be considered—that is that Jews could kill members of the regular Persian army who might have attacked them and their (the Jews') families (children and women). The NIV's translation supports this interpretation, but it is not consistent with the translations in the ESV, NASB, and NKJV. Also, Mordecai would not have issued a decree in the king's name which would have permitted members of Ahasuerus' standing army to be slaughtered.

1.3.2.2. The correct interpretation cannot be a matter of *preference*; but must be determined by the context. The application of the decree (Est 9.5-12, 16) indicates how it is to be interpreted. The Jews killed their enemies, not members of the *army* of Persia.

1.3.2.3. This decree did just warn the enemies of the Jews not to attack the Jews, it gave the Jews the right to kill those (and their families) who were their enemies and would have slaughtered them if it had not been for Mordecai's decree allowing them to take up arms and take proactive action to rid themselves of their enemies.

1.3.2.4. A warning not to attack the Jews, or suffer the consequences, would have not been sufficient. The publicly avowed enemies of the Jews would still have been present after the 13th day of the 12th month; and would have become even more virulent in their hatred of the Jews.

1.3.2.5. The decree may sound harsh, but it is based on three principles: 1) plotting murder is a capital crime, 2) *pre-emptive* self-defence is justifiable (when the properly weighed circumstances warrant it), and 3) retributive justice requires that actual murderers, or those who plan and attempt murder, are to be executed (Gen 9.6).

1.4. Plunder the goods of their enemies

1.4.1. If they wished, the Jews could enrich themselves by taking the possessions of their enemies. In fact, they did not take advantage of this provision (Est 9.10, 15, 16).

1.4.2. This provision of the decree was intended to mirror and counter the corresponding provision in Haman's decree (Est 3.13).

2. How did Mordecai's edict stay within the Persian 'letter of the law'?

2.1. He used precise and official legal language to word his decree; thus, ensuring that there could be no misinterpretation or misapplication of his decree.

2.2. Because it was claimed that Persian law could not be changed, Mordecai's decree allowed the provisions of Haman's decree to stand. Mordecai's decree did not state that the previous decree issued by Haman were annulled or prevent anyone from carrying out its provisions. Rather, it provided a pre-emptive intervention to prevent anyone from carrying out the provisions of Haman's decree.

2.3. What potential problem did the existence of the two decrees create?

2.3.1. If the forces antagonistic to the Jews had not been frightened by Mordecai's decree the Persian Empire could have been plunged into civil war.

2.3.2. Mordecai likely thought through the possible consequences of his decree and determined that the enemies of the Jews were bullies who would only have acted if they knew that the vizier and king were supportive. Without that support they were intimidated into inaction.

2.3.3. However, the possibility of civil war indicates the foolishness of the Persian king who would rather have avoided the embarrassment of reversing an unjust law, than to do what was right.

2.4. What does the nature of the second decree tell us about Mordecai (and Esther)?

- 2.4.1. The provisions of the second decree and the means for staying within the ‘letter of the law’ were probably devised by Mordecai. Although, he may have discussed it with Esther and sought her advice on the matter.
 - 2.4.2. It indicates that Mordecai was a creative and able administrator. He was able to solve an apparently unsolvable problem—how to change something that is unchangeable (the king’s edict).
3. For how long were the Jews permitted to take action against their enemies? Why?
 - 3.1. Only for one day; the 13th day of 12th month, the month of Adar.
 - 3.2. This would limit the extent of the hostilities between the Jews and their enemies and ensure that the Jews would not be indiscriminate but would prepare strategically and target only their most egregious enemies for execution.
 - 3.3. The 13th day of Adar had been the day selected by divination by Haman. He would have thought it to be a propitious day as it was associated with death. In Zoroastrianism *adar* was associated with fire, an agent of ritual purity. Also, the name of the month (Azar/Atar/Adur/Addaru) from the Assyrians and Babylonians corresponded with February-March and was associated with fire. In Haman’s opinion, the Jews were to be sentenced to death by the fire of war; but instead the day became a consuming fire for the enemies of the Jews.
4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.11-13)
 - 4.1. *Self-Defence* – The primary lesson of this section is what we can derive from its example of justifiable (pre-emptive) self-defence, which includes the use of violence in the form of execution. [We will consider the attributes of justifiable self-defence in more detail when we address 9.5-17, in the section entitled *Purge*.]
 - 4.1.1. A number of commentators stumble on this section, and ask if it was really ethical for Mordecai to give the Jews the authority to kill and plunder their enemies. Some even go to the extent of saying that God presented a different ethic in the OT than in the NT where, they claim, violence of *any* kind (including when used in self-defence) against one’s enemies has been replaced by Jesus, who exhorts us to love our enemies and ‘turn the other cheek’.
 - 4.1.2. The arguments in favour of the right to self-defence are similar to the arguments in favour of engaging in a just war. Personal self-defence is in practice no different from defence of a nation, it is only scaled down. In summary, self-defence is permitted because it is our duty to protect our life, and the lives of others, against attack. Self-defence is not a sin, even if it involves the death of an attacker (Ex 22.2-3), but a positive injunction falling under the duties associated with the 6th Commandment: “The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by ... just defence thereof against violence, ... and protecting and defending the innocent.”²⁰³
 - 4.1.3. Many who might agree that self-defence is permissible when a person is faced with a belligerent and violent aggressor, may not be willing to accept the idea that pre-emptive self-defence could be permitted under some circumstances. They would argue that the Jews should have waited passively until their enemies attacked them and then defended themselves, rather than taking the offensive position and killing their enemies before they attacked. However, if we knew with certainty that an enemy was going to attack our family and attempt to kill our children on a specified date, and the only way to stop him would be to kill him before the given day, then it would be incumbent upon us to stop him, with force if necessary. Of course, in general we cannot know that a person is going to attack our family or us, because we cannot know the future with certainty. However, Haman’s decree had given a degree of certainty which is normally not available. A modern example of justifiable pre-emptive self-defence could be stopping ISIS before they advanced into an adjacent region or to the next town. Their

²⁰³ *Larger Catechism*, q. 135.

consistent behaviour indicates that if they are not stopped, they will slaughter all Christians and many of the Shiite sect.

4.1.4. Haman's decree called for murder and genocide of possibly over a million people. Mordecai's decree resulted in the execution of around 76,000 persons. On a proportionate basis, stopping, by death, those who were intent on genocide resulted in far fewer casualties.

4.1.5. In addition, the Jews showed remarkable restraint in exercising their right to self-defence. They limited the executions to egregious enemies and did not plunder the possessions of their enemies.

4.2. *Sin Deferred* – The Jews were given the right to execute their enemies. However, this did not solve for all time the problem of antagonism against God's covenant people. A generation later a new cohort of enemies of the Jews would attempt to disrupt the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem (Neh 4.1-14). Later, God's covenant people would suffer persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Herod the Great, Titus, and Nero. Cultural Jews continued to suffer at the hands of a number of other Roman emperors until the time of Constantine, the Druids, Muslims, the Inquisition, Communists, Nazis, etc. In one generation much may be accomplished to stop persecution of Christians (God's covenant people since Christ's resurrection), but it will only be a temporary dike. Evil forces will breach the dike and flood the Church again. We must not think that actions of self-defence or legislation will ever stop persecution in this spatial-temporal realm—they can only defer sin for a short time. Only with the final realization of the Messianic kingdom, on the last day, with the renovation of the heavens and earth, will we see the complete destruction of Satan and sin (Rev 20.14, 15).

4.3. *Silliness Defeated* – As we noted, Mordecai's decree provides an example of a creative way to stay within the 'letter of the law' and yet work against the law. We should take note of his wisdom and solution, and use similar tactics to challenge wicked, dangerous, and silly laws created by human legislatures. What are some examples of how this type of creativity can be applied by Christian government officials?

4.3.1. Some US states limit access to abortion, even though the Supreme Court has ruled that abortion should be available, by requiring abortionists to be on the staff at a hospital or by requiring abortion centres to meet hospital-level standards.

4.3.2. Some legislators have recommended eliminating funding for the administration of some laws (e.g., egregious EPA regulations), thus allowing the law or regulation to stand but providing no means of enforcing it.

4.3.3. If a law or human rights commission requires a business run by Christians to perform work which they find abhorrent (e.g., providing services for a homosexual union ceremony), the business could advertise that the profits from the proceeds of the engagement will be donated to a Christian organization which speaks out against the abhorrent practice. If enough Christian businesses took this approach, their enemies would likely stop suing them to avoid being made to look foolish—however, they would probably then try to have legislation passed prohibiting proceeds to be donated to charitable causes which they disagree with.

Praise (Est 8.15-17)

1. What did Mordecai do after he had issued the decree? Why?

1.1. He made a public appearance in official splendour—the robes of office.

1.1.1. He was clothed in garments reserved only for royalty and nobles—indicating his status as vizier.

1.1.2. He also wore a 'crown'; likely a bejewelled turban, or possibly a diadem, but not the official crown of the head of state.

1.2. It is important that officials make public appearances. When officials do not make appearances, people begin to question their authority and rumours begin to spread. Thus, CEOs hold town halls, the queen makes an annual statement or visits a hospital or agricultural fair periodically, or a mayor

- appears at a parade.
- 1.3. Mordecai's action:
 - 1.3.1. Demonstrated that he was now the vizier; and no other.
 - 1.3.2. Reinforced the authority behind the decree that he had issued.
 - 1.3.3. Assured the Jews that the decree was official and that they could defend themselves.
 2. How did the citizens of Susa respond when they saw Mordecai?
 - 2.1. They shouted and rejoiced; a marked contrast to the confusion resulting from Haman's decree (Est 3.15).
 - 2.2. Not only the Jews, but also all the citizens of Susa rejoiced. The city had been thrown into confusion by Haman's decree to kill the Jews (Est 3.15). The issuance of Mordecai's decree, allowing the Jews to defend themselves, provided a check on the arbitrary power of the former vizier and his henchmen. With the new decree the citizens no longer were apprehensive that a great danger loomed on the horizon and that their ethnic groups might be next to encounter Haman's madness.
 - 2.3. What might be some modern parallels?
 - 2.3.1. The sense of relief a city might have when a serial killer or arsonist is captured, or the members of a violent gang are arrested.
 - 2.3.2. Many of the citizens of Toronto were relieved when John Tory was elected Mayor, replacing Rob Ford. People may enjoy for a time the notoriety which accompanies the exploits of a colourful chief executive. However, they prefer the stability which accompanies a routine but dignified administration.
 - 2.3.3. Many of the citizens of the US were relieved when Barack Obama was replaced as president by Trump.
 3. What was the Jews' response on hearing of Mordecai's promotion and decree, and to seeing him presented as vizier?
 - 3.1. The Jews in Susa "had light and gladness and joy and honor".
 - 3.1.1. The author uses synonyms (a Hebrew idiomatic form) to emphasize the completeness of their happiness.
 - 3.1.2. The word 'light' used here (Est 8.16) is a metaphor for joy or happiness.
 - 3.2. Among the Jews throughout the empire, gladness and rejoicing greeted the edict which Mordecai had published under the king's authority. The gladness and joy were observed among all the Jews of every station and rank, in every province and city.
 - 3.3. These verses emphasize rejoicing:
 - 3.3.1. They mention happiness seven times ('shouted' and 'rejoiced', 8.15; 'light', 'gladness' and 'joy', 8.16; 'gladness' and 'joy', 8.17).
 - 3.3.2. The chapter opens with Esther weeping (Est 8.3), but ends with the Jews rejoicing. The Jews had been mourning and fasting (Est 4.3) but now were rejoicing and feasting.
 4. Why did the Jews rejoice?

They rejoiced over the:

 - 4.1. Downfall and death of their enemy, the evil Haman.
 - 4.2. Exaltation of Mordecai the Jew to the position of vizier
 - 4.3. Patronage of a Jewish queen.
 - 4.4. Decree permitting them to defend themselves against their enemies.
 - 4.5. Removal of the threat of annihilation and the subsequent sense of safety and peace.
 - 4.6. Favour shown their nation by the Persian King.
 - 4.7. Favour (honour, Est 8.16) they held with others in the empire (Est 8.17).
 5. How did the Jews demonstrate their joy?

- 5.1. They observed a holiday (lit: a ‘yom tob’, יום טוב) or ‘good day’ and a feast.
 - 5.2. The day Mordecai’s decree was issued was not declared to be an official holiday or feast day, as Purim would later be (Est 9.20-22), but it would have been difficult for the Jews, and many of the other citizens of Susa and of other cities in the empire, to perform serious work as they would be continually discussing and rejoicing over the turn of events.
 - 5.3. They held a spontaneous celebration like that which occurred on September 2nd, 1945 when the headlines declared the surrender of the Nazis and the end of WW II. Iconic pictures are well known from that day such as the sailor (George Mendonsa) kissing the nurse (Greta Zimmer Friedman), a stranger, in Times Square and crowds which poured into the streets and squares of cities throughout Europe and North America.
6. What did many non-Jews do, in response to Mordecai’s decree? Why?
- 6.1. They declared themselves to be Jews.
 - 6.2. The primary reason was fear of being considered an enemy of the Jews, and of Mordecai’s authority in particular (Est 9.3-4). So, some of the Persians (or of other nations within the empire) did not want to be thought of as advocates of Haman’s genocidal plan. Their allegiance could have been superficial, similar to people with no Irish heritage who wear buttons or T-shirts which say, “Kiss me, I am Irish.” on St. Patrick’s Day; or people who make stupid statements like, “I have a dear friend who is a _____.” in order to appear unprejudiced.
 - 6.3. However, probably *many* of the Gentiles became believers in the true God. They knew that none of the gods in their pantheon could do what the true God had done, and were so impressed by God’s providential working in answer to the Jews’ prayers (the provision of a means of escape from their pending slaughter) and the promotion of Mordecai that they believed in God and aligned themselves with the Jews. These folks became examples of the first fruits of the promise that many Gentiles would come into the Kingdom (Gen 22.18; Ps 102.22; Is 19.23-25; Is 42.6; Is 44.5; Zec 8.23)—some people had joined Israel previously, such as those who came out of Egypt with them during the Exodus (Ex 12.38) and others such as Rahab and Ruth. They probably became proselytes (Acts 10.2; Acts 16.14; Acts 18.7) rather than full-fledged Jews who joined through circumcision (according to the LXX they were circumcised). As is often the case, God is a master of understatement. Here the conversion of many is recorded with just a few words and not with blaring trumpets and unfurled banners. It is similar to the statements we find in other places (Dan 4.34-35; Jonah 3.5; Acts 2.41, 47).
 - 6.4. What ironies are evident in this action of the Gentiles?
 - 6.4.1. The Book of Esther opens with Mordecai and Esther keeping their nationality a secret. But after the demise of Haman, even some pagans wanted to be thought of as friends of the Jews.
 - 6.4.2. At first, the Jews were afraid, but then people became afraid of not being considered Jewish.
 - 6.4.3. Haman had wanted to destroy the Jews, but God used Haman’s animosity to become a means of increasing the number of the true believers.
7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 8.15-17)
- 7.1. *Gratitude* – The Jews throughout the Persian Empire rejoiced over the temporal salvation which God had provided for them. Though it is not explicitly stated, they would have praised and thanked *God* for his watchful care and protection (i.e., providing a means for them to protect themselves from their enemies), and blessings (e.g., the provision of a Jewish queen and vizier). They were particularly grateful that their time of weeping and been turned to a time of rejoicing. Gratitude should be one of the most evident attributes of a Christian. We have much for which we should be thankful. The most important blessings we have been given are rescue from the hands of Satan, being saved from our sins, and being declared joint heirs with Jesus Christ of a glorious new created order. In addition, we have many temporal blessings, including daily protection from danger and provisions for our physical needs. Thus, we should give thanks in all things! (Eph 5.20; 1 Thess 5.17-18)

- 7.2. *Guidance* – The faith of the Jews (in particular that of Esther and Mordecai) was evident through their appeal to God for salvation and their living humble and helpful lives. Because of their witness many turned to the true God. Our lives should be full of faith, hope, and love so that everyone around us knows that we are believers in the true God and wants to know more about what we believe and why (1 Pt 3.15-16).
- 7.3. *Growth* – As the faithful undergo persecution they bear witness to the world that faith in the true God overcomes all adversity. God uses the persecution of his people to draw others to the church. Tertullian (2nd c) wrote that “the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church,” teaching that the death of believers leads to the conversion of others. Likewise, the faithful lives of Christians facing persecution leads many to align with Christ. Persecution always opposes its own objective. Satan and Haman believed that they could destroy God’s people. Instead they added to the Church those who were being saved. ISIS and other Muslim groups which persecute Christians may slaughter many and drive even more from their homelands, but the witness of the persecuted adds more to the Church daily. Until Christ returns, his Church will continue to grow and be the most visible worldwide institution (Dan 2.34-35, 44-45; Mt 16.18; Mt 28.19-20).

Persecutors Destroyed (Est 9.1-19)

Power (Est 9.1-4)

1. What happened on the 13th day of the 12th month?
 - 1.1. The Jews assembled in their cities and exercised *pre-emptive* self-defence against their enemies—those who sought their harm—but on no others. None of their enemies were able to stand against them (Ps 71.13, 24).
 - 1.2. The Jews gained the mastery over their enemies who had hated them and who had hoped to have mastery over them. It was a complete reversal of what was expected—those who were supposed to be the victims became the victors. It is reminiscent of what happened to the enemies of Daniel who had convinced Darius (Cyrus) to sentence Daniel to death by means of hungry lions but were instead themselves destroyed by lions before they reached the bottom of the lions’ den (Dan 6.24).
 - 1.3. What day was this to have been?
 - 1.3.1. The account has skipped over 8 months and 20 days, from the issuance of Mordecai’s decree to the execution of it.
 - 1.3.2. It was the day when the enemies of the Jews had hoped to gain mastery over them and had planned to carry out the provisions of the decree issued by Haman against the Jews.
 - 1.3.3. It was the day that had been selected by Haman by the casting of lots. It was supposedly a propitious day for him and his anti-Jewish cause. However, the casting of the lots is under the control of God (Prov 16.33) and God demonstrated that he controls events and time for the working out of his good will, for his glory. What are other examples of God’s exquisite timing?
 - 1.3.3.1. Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census to be conducted at just the right time for Mary to have to go to Bethlehem so that Jesus would be born there (Mic 5.2; Lk 2.1).
 - 1.3.3.2. Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus at just the right time to protect his life from the genocidal program of Herod (How 11.1; Mt 2.13-14).
2. What had happened to Mordecai during the time since he had issued his decree? Why?
 - 2.1. From the time he issued his decree until the proposed date for the slaughter of the Jews (13th day of 12th month; Est 3.13; Est 8.12; Est 9.1) was 8 months and 20 days. God had decreed this duration (directing Haman’s lot) to allow Mordecai to consolidate his power as vizier and increase his influence throughout the provinces (Est 8.15; Est 9.4; Est 10.2).
 - 2.2. Mordecai is referred to as ‘the man’ (compare Num 12.3) to indicate that he was distinguished as a man of name and influence. This would be similar to including ‘great’ in a person’s title, such

- as ‘the great one’ when referring to Wayne Gretzky.
- 2.3. Undoubtedly there would have been provincial governors and bureaucrats who would have opposed Mordecai and his appointment to the role of vizier (compare Dan 6.1-5), but over the eight months before the Jewish defensive action Mordecai would have been able to dismiss incompetent and wicked administrators. And those whom he had not yet dismissed would have been fearful of doing anything which would appear to challenge his authority. As time passed, it would have become clear that Mordecai’s influence was growing and that he was not likely to be removed from power—thus the provincial administrators would have determined that it was in their best interests to support his initiatives.
 - 2.4. Mordecai understood that God had given him his position as vizier, and he used his power to do the will of God by assisting the Jews and by providing a good and just administration within the Persian Empire.
3. Why were the Jews successful in defending themselves against their enemies?
 - 3.1. They assembled in an organized fashion.
 - 3.1.1. Because of Mordecai’s edict they were able to organize themselves in the cities in which they lived throughout the empire and make their preparations public. They did not need to resort to covert activities like the French resistance movement against Nazi occupation during WW II.
 - 3.1.2. Working in an organized manner allowed them to pool their resources and prioritize their defence strategies.
 - 3.2. Fear of them had fallen on all the people.
 - 3.2.1. The visibility of their coordinated preparations would have had an intimidating effect on their enemies.
 - 3.2.2. God used Mordecai’s decree and the Jews’ preparations to send fear into the hearts of their enemies as he had done with other enemies of the Jews (compare: Gen 35.5; Dt 2.25; Dt 11.25; Josh 2.8-11; Josh 5.1; Josh 9.24).
 - 3.3. The officials of the provinces helped the Jews, because they feared Mordecai.
 - 3.3.1. Even though Haman’s edict against the Jews was still in place, the administrators realized that it was out of favour with the king and that the decree of Mordecai took precedence. The administrators knew how to read the prevailing winds. They could tell that they were now storming against Haman’s pogrom and were blowing fair for the Jews’ self-defence. An example of this form of conflict of law and support of popular opinion can be seen in the situation in the US where states such as (e.g., Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington) had legalized the sale and use of marijuana while a Federal law still stood against its sale and use. So, state administrators enforced the state’s laws and ignored the Federal law.
 - 3.3.2. The provincial administrators (the ones “doing the king’s business”) were in such awe of Mordecai that they even helped the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies. This help could have ranged from providing the Jews with information about the whereabouts of their enemies to assisting them with para-military training and providing them with armaments.
 - 3.4. They had a genuine cause, a good conscience, and great courage. God was on their side.
 4. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.1-4)
 - 4.1. *Righteous Command* – Mordecai’s influence, because of his position, power, and prominence, demonstrates the influence which persons in authority positions may have and the importance of their doing what is right from within those high positions. God places Christians (and even non-Christians) in these positions for the advancement of his cause. Thus, Christian politicians and administrators, corporate leaders, writers and journalists, scientists and engineers, doctors and emergency services personnel, policemen and military servicemen, and coaches and athletes all have roles which can be used for good. People in positions of power and prominence have a great

responsibility to influence others for the greater good and to engender a general fear of God within their public.

- 4.2. *Reversed Circumstances* – In the period of a couple of days the future of the Jews was changed from despair to hope, when Esther appeared before Ahasuerus and pleaded for the protection of the Jews and revealed Haman's wicked scheme, and a worthless vizier was replaced with a competent one. Then, in less than nine months the prospect for the Jews was changed from victimhood to victory. This reversal teaches that:
 - 4.2.1. Those who dig a pit will fall into it (Prov 26.27). Those who perpetrate evil against others will see it reversed onto their own heads—if not immediately, always eventually, even if only in the next life. Examples collected for the Darwin Awards²⁰⁴ illustrate this truth.
 - 4.2.2. There will be a great reversal of positions when Christ returns to judge the world and the first will be last and the last first (Mt 19.28-30).
 - 4.2.3. Those in the ascendancy today (e.g., advocates for abortion, homosexual practices, outlawing Christian prayers and the Ten Commandments, and teaching evolution myths) will experience a great reversal, in ways which cannot be imagined now. This leads to the third lesson ...
- 4.3. *Reverent Confidence* – The example of the Jews defending themselves teaches that Christians may live in faith, knowing that God controls the nations as much today as he did in the days of Esther and Mordecai. It may appear that God is absent today from the world, with wickedness in the ascendancy and Christians being persecuted in many countries. However, the 'political winds' can change rapidly because God is always at work—even if his work is not always visible. Even though the author of Esther doesn't mention God and attribute to him his providential work, God's control of all events is clearly illustrated by this great account.

Purge (Est 9.5-17)

1. Whom did the Jews kill?
 - 1.1. All their enemies, who hated them.
 - 1.1.1. What is described in this section is an act of *pre-emptive* self-defence. The Jews were the aggressors! Those who attempt to qualify this account by suggesting that the Jews sat by passively and only killed those who attacked them, are reading into the account their modern sensibilities and ignoring the facts. What facts indicate that the Jews were the aggressors?
 - 1.1.1.1. Their enemies were afraid of them (Est 9.2), and did not have the support of the government officials (Est 9.3), so very few would have dared to attack them. It is ridiculous to suggest that about 76,000 of their enemies would have dared to attack them in the face of direct government opposition. Instead their enemies would have been hiding and cowering hoping that the Jews were unable to find them.
 - 1.1.1.2. It is equally ridiculous to suggest that all ten of Haman's sons (Est 9.7-10) rose up against a force of well-armed Jews in Susa.
 - 1.1.1.3. The Jews were granted a second day of purging their enemies in Susa (Est 9.13-15). This was not an act of *reactive* self-defence.
 - 1.1.1.4. Nothing is mentioned in the account about their defending only themselves against those who attacked them—a *reactive* self-defence.
 - 1.1.1.5. There is no reference to any Jews losing their lives during the purge of the Jew-haters. This indicates that they were not engaged in self-defensive battles, but rather were carrying out executions.
 - 1.1.2. Their purge was focused on 'those who hated them' (Est 9.5, 16). Since the Jews could not read the minds of their enemies, they had to make their judgement on visible and public displays of animosity toward them as an ethnic group. The hatred they were dealing with was not the secret sins of the heart but rather overt actions of aggression (persecution) which had been perpetrated against them. Those whom they killed were the ones who would have

²⁰⁴ www.darwinawards.com/

continued to persecute the Jews and kill them, if they had been allowed to live.

1.1.3. Their action was not vigilantism. It was legally authorized capital punishment against a group of former, and potentially future, violent aggressors.

1.1.4. Some critics suggest that it was morally wrong for the Jews to kill about 76,000 probable murderers. We will address the morality of the matter when we consider the lessons we can derive from this section. However, as a preliminary consideration, we can argue that it was better that about 76,000 Gentiles be killed, rather than more than ten times as many Jews. The Persian Empire temporarily became a better place since the haters of God's covenant people could not have been good people. Although the scale is different, the principle is the same, when we hear of gang members, kidnappers, serial murderers, or drug dealers who are killed in a shootout with the police. We don't have any sympathy for them but rather are glad to hear that another bad person has been taken 'off the streets'.

1.2. The ten sons of Haman.

1.2.1. The Jews executed the sons of Haman who were Amalekites, and whom the Jews had been commanded by God to execute (see, *Promotion*; Est 3.1-2a), since their continuing existence was a threat to the existence of God's covenant people. In addition, they likely had displayed the same overt hatred against the Jews as had their father and it was necessary to remove them lest they take revenge for the death of their father.

1.2.2. The names of the ten sons of Haman are mentioned in the account. This reinforces the historicity and exactness (compare 1.14) of the account and provides an indication that God takes into account the acts of the wicked (Rev 20.12-13). In addition, the inclusion of their names may have had a polemical purpose. Many of the names appear to be associated with religious ideas, including fire-worship and guardians of pagan temples. The author may be suggesting that there is no future for those who worship false god's in contrast to God's covenant people who will flourish, in spite of the world's hatred against them.

1.3. They did as they pleased.

1.3.1. This does not mean that the Jews went on an undisciplined rampage of pillage and destruction. It means rather that they killed those whom (over the proceeding eight months) they had identified as Jew-haters.

1.3.2. The reference is provided as a contrast to the king's words to Haman (Est 3.11), reinforcing the reversal which is so evident in the account. Instead of their enemies doing as seemed good to them, the Jews did what was required to prevent genocide.

1.4. The words 'killing and destroying' their enemies may seem harsh. However, the use of synonyms emphasizes the fact that the work was complete. None who deserved to be executed was overlooked and left alive to persecute that generation of the Jews in the future.

2. How many of their enemies did the Jews kill?

2.1. The number of the executed, probably reported in round numbers, was 75,000 in the provinces, 800 (500 on the first day and 300 on the second day) in Susa, and the 10 sons of Ham; or about 76,000.

2.2. The number killed in Susa on the 13th day of the month was reported to the king. He would not have received information about the extent of the executions in the rest of the empire for a few days (until the couriers arrived with the information).

2.3. The 75,000 killed in the provinces is not a large number in relative terms. The Persian Empire probably had a population of over 100 million at that time, spread across 127 provinces (Est 8.9). Thus, <0.001% of the population was executed.

2.4. There would have been roughly 150 major cities in the empire—the capital of each province and multiple significant cities in some of the larger provinces such as Egypt, Babylon, and Persia. Assuming that Jews lived in most of these cities—a valid assumption since Mordecai directed the letters to all the provinces (Est 8.9; Est 9.30)—the average number executed in each city would have been fewer than 600 (less than the total who were executed in Susa). In fact, there were likely

many more than 150 cities, and the number executed, on average, in each city would have been lower.

- 2.5. The vast majority of families and people in the Persian Empire would not have known a person who was executed that day.
3. Why did God permit this act of pre-emptive self-defence?
 - 3.1. God set the ‘gold standard’ for mankind in the promise made to Abram, through whom (through his seed, Jesus Christ) all nations on earth would be blessed. He promised Abram that he would bless those who blessed Abram but would curse those who cursed him (Gen 12.3). Thus, those who hate God’s covenant people are cursed by God. Therefore, the Jew-haters in the Persian Empire were cursed by God, and God chose to deal with their animosity against the true religion by providentially decreeing their execution.
 - 3.2. Haman was an Amalekite. The animosity between the Amalekites and the Israelites had a history of about a thousand years. Haman and his sons were the contemporary embodiment of the pagan forces, primarily typified by the Babelites and the Canaanites who perpetrated all forms of paganism and anti-God religion. God continued his campaign against the wickedness that had dominated the Levant and Mesopotamia for two millennia. These enemies of God had to be silenced.
 - 3.3. The Jew-haters were an overt danger to the line of descent to the seed of the promise. God reigned in the wicked forces of paganism to allow the line of descent from Adam and Eve to Mary to continue so that the Messiah would be born as prophesied—of the line of Judah, in the city of David.
 - 3.4. Those influenced by modern sensibilities (e.g., opposition to capital punishment or negotiating with terrorists) attempt to apologize for the execution of these pagan Jew-haters. They refer to different times and cultures, claim that the book of Esther is only recounting the events of the execution of the enemies of the Jews but not endorsing it, and even accuse God of being harsh in the OT. They need to stop making such excuses and accept the reality that these wicked men deserved the executions they received under the direction of a lawful civil magistrate and his appointed means.
 - 3.5. God provides an example of what all men deserve who are against his Son and his bride, the Church. God reminds us that the life of every person belongs to him and the one who sins will die (Ezk 18.4)
4. What was the king’s observation?
 - 4.1. The news of the events of the day were reported to the king. He noted that since 500 enemies of the Jews had been killed in Susa, the number throughout the empire must be significantly larger. At that point he had not received the records of the execution via the courier system.
 - 4.2. Some suggest that his words show that he was shocked by the number who were killed in Susa. Others suggest the opposite—that he was indifferent to the destruction of his own people. The ESV and NASB include an exclamation mark, the NIV and (N)KJV include a question mark. Ahasuerus’ statement is given as an observation, but the offer which he then makes to Esther seems to imply that he was pleased with himself for having granted Esther’s request eight months earlier to allow the execution of the enemies of the Jews, and that he accepted the executions as a routine matter—life is cheap where a nation and rule is devoid of the true God.
5. Why was Esther present with the king?
 - 5.1. She would normally not have been present in the throne room, where the king would have received news of events in Susa and from throughout the empire.
 - 5.2. She may have been present because:
 - 5.2.1. The king wanted her close to protect her in case a civil war erupted.
 - 5.2.2. The king wanted to have her present when he received the news of the executions so that he

could demonstrate to her that he had fulfilled the promise he had made to her.

5.2.3. Esther wanted to ask the king for an additional boon—to extend the executions of the Jews' enemies in Susa for another day.

6. What did Ahasuerus grant to Queen Esther?

6.1. He offered to fulfill any wish she had. Since this offer is given in the context of the report about the executions of the enemies of the Jews, it would seem that he was asking her if she wanted anything else done with respect to these enemies.

6.2. Esther asked, first, for more time (another day) to continue the executions of the Jews' enemies.

6.2.1. The Jews had undoubtedly drawn up a list of those who were demonstrably their worst enemies and had worked through the list on the 13th of Adar. However, it had taken a full day to execute 500, and there may have been more names on the list which needed to be executed. It may also be that they concentrated their efforts on the 13th in one portion of Susa (the citadel) and needed to continue in the lower portions of the city.

6.2.2. This request was a precautionary measure on Esther's part. There were other dangerous and armed enemies who wanted the Jews slaughtered and were committed to carrying out Haman's edict. So, Esther requested permission to have them executed also to avoid the possibility of their carrying out later revenge attacks.

6.3. Esther also asked that the bodies of the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows.

6.3.1. The Jewish Rabbi, Mordechai Kraft, in the *Secrets in the Story of Purim*²⁰⁵ claims that 9.13 does not refer to the ten sons of Haman who had been killed along with the 500 (Est 9.10). He claims that the request of Esther was to have ten other men killed, and that the fulfillment of her request refers to ten of the eleven (one, Goring committed suicide on the night before his execution) who were sentenced to death in 1946 by hanging at the Nuremberg Trials.²⁰⁶ His view is that the Germans were descendants of Amalek and that the Talmud (written about 400 AD) predicts an attempt for world dominance by Germany.²⁰⁷ This is an invalid interpretation of Esther's request. She did not ask for the death of an additional ten Amalekites. Rather, she asked that the bodies of the ten dead sons of Haman be hung on gallows the next day and therefore not immediately buried. Also, the idea that Germans are descendants of Amalek is pure supposition,²⁰⁸ supported by an anti-Germanic racism which is as evil as anti-Semitism. It is sad that Mordechai Kraft and many other Jews attempt to find hidden signs (in letters and numbers in the OT Hebrew manuscripts) which they claim predict the future, when they ignore the hundreds of clear prophecies about the Messiah which were fulfilled in Jesus.

6.3.2. The Persians exposed bodies (or the heads) of their executed enemies on the walls of their citadels and in other public places as a warning of what would happen to any others who opposed them.²⁰⁹ Esther may have been following this practice and warning the enemies of the Jews of what was in store for them if they persisted in their overt animosity. However, there would have been an additional factor influencing her request. The Mosaic Law pronounced those exposed (by impaling or hanging on wooden gallows) to be cursed (Dt 21.23; Josh 8.29). So, Esther was pronouncing a public curse on Haman's sons.

6.3.3. The gallows used to hang the ten sons of Haman may have been the same gallows that Haman

²⁰⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vwzPwFPY2E ; see also: "Mysteriously Recorded Hundreds of Years Before It Happened—Chilling 'Hidden' Message Is Decoded! The Shocking Nazi-Iran-Purim Connection", beforeitsnews.com/prophecy/2014/03/mass-butchery-and-bizarre-executions-chilling-link-decoded-mysteriously-recorded-hundreds-of-years-before-it-happened-the-shocking-nazi-iran-purim-connection-videos-photos-2459474.html

²⁰⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_trials

²⁰⁷ www.daatemet.com/questions/index.cfm?MESSAGEID=340

²⁰⁸ Germans are more likely Cimmericians, descended from Japheth; not descendants of Esau, who were Shemites.

²⁰⁹ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, para 19; classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/artaxerx.html; Herodotus, *The Histories*, book 7, chapter 238; www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D7%3Achapter%3D238%3Asection%3D1

had had built (Est 5.14), if Mordecai had not had it removed from the estate he was managing for Esther (Est 8.2). Alternatively, it may have been the standard gallows used for the executions of traitors (Est 2.23).

- 6.4. Esther was not bloodthirsty, cruel, or harsh. She was acting as a civil magistrate (the queen) who had been given responsibility, with the vizier, for carrying out a series of executions of wicked men. The objective of her additional requests of the king was to ensure that justice was administered correctly and that those who may have been missed thus far would not cause further trouble in the future.
7. Whom did the Jews not kill?
 - 7.1. It appears that the Jews generally did not kill women and children, but only the adult males among their enemies—the exception may be that some of the ten sons of Haman could have been children. Verse 8.11 refers to the Jews being given permission to kill women and children (as culpable through a covenantal familial relationship), but there is no reference (in chapter 9) to their having done so. This may indicate that they did not kill any women and children. For example, they killed Haman’s sons but there is no mention of their killing his wife, even though she suggested that Haman should build the gallows and ask Ahasuerus for permission to kill Mordecai (Est 5.14).
 - 7.2. The Jews may have executed only male heads of families and single adult males, who were in belligerent opposition to their existence. They administered royally sanctioned judicial action only as was necessary to ensure their own future safety.
 - 7.3. The contrast is evident between the Jews’ behaviour at this time and that of an organization like ISIS, which rapes and murders women and slaughters little children.²¹⁰ True Christians (the covenant people before the incarnation trusting in the coming Messiah, and those who look back to his finished work on the cross) do not resort to gratuitous violence in the name of God. Those who are driven by fanatical attachment to false gods or false beliefs use the tactics of fear, intimidation and destruction advanced by their spiritual father, Satan.
8. What did the Jews not take?
 - 8.1. Even though they had been given permission by the King’s decree to plunder their enemies (Est 8.11), they did not touch it. This is stated three times (Est 9.10, 15, 16) for emphasis to ensure that no reader could misunderstand their behaviour.
 - 8.2. This indicates that in their pre-emptive self-defence the Jews were not influenced by motives of vindictiveness, aggrandizement, or the accumulation of wealth. The executions which they carried out were only those that were necessary to protect themselves and their families and to ensure their right to live safely in the empire.
 - 8.3. There may have also been an aversion to touching the spoils of their enemies when they considered the judgement issued on king Saul when he took some of the forbidden property of the Amalekites which was to have been dedicated for destruction (אֶרֶץ; 1 Sam 15.3, 9, 26). Although only a few of their enemies throughout the Persian Empire would have been Amalekite descendants, the Jews would not have wanted to go near the possessions of their enemies in case they should mistakenly acquire some which belonged to Amalekite descendants, and were thus devoted to destruction.
 - 8.4. Even in their judicial action the Jews showed mercy as they left the possessions (homes, goods, animals, and money) for the widows and children of those whom they had executed. Such restraint and compassion could not have gone unnoticed among the Persians and would have improved the standing of the Jews among the general populace.
9. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.5-17)
 - 9.1. *Approval* – We noted previously (*Provision*; Est 8.11-13) that the arguments in favour of the right

²¹⁰ Vanessa Altin, “Inside Kobane: Drug-crazed ISIS savages rape, slaughter and behead children,” *Mirror*, 2014-10-11; www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/inside-kobane-drug-crazed-isis-savages-4423619

to self-defence are similar to the arguments in favour of engaging in a just war. Self-defence is a duty because we are to protect our life and the lives of others, against attack.

9.1.1. What are the criteria for determining if a war (or an act of self-defence) is justified?

9.1.2. The ‘just war’ concept has been developed over the centuries by Christian thinkers, including: Augustine; the *Peace of God* (AD 988), that ruled that non-combatants were to be immune from attack, and the *Truce of God* (AD 1095; Pope Urban II), establishing when military conflict could occur;²¹¹ Basil the Great (*Canon 13*),²¹² Thomas Aquinas;²¹³ Martin Luther;²¹⁴ and John Calvin in the *Institutes*,²¹⁵ directed specifically against Anabaptist pacifism.

9.1.3. A just war meets at least the following criteria, which can be applied to the Jews’ defensive actions:

Just War Criteria	The Jews’ Self-Defence
1. Declared by a competent authority.	Mordecai as vizier issued the decree (Est 8.10-12).
2. For a legitimate reason—to right an intolerable injustice or to defend a community against serious injury and violent death	The decree provided for defence against a wicked aggressor (Est 3.12-14). Fear of attack is a sufficient just cause, provided it is not merely speculative but already mediated by an enemy, somewhat developed, and impending or about to take place. ²¹⁶
3. Proportional—to limit the cost and casualties to as low a level as possible while achieving the goals.	The Jews exhibited remarkable restraint (for example, not touching the plunder; Est 9.10, 15, 16), indicating that their motives were judicial and for self-preservation, not vindictive or vengeful.
4. Probability/prospect of success.	About 76,000 enemies of the Jews were executed, compared with a potential one million Jews who might have perished if the defensive action had not been taken. Far more people were left alive than would have been if the Jews had taken a passive non-violent approach and had not taken up arms when threatened by members of Haman’s party.
5. Exhaustion of peaceful means of resolution; a last resort.	The backing of the crown (Est 8.10-14), the time available for preparation (8 months), and the respect the provincial administrators had for Mordecai (Est 8.15; Est 9.3) increased the likelihood that the Jews would be successful.
6. Right intention.	Esther had asked to have the unjust law overturned, but the king’s pride would not permit that (Est 8.5-8) and an alternative, violent, solution had to be found.
7. Force and violence limited to legitimate military necessity.	There was no collateral damage, and a limited sacrifice of life; only those who had overtly and egregiously demonstrated their hatred for the Jews were executed.
8. Discriminatory; no direct, intentional attacks on non-combatants.	The women and children were spared and left with material provisions. The Jews displayed mercy and compassion for their enemies.

9.2. *Applicability* – Can Christians attack their enemies and kill them today?

9.2.1. Some commentators on this section make statements such as, “As Christians and part of the new covenant, we are under the ethical teachings of Jesus. The Old Testament is God’s Word and contains a wealth of teaching that is needed by all Christians. But our application of it must always be within the framework of the whole Bible. We cannot apply anything in a way

²¹¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_and_Truce_of_God

²¹² orthodoxwiki.org/Just_war#Canon_13_of_St._Basil

²¹³ files.libertyfund.org/pll/quotes/130.html

²¹⁴ www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1558/poth.v12i2.305?journalCode=ypot20

²¹⁵ “Right of the Government to Wage War,” 4:20.11, 12.

²¹⁶ Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 266-268.

that would contradict the teachings of Jesus.”²¹⁷ The subtle message of this statement is that NT teaching is different from OT teaching, with the implication that Christians cannot defend themselves against aggressors if that would contradict the teachings of Jesus. Further analysis of the entire Bible’s teachings about Christian self-defence and of the pacifist position would take us on a digression from our immediate study of Esther. However, in short, God’s law has not changed—God has only one word for mankind, as communicated through the Bible. The principles Jesus teaches are entirely consistent with the teachings of the OT—for example the command to, “love your neighbour” (Mt 19.19) is cited from Leviticus 19.18, and the *Sermon on Mount* is not given as a new law but as guidance on how the OT law is to be correctly interpreted and applied.

9.2.2. In most situations we do not have evidence of a clear and present danger such as the Jews had with Haman’s decree. We also have no insight into potential future crimes such as was considered in the movie *Minority Report*. However, there may be instances where imminent danger to Christians may require pre-emptive self-defence, such as that which was administered by the Jews. For example:

9.2.2.1. The Covenanters in Scotland during the ‘killing time’ (1680-1688) *may* have had justifiable reasons for taking up arms against the Stewart king’s armies, as they did (unsuccessfully) at the battle of Drumclog or the battle of Bothwell Bridge.

9.2.2.2. If an ISIS force was surrounding a town in Syria, Christians could legitimately serve in a military task force sent out to assassinate the ISIS commanders.

9.2.3. Some of the basic principles which should be applied by us, are:

9.2.3.1. Individual Christians must not undertake vigilante activities against their purported enemies.

9.2.3.2. The ‘just war’ criteria should be applied when pre-emptive self-defence is being considered. For example, it is wrong to take personal aggressive action, but another thing entirely to engage in war or to exercise capital punishment under the order of a legitimate civil authority (Rom 13.1-7), and for the right reasons.

9.2.3.3. Although there is significant hatred of Christ and Christians in the West today, there do not appear to be any justifiable situations where pre-emptive self-defence would be required. Police forces would still take seriously overt threats against the lives or property of Christians made by local Islamic jihadists or homosexual activists. For example, it would not be right for a Christian to assassinate an Islamic Imam who declares Christians to be infidels. Such an action does not fall into the class of pre-emptive self-defence as exercised by the Jews at the time of Mordecai and Esther.

9.2.3.4. Today, the proper means of challenging Islamists, homosexual activists, and human rights commissions is to use creative approaches (as Mordecai did in circumventing the standing decree of Haman). For example, if Muslims planned to open a mosque or school in a business district and Christians wanted it stopped, it might be more effective to open a butcher shop next door which specialized in pork products or a dog grooming studio rather than trying to block it with changes to zoning bylaws. Or, if homosexual activists filed a lawsuit against a small business (e.g., a wedding photographic service) it might deter them if the business advertised that all proceeds (or profits) from that engagement would be donated to a Christian organization promoting the Biblical model for marriage.

9.2.3.5. Our primary instruments for countering unbelief and evil are prayer, preaching, presentation of the hope we have in Christ, and loving service (Mt 5.44; Rom 10.14-17; Eph 6.10-18; 1 Pt 3.13-17).

9.3. *Admonition* – The execution of the enemies of the Jews has an eschatological dimension. It

²¹⁷ M. Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, The New American Commentary, electronic ed., Vol. 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), pp. 359–360.

provides a warning (as the impaled and exposed bodies of Haman's sons would have to the residents of Susa) that those who are enemies of God, his Messiah, and his covenant people will be subject to eternal punishment (Mt 25.41-46) and exposure to derision (Ps 2.4). Ultimate victory belongs to the Kingdom and people of God (Dt 32.35; Rev 20.11-15).

Party (Est 9.17-19)

1. What did the Jews do after they had eliminated the threat from their enemies?
 - 1.1. *They rested.* They ceased from the work of executions but also from other work activities. On the day after their mission against their enemies they would have been so distracted by their success that they would not have been able to focus on their normal vocations. So, they observed a holiday or a 'good day' (literally, 'yom tob', יום טוב). We will consider the implications of this 'holiday' when we address the introduction and authorization of the feast of Purim (*Prescription*; Est 9.20-22).
 - 1.2. *They feasted.* With a collective sigh of relief, they were now able to enjoy a meal—something they had not been able to do for over eight months.
 - 1.3. *They rejoiced.* The writer of the book of Esther does not inform us how they rejoiced (displayed their gladness), consistent with his non-explicit presentation of God's providence. However, we can surmise that on the day after the execution of their enemies the Jews would have been unable to speak of anything other than the deliverance God had wrought. They would have greeted one another with expressions such as 'shalom' (Gen 43.23), 'hallelujah' (Ps 111.1), and 'the LORD is good' (Ezra 3.11; Ps 34.7). We often observe this kind of behaviour from people, even when they are not particularly religious, when they have been delivered from a narrow escape (e.g., a plane crash, boat capsizing, or train derailment). They will say something like, "Thank God! I can't believe I survived!"
 - 1.4. *They gave food gifts to the poor.* The Hebrew (Est 9.19, 22) literally reads, "and sending of portions" (where the ESV has "as a day on which they send gifts of food"). So, the translation is interpretive; although probably a legitimate inference. It appears that those who were well off gave portions of the food they had prepared for their feast to those who had fewer material possessions. This was a practice which may have been founded on the instructions given by Moses (Dt 16.11, 14) and observed later by Nehemiah's contemporaries (Neh 8.10, 12).
 - 1.5. In summary, they threw a spontaneous (not formally organized) collective party. We can understand the joy and relief of the Jews after months of tension and anticipation—wondering if they were going to be slaughtered. Thus, we can picture their exuberance as they went from home to home congratulating one another on the reversal of their circumstances from mourning to rejoicing and from fear and threats to peace and security.
2. How did the Jews in Susa celebrate differently from the Jews in the territories?
 - 2.1. The Jews in the provinces completed their planned executions on the 13th day of Adar and rested and feasted on the 14th. The Jews in Susa continued to carryout executions on the 14th of Adar and rested and feasted on the 15th. The difference was not in the nature of their observance, but in the day on which they observed it.
 - 2.2. The difference may not have been only between rural and urban dwelling Jews (Est 9.19). Rather it may have been between the Jews in the capital and the rest of the Jews living in the provinces, including those living in provincial *cities*. Regardless of the exact division, from the beginning of the observance of the remembrance of the day there was a difference among the Jews which would have to be resolved by Mordecai (Est 9.20-22).
3. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.18-19)
 - 3.1. *Sabbath* – The annual observance of the festival did not fall on the 13th of Adar. They did not remember their deliverance on the day of their victory over their enemies, but on the next day, the day they had set aside for resting. Thus, they observed a 'sabbath' after their hard work of

conquering their enemies. They followed the pattern set at creation—rest follows labour. Their ‘sabbath’ day was one of resting, feasting, rejoicing and works of mercy (giving to the poor). Although the word translated ‘rest’ is נָחַם, and not שָׁבַת (from which the word ‘sabbath’ is derived), the way they observed the day illustrates how we should observe the Lord’s Day (the Christian Sabbath), which commemorates the completed work of Christ who conquered his enemies and arose triumphantly to declare eternal victory over them. Our Sabbath also points to the day when we will cease (rest) from all our earthly work (Heb 4.9; Rev 21.4), rejoice in our eternal salvation (Rev 11.17-18), and share in the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev 19.9).

- 3.2. *Split* – The Jews had experienced a great deliverance and were rejoicing together because of that deliverance. However, there was not unity among them. A division arose about the day for celebrating the victory. Mordecai had to step in to provide guidance so that long-term discord would not arise and so that the people would remain united. A similar thing occurred in the early days of the NT Church, when the number of disciples was increasing rapidly (Acts 6.1, 7). A dispute arose among different factions of the Jewish believers (Hellenists vs Hebrews) and the Apostles had to provide guidance so that long-term discord would not develop (Acts 6.2-6). Clearly Satan goes on the offensive when the Church has had a great victory and sows the seeds of discord among the rejoicing believers. We must observe his tactic, be on guard against it, work with our leaders to provide a solution which will keep the body united and pray that God will keep us from becoming intransigent.

Postscript [Act IIIb] (Est 9.20-10.3)

Purim Decreed (Est 9.20-32)

Prescription (Est 9.20-22)

1. What things did Mordecai record?
 - 1.1. ‘*These things*’. What are the things he recorded?
 - 1.2. Some commentators state that Mordecai recorded the immediate events of the 13th to the 15th of Adar—i.e., the executions and subsequent celebrations. This view is supported by the reference to the direction he gave the Jews to observe both days (Est 9.21). Others state that what he recorded was the entire account of the book of Esther to this point, including the background on how Esther became queen and the events leading up to 13th of Adar. This latter view is preferable since most of the Jews in the provinces would not have known why Haman had issued his decree to annihilate the Jews or how it was overcome. So, Mordecai used the Persian court scribes and postal network as a means of making known all the events recorded in the book of Esther to all the Jews.
 - 1.3. Since Mordecai was using the resources of the Persian Empire to copy and disseminate this record, a copy would have been included in the official records, potentially to be read by the king and his other officials (Est 6.1). So, he was careful not to include anything in the record which would blatantly offend the king or directly ridicule their pagan religion. Some suggest that he was guided by policy rather than piety and thus diluted his account, compared with that written by Nehemiah, not long after—Mordecai makes no explicit references to God or his providential acts, whereas Nehemiah makes many explicit statements about God’s work. However, the contrast between the two books does not indicate that Mordecai was less pious than Nehemiah. The difference between the two books is explained by the circumstances under which they were written—Esther became part of the official court records of Ahasuerus, whereas Nehemiah is the personal account of Nehemiah, written in Jerusalem for an explicitly Jewish audience. The contrast shows the wisdom of Mordecai—which has already been exhibited by his devising the solution for how to overcome Haman’s decree which the king refused to annul. His brilliance is shown by how he was able to write an account which:
 - 1.3.1. Subtly, but obviously, demonstrates God’s providential governance of all nations, without stating the fact explicitly.

- 1.3.2. Is not openly offensive to pagans, yet shows the foolishness of their culture, such as the capriciousness and petulance of their kings, their indulgence in luxuries and pleasures (e.g., harems, beauty treatments, lavish feasts, alcohol, etc.), their superstitious belief in fate, and their concept of ‘irrevocable’ human laws.
 - 1.3.3. Was disseminated to the Jews using expensive government resources (scribes and couriers). The irony is that he used the resources of the pagan Persian Empire to disseminate a portion of the Bible, without creating any dissent.
2. What did Mordecai decree for the Jews?
 - 2.1. He decreed the observation of a two-day festival on the 14th and 15th of Adar, as days to remember and celebrate the deliverance (‘relief’) the Jews got from their enemies.
 - 2.2. He decreed that it was to become an annual festival (‘year by year’).
3. How did Mordecai solve the festival’s observational difference between urban and rural Jews?
 - 3.1. He mediated between the conflicting positions—observing the 14th or 15th of Adar—and decreed that both days should be observed as a festival.
 - 3.2. We can find contemporary examples.
 - 3.2.1. In Canada the Federal government observes November 11th as a statutory holiday, but a number of the provinces do not. So, there is confusion on that day about what is open or closed. There has been talk at the Federal level of standardizing November 11th as a countrywide statutory holiday.
 - 3.2.2. Companies which operate across countries, or globally, develop policies for dealing with statutory holiday differences. For example, they will specify which holidays are to be observed in which locations and provide a floater day to compensate for the differences (e.g., when one province has 11 statutory holidays and another only 10).
 - 3.3. In the NT there appears to be an example of a similar kind of accommodation. Apparently the seventh day Sabbath was still being observed among Christian Jews, along with the first day—the Lord’s Day. In this context, Paul (Rom 14.5; Col 2.16-17) says it is no longer necessary to observe the seventh day (and other OT festival days) as holy, but if a person wanted to do so, that was permissible, and no one should judge him for it.
4. What rationale is given for instituting an annual festival?
 - 4.1. The Jews had obtained relief from their enemies in the month of Adar, and the month had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday.
 - 4.2. The annual remembrance is in the same class as when Canadians, the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, etc. remember Armistice Day on November 11th as a reminder of the sacrifice of those who fought in WW I and of the peace which they procured through their actions.
 - 4.3. It was to be observed annually because it was important to remember what God had done by preserving his covenant people and giving them peace.
5. What elements were to be included in the observation of the festival?
 - 5.1. They were to be days of feasting and gladness (rejoicing).
 - 5.2. They were to be days for sending gifts of food to one another
 - 5.3. They were to be days of giving gifts to the poor, or days of charity.
 - 5.4. When we considered the first observation of the festival (*Party*; Est 9.17-19), we noted that the expression of gladness would have undoubtedly been accompanied with praises to God. Thus, although Mordecai does not state that the Jews were to praise and worship God for their deliverance, it is implied in what he states. In addition, the gift giving was probably based on a principle derived from the Mosaic Law. Thus, the Jews would have understood that the festival was to have a religious dimension to it, through praise to God.

6. What authority did Mordecai (and Esther) have to create a new festival which would be binding on the Jews?
- 6.1. It has been suggested that Mordecai had no special authority over the Jews as a nation. He was vizier in the Persian Empire (Esther was the queen)—but there is no indication given in the Bible that Mordecai was a formal prophet, member of the priesthood (as was Ezra), a Levite, or among the synod of elders. Yet, in their roles in the civil administration of Persia, Mordecai and Esther appear to have been instituting a festival which had spiritual and religious significance. As a result, the institution of this yearly festival presents a challenge—by what authority was it instituted? In addition, Robert Beckwith suggests that the Jews initially resisted the observance of the festival because there was fear that such a nationalistic feast would engender animosity from the Gentiles and that it was an addition to the Mosaic festivals (Lev 23.1-44; Num 28-29).²¹⁸ The fact that Mordecai had to issue a decree regarding the annual observance of the festival indicates that there may have been some reservation about its observance, particularly among the Jews in Jerusalem. However, the account tells us that after Mordecai issued his directive the Jews accepted the festival and began to observe it (Est 9.23)
- 6.2. Some argue that Mordecai and Esther had direct authority over the Jews by virtue of their offices within the Persian Empire and therefore had the right to dictate the observance of the festival. The use of their family designations and titles (Est 9.29) reinforces this authority. It could be argued that if the Jews had been clustered in Jerusalem and Judea, and a Jewish governor, under Persian suzerainty, dictated an observance of a local festival, that that would constitute sufficient authority for its observance. The only difference being that the Jews were scattered throughout the empire. Matthew Henry states, “It was not a divine institution, and therefore it is not called a *holy day*, but a human appointment, by which it was made a *good day*, v. 19, 22. (1.) The Jews ordained it, and took it upon themselves (v. 27), voluntarily *undertook to do as they had begun*. v. 23. They bound themselves to this by common consent. (2.) Mordecai and Esther confirmed their resolve, that it might be the more binding on posterity, and might come well recommended by those great names.”²¹⁹
- 6.3. Others have suggested that the adoption of the festival commemorating the deliverance from Haman’s planned genocide, shows that the post-captivity Jews had taken a freer position regarding the strictness of the ceremonial aspects of Law and interpreted the introduction of the festival to be consistent with the spirit of the Mosaic system, if not the explicit letter. For example, Hellenistic Jews appear not to have been concerned about the question of authority for instituting festivals in addition to those decreed by Moses. They observed Nicanor’s Day (commemorating a victory by Judas Maccabeus over Nicanor, a Syrian general who hated the Jews and vowed to destroy them) and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) commemorating the re-dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus on December 14, 164 BC. So, the Jews of the Persian diaspora may have also been as willing to accept the authority of Mordecai and Esther to decree a new festival.
- 6.4. It may be thought that a possible resolution is to consider the festival as a national cultural and civic holiday rather than a religious ceremonial day. Mordecai did not prescribe any religious ritual (prayers, sacrifices, lighting of lamps, Scripture reading, etc.). However, the idea that there can be a distinction between the civic authority and the religious authority is a modern construct which was unknown in the ancient world. Religious ceremonies were endorsed by the civil authority, and what the civil authority dictated was part of the religious ceremony.
- 6.5. It is best to conclude that Mordecai acted in the role equivalent to a prophet and that the festival was instituted, through him, by express divine authority. In this regard, it could be argued that the fact that the book of Esther has been received into the canon of Scripture indicates that Mordecai, as its author, was considered to have prophetic authority. Thus, the observance of the festival was

²¹⁸ Robert Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, 1985 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans), p. 289.

²¹⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 653.

sanctioned by God. Also, the fact that the Jews obeyed Mordecai (Est 9.23) and began to keep the festival as Mordecai had decreed, is evidence that they considered the festival to be a divine institution delivered through a person acting in the role of a prophet with equivalent authority to a Moses or David.

6.5.1. If the observance of the festival was instituted by divine direction, through Mordecai, then we might expect to find some evidence that this festival was observed by Jesus and his disciples. This may be the case. John 5.1 refers to Jesus being in Jerusalem for an unnamed feast. It is generally believed that the feast was the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Ingathering or Feast of Booths), in the fall of 28 AD. However, it is possible that the unnamed feast was in the winter of 28 AD, and was Purim. Those who defend this view claim that the only feast which fell on a Sabbath (Jn 5.9, 16) between AD 25 and AD 35 was Purim, in AD 28 [why Purim would have to fall on a Sabbath, isn't clearly explained]. However, determining exact Gregorian dates for events in that era is not a simple matter. For example, using one Hebrew calendar converter,²²⁰ and selecting the 14th of Adar 3788 gives Sunday, February 27th, 28 AD. Alternatively, selecting the 4th of Adar, to account for the 'lost' days in the Gregorian calendar,²²¹ gives Thursday, February 17th. Whereas another converter²²² also gives Sunday, February 27th for the 14th of Adar. Neither of these days is a Saturday (i.e., a Sabbath). Those who claim that the unnamed feast was Purim also suggest that Jesus gave gifts to the poor (Est 9.22) by healing the poor man at the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5.2-9).

7. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.20-22)

7.1. *Statutory Holidays* – The only place the word 'holiday' occurs in the ESV is in Esther (Est 8.17; Est 9.19, 22; but also in the NASB and NKJV, but not in the NIV or KJV, in these verses). The word 'holiday' is a translation of the Hebrew expression 'good day' (literally, 'yom tob', יום טוב). The only other occurrences of the two words used together in the Hebrew OT are in Psalm 84.10 ('day ... better') and 1 Samuel 25.8 ('feast day'). The use of the word 'holiday' (i.e., *holy* day) is interpretive, it might have been better if the ESV had translated the expression as it did in 1 Samuel as 'feast day' as there is no indication that the Jews were required by Mordecai's instructions to abstain from work, as they were on the Sabbath. Nor was the day necessarily to be considered as a religious (ceremonial) '*holy* day'. Regardless, the use of the word 'holiday' raises questions about the place of statutory holidays in our age:

7.1.1. Does Mordecai's action give the NT Church a warrant to institute 'holidays'?

7.1.1.1. Richard Hooker (1554-1600), an Anglican priest, wrote an extensive polemic against the Puritan's position on worship and church government. In this polemic he defended the Church's power to prescribe festival days based on Mordecai's action; arguing that the festival was not a divine institution but was instituted by ecclesiastical authority, not civil authority.²²³

7.1.1.2. As we noted above, the fact that the Jews obeyed Mordecai (Est 9.23) and began to keep the festival as Mordecai had decreed is evidence that they considered the festival to be a divine institution delivered through a person acting in the role of a prophet with equivalent authority to a Moses or David. Since God delivered every change in the order, or form, of worship recorded in Scripture, through the prophetic (or apostolic) office, and since no prophet or apostle exists in the Church today, no festivals can be added which Christ or his Apostles did not prescribe for the Church.²²⁴

²²⁰ www.hebcal.com/converter/

²²¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar#Adoption

²²² stevemorse.org/jcal/jcal.html

²²³ Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, book 5, chapter 71 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1843), pp. 40-43; books.google.ca/books?id=iAYPAAAAYAAJ&

²²⁴ James R. Hughes, *In Spirit and Truth: Worship as God Requires (Understanding and Applying the Regulative Principle of Worship)*, 2005, chapter 7, Prophets and Covenants; available at: www.EPCToronto.org.

- 7.1.1.3. The Biblical view regarding Church's warrant to institute holidays is summarized by the Puritan document entitled *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in which it is stated that, "There is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued."²²⁵
- 7.1.2. Does Mordecai's action give a modern State a warrant to institute 'holidays'?
- 7.1.2.1. Since we have concluded that the festival was instituted by divine initiative through a prophet, the simple answer is that Mordecai's example provides no guidance or warrant for modern governments to institute statutory holidays.
- 7.1.2.2. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* also states, "Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for publick fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to his people."²²⁶ Notwithstanding this, this does not give governments a right to declare permanent statutory holidays that *require* business to cease operations. When they do this, they usurp God's right to declare a day of rest (Gen 2.3; Ex 20.8-11) and they replace the Lord's Day with secular (and pagan) equivalents.
- 7.2. *Sharing Help* – The Jews were to commemorate their deliverance with a feast and rejoicing. And they were also to send gifts of food to one another and give gifts (of food) to the poor.
- 7.2.1. What do all these have in common?
- 7.2.1.1. While feasting often includes personal indulgence in luxuries it can also include an element of giving—it requires the host of the feast to give lavishly to those in attendance (even if they are only those of his own family). Hosting a feast is a symbol of generosity.
- 7.2.1.2. Likewise, the Jews rejoicing in this context included an offering of thanksgiving to God for their deliverance.
- 7.2.1.3. Sending gifts of food to others and giving gifts to the poor are clearly examples of giving of one's possessions to others.
- 7.2.1.4. So, aspects of the festival decree involved thinking about others and not just one's self, and giving to others.
- 7.2.2. The observation of the festival was intended to demonstrate that those who had received mercy must, in turn, display gratitude and show mercy. Paul indicated that we are to work hard so that we are able to help the weak (those in need); for, as Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."²²⁷ (Acts 20.34-35) Why should we be generous in giving to others, particularly within the household of faith? Because it:
 - 7.2.2.1. Is a command of God (Dt 15.7-11)
 - 7.2.2.2. Pleases God (2 Cor 9.7)
 - 7.2.2.3. Reminds us that all the good things we have, have been given to us by God (Jam 1.17)
 - 7.2.2.4. Offers a tribute to God for what he has given to us (Ps 116.12-14)
 - 7.2.2.5. Widens our focus from ourselves, and reigns in selfishness (1 Cor 10.24; Phil 2.4)
 - 7.2.2.6. Emulates God's goodness and sacrificial grace toward us (Ps 145.16; Jn 3:16-17)
 - 7.2.2.7. Engenders in us a trust in God, who will provide (Eccl 11.1; Mal 3.10; 2 Cor 9.6, 10)
 - 7.2.2.8. Helps the receiver who may have material needs (Rom 12.13; Eph 4.28)
 - 7.2.2.9. Brings joy to the receiver (Phil 4.14-20)

²²⁵ "An Appendix touching Days and Places of Publick Worship," *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.

²²⁶ "An Appendix touching Days and Places of Publick Worship," *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.

²²⁷ Probably a well-known statement of Jesus which was quoted by the disciples but was not included in the Gospels (John 20.30; Jn 21.25). Paul included it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

- 7.2.2.10. Improves the bonds of companionship, friendship, and fellowship in ways that words of encouragement and comfort alone cannot (Gen 33.8-11).

Participation (Est 9.23-28)

1. How did the Jews respond to the instructions sent by Mordecai?
 - 1.1. They accepted the instructions sent my Mordecai to resolve the difference between the two forms (rural and urban, or Susa vs territories) of observance of the festival.
 - 1.2. They agreed to continue observing an annual festival (Est 9.21, 27) on two days—the 14th and 15th of Adar (Est 9.21, 27)—to commemorate their deliverance from Haman’s plot to destroy them.
2. What information do verses 24-25 provide? Why?
 - 2.1. The verses provide a condensed summary of the events which lead to inauguration of the festival, with a few key points within a collapsed timeframe (e.g., the time gap between the death of Haman and his ten sons on the gallows is not mentioned).
 - 2.2. The summary provides a justification for the institution of the annual observance of the festival, by referring to Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews and the reversal of circumstances so that the disaster came instead on his own head and on the heads of his ten sons. Mordecai wanted the Jews always to remember God’s providence in overruling Haman’s wickedness. He also continued his careful positioning of the narrative of the events by giving the credit for Haman’s death to the king.
 - 2.3. To this point the annual festival has not been given a name. While recounting the historical basis for the festival’s observance Mordecai includes a reference to Haman’s casting the *Pur*—which is not a Hebrew word, so Mordecai supplies a translation—and thus provides the basis for the festival’s name.
 - 2.4. The NKJV and KJV translations include Esther’s name in verse 25. They understand the feminine form of the verb ‘to go’ to refer to Esther and infer that ‘she came’ should be translated as ‘Esther came’. However, the feminine form of the verb does not require a female actor and modern translations have ‘it came before the king’—that is the matter of Haman’s plot. This is preferable, as Esther has not been mentioned in the context of the summary and is not the logical antecedent of the verb.
3. What was the name given to the festival?
 - 3.1. The name given to the festival by Mordecai and the Jews was ‘Purim’. It is based on the Old Persian (or older; from Assyrian or Akkadian) word for casting the lot (Est 3.7; Est 9.24). It was given a Hebrew plural form (the ending ‘im’).
 - 3.2. The name was selected because it would remind the Jews of the foolishness of casting lots to determine the future; just as the name for Passover reminded them that the angel passed over those who had the mark of blood from the lamb on their doorposts. The casting of lots turned out not to be propitious for Haman or the enemies of the Jews—to the contrary God turned the day into a disaster for them. There is irony in a God-ordained festival of the Jews being named after ‘chance’. It is a defiant rejection of fatalism and shows God’s sense of humour (Ps 2.4). The name Purim should forever remind us that the times and actions of all mankind are under the dominion of the sovereign God, and that he frustrates the evil sham of astrology and fortune telling (Is 44.24-26; Is 47.13).
4. For how long did the Jews commit to observe Purim? (27-28)
 - 4.1. They firmly obligated themselves, their descendants, and all who became proselytes (Est 8.17) to observe the two-day Purim festival yearly, for all generations to come. As a result, Purim became a national institution by decree and general consent.
 - 4.2. Why did all the Jews commit to observe Purim?
 - 4.2.1. Because of what Mordecai wrote to them—they had a preliminary version of what became

the book of Esther, which provided them with an account of how God protected his covenant people.

4.2.2. Because of what had happened to them—they had personally experienced the miraculous reversal of circumstances as they were transformed from victims to victors.

4.2.3. Because they accepted Mordecai's authority—both as a prophet with a God-given role to write a portion of Scripture and to institute a new festival, and as a legitimate civil authority over them.

4.3. Those who claim to be Jews today continue, after 2,500 years, to observe Purim. Purim is observed as a one-day or two-day feast in the early spring (on the 14th of Adar, but sometimes also on the 15th), a month before the Passover. The prior day (the 13th of Adar) is observed as a fast (Est 4.16). On either the 13th the congregation assembles to hear a public recitation of the book of Esther—during the reading, when the name of Haman is mentioned, the congregation offers boos and other noises using rattles; when Mordecai's name is mentioned the congregation cheers. On the second day of the feast, the Jews exchange gifts (generally a dessert) and make charitable donations for the poor.²²⁸ In some cases the observance of Purim has become a “Jewish Mardi Gras” with costumes and excessive eating and drinking of alcohol.

5. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.23-28)

5.1. *Celebration* – Should Christians celebrate Purim?

5.1.1. Within our congregation's historical, denominational, and theological context the question sounds almost foolish. However, Messianic Jews include the celebration of Purim within their liturgy.²²⁹ Also within the broader Evangelical Church the observance of Purim is considered to be discretionary—with arguments such as, “Since God did not command the celebration of Purim, we are not obligated to observe it.” “We can retain ceremonies, as long as they are not contrary to the word of God.” Or, “Since Purim wasn't replaced by a NT festival, as Passover was by the Lord's Supper, and does not represent the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross, observance of the festival isn't wrong.”

5.1.2. As we noted in our study of the previous section, the Biblical view regarding Church's warrant to institute holidays is summarized by the Puritan document entitled *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in which it is stated that, “There is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.”²³⁰

5.1.3. It is ironic that Evangelical Christians would consider it legitimate to observe Jewish festivals or festivals introduced by the Church in the Middle Ages (e.g., Christmas), which have no warrant in the word of God, when they largely ignore the one day God clearly ordained, that is to be kept holy—the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. Paul would ask proponents of observing Purim, “Who bewitched you?” (Gal 3.1) and Isaiah would tell them, “God hates your appointed feasts.” (Is 1.12-14).

5.1.4. Let us compare the Sabbath with Purim. How is the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day to be observed? By:

5.1.4.1. *Memorial* – It is a specially designated time to reflect on the work Jesus did on the Christ and of the glorious resurrection. It is a day that reminds us of our deliverance. Purim was a day that reminded the Jews of their deliverance.

5.1.4.2. *Meditation* – Performing and delighting in the exercises of public and private worship. As we noted, the book of Esther does not have any explicit references to worship, but we inferred that the festival of Purim would have included elements of worship—at

²²⁸ www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Winter_Holidays/Purim/purim.html; judaism.about.com/od/holidays/a/Purim.htm

²²⁹ www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Winter_Holidays/Purim/Scandal/scandal.html; www.jewsforjesus.org/judaica/purim

²³⁰ “An Appendix touching Days and Places of Publick Worship,” *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*.

minimum, praise and thanksgiving to God.

5.1.4.3. *Melioration* – Holy resting from work and recreation that is lawful on other days and doing whatever is required to contribute to rest. Purim was set aside as a day of rest, a sabbath, for the Jews.

5.1.4.4. *Maintenance* – Performing works and duties of necessity. Food was to be prepared and served on at Purim.

5.1.4.5. *Mercy* – Performing loving works of care and healing. Mordecai dictated that food was to be shared and gifts given to the poor.

5.1.4.6. *Merriment* – The Sabbath should be a joyous day, not a doleful day because we can't go about the business of the rest of the week (Amos 8.5). It is a day in which we should rejoice in our salvation, with anticipation of the eternal Sabbath yet to be revealed. Purim was designated as a day of feasting and rejoicing.

5.1.4.7. *Management* – Planning the use of our time and preparing in advance for the Sabbath. Food ingredients would have been procured and business facilities shuttered prior to the observance of Purim.

Therefore, the Church has no need of a separate festival such as Purim, since it has a weekly festival that is far better.

5.2. *Continuity* – However, the Jews' observance of Purim provides a valuable lesson for the modern Church.

5.2.1. The Jews at the time of Mordecai and Esther committed to observe the festival of Purim and to obligate their descendants in the following generations. 500 years after the events recorded in Esther the Jews at the time of Jesus were still observing the festival. And Jews today, 2,500 years later, continue to observe the festival.

5.2.2. Christians do not have this kind of cultural tenacity or sense of historical perspective. It has been 500 years since Martin Luther sparked the Reformation with his theses against indulgences and created a major controversy which rocked Europe for almost two centuries, but most Protestants today have no idea what the controversy was about. Similarly, there are few Protestants who could explain why the Church in Geneva in 1560 conducted worship the way it did or what principles the Puritans and Covenanters held regarding legitimate worship which honours God. Many Evangelicals today live essentially in the moment—dismissing anything that isn't new and is more than a few years old or ignoring the sacrifices previous generations of Christians made to establish and secure the foundation which we now have (e.g., 1st and 2nd century martyrs in Rome, the anti-Arians at the Council of Nicaea, the Hussites in Bohemia, the Lutherans in Wittenberg, the Puritans in England, and the Covenanters in Scotland). They are like the Athenians of old who were only interested in what was new (Acts 17.21). As one Christian blogger has said, we are “always one generation from ignorance.”²³¹ Thus, the Church is always one generation from extinction. Therefore, all Christian parents and Church leaders have an obligation to hand down the Biblically authorized traditions to the next generation.

5.2.3. We should continually ask God to give us wisdom so that we know what we believe and why, and the determination to ensure that the Biblically authorized traditions are preserved; such as true doctrine and worship—for example, confessional continuity, observance of the Lord's Day, and a correct adherence to the regulative principle of worship. The eminent Church historian, Jaroslav Pelikan (1923-2006), said in an interview reported in *US News & World Report* (1989-06-26). “Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”²³²

5.3. *Caution* – The Jews at the time of Esther understood the importance of being vigilant in the face

²³¹ Andrée Seu Peterson, “Always one generation from ignorance”, *World*, 2014-12-26; www.worldmag.com/2014/12/always_one_generation_from_ignorance

²³² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaroslav_Pelikan

of pending persecution. Therefore, they wished to keep the memory of Haman alive so that their descendants would always be cautious. The situation has not changed today. Christians, God's covenant people, are the most persecuted group on earth—with many millions of Christians living in countries where open persecution continues. Of these countries, nine out of the top ten (the exception is North Korea) have populations in which more than half of the citizens are Muslims.²³³ Islam is the modern equivalent of the Amalekite paganism of Haman and is virulently anti-Christian. Terrorism and persecution have never been successful, and never will be, in eliminating truth and the Church (Mt 16.18). Nevertheless, Satan is perversely pleased when he sees Christians being persecuted. When the last Christian is killed in the Muslim-dominated lands, or driven out, persecution of Christians will not end (Mt 24.9)—it will continue in a new form in the 'secular' and 'tolerant' West. Knowing this, like the Jews of old, Christians should:

5.3.1. Not depend on the institutions of the world for safety (Ps 146.3),

5.3.2. Be ready to flee, if necessary (Mt 10.23),

5.3.3. Be prepared to face persecution when it inevitably comes (Mt 5.11-12),

5.3.4. Pray constantly for the peace of Jerusalem, the Church (Ps 122.6; Heb 12.22), and

5.3.5. Trust God, since he knows what is best for his people, even if it involves persecution (Rom 8.28).

Precept (Est 9.29-32)

1. How did Esther and Mordecai reinforce the observance of Purim?
 - 1.1. They jointly endorsed a second letter about the observance of Purim to the Jews from Mordecai.
 - 1.2. The Hebrew, "she wrote Esther ... with all power (authority) to stand", is translated in the ESV as, "Esther ... gave full written authority confirming." In what form would this authority have been applied to the letter?
 - 1.2.1. By it being written down, applying the concept that when something (e.g., a business deal) is documented in writing (e.g., with a contract) it has more authority than a mere verbal expression of intent.
 - 1.2.2. By it having the titles of the queen and vizier included. The name, title, and role of a person issuing a document has bearing on its acceptance (e.g., Paul opened most of his letters with an indication of his role as an apostle).
 - 1.2.3. By having a royal seal affixed. Mordecai, as vizier, carried the royal seal of Ahasuerus (Est 8.8). Esther may have also had a personal seal which she also affixed to the letter.
 - 1.3. Mordecai and Esther wanted the second letter to be understood as having authority equivalent to formal legislation within the Persian Empire.
 - 1.4. A copy of this second letter was distributed to all the Jews in all 127 provinces throughout the empire to ensure that every Jew knew about how Purim was to be observed.
 - 1.5. What is an element of irony we find in this action of Esther?
 - 1.5.1. The reversal is complete. The counsellors of Ahasuerus had advised him to legislate that all women were to give honour to their husbands and be subject to them (Est 1.20, 22). The last recorded act of Esther, a woman and wife, is to issue a decree that applied to husbands as well as to wives.
2. What were the first and second letters?
 - 2.1. There are different possibilities for what the first and second letters were:
 - 2.1.1. The first letter was Mordecai's original decree (Est 8.9-10, 13-14), and the second was his decree regarding the days on which Purim was to be observed (Est 9.20-22). If this is the case, then Esther co-endorsed the second letter.
 - 2.1.2. The first letter was the one Mordecai wrote to clarify the observance of Purim (Est 9.20-22) and then a second letter, jointly endorsed by Mordecai and Esther, was issued as a follow up.

²³³ www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/

If this is the case, then it implies that the differences between the rural and urban (or capital and provincial) Jews (Est 9.9-16) persisted in spite of the first letter. However, the Jews' willing acceptance (Est 9.27) of Mordecai's decree suggests that a follow-up letter would not have been needed.

- 2.1.3. The first word in verse 29 in the Hebrew is 'she wrote' (תִּכְתֹּב), which seems to imply that Esther took a separate action from what Mordecai had taken. This may be reinforced by the statement in verse 32, indicating that it was a command ('word') of Queen Esther. If so, Esther may have written a letter of her own, addressed to the Jews, and had Mordecai co-sign it as vizier. It may have been issued with Mordecai's letter (Est 9.2-22) or separately.
- 2.2. Regardless of the particular identification of the first and second letters, the intent of the second letter was to indicate that the decreed observance of Purim had full legal authority and was binding on all the Jews in all the provinces.
3. What was their purpose for issuing the second letter, legislating Purim? To get the Jews throughout the Persian Empire to:
 - 3.1. Observe Purim. There was a didactic purpose for celebrating Purim. Mordecai and Esther did not want the Jews ever to forget how God overruled Haman's wickedness and preserved the Jews.
 - 3.2. Observe Purim at the appointed seasons (i.e., the 14th and 15th of Adar).
 - 3.3. Observe Purim with the appropriate fast and lamentation (i.e., on the 13th of Adar). This fast has become known as the 'Fast of Esther'.²³⁴
 - 3.4. Accept a single correct manner for observing the festival.
 - 3.5. Maintain peace and harmony between their different communities. Often God's people observe the downfall of their enemies only to turn the manner of the celebration of victory into a source of conflict among themselves! For, example, a congregation may have been tightly united while fighting city hall for years to get a building permit, but once they obtained approval, they self-destructed during the building project.
 - 3.6. Fulfill their committed obligation to observe Purim.
 - 3.7. Have their descendants (offspring) observe Purim.
4. What do the words "in words of peace and truth" (Est 9.30) tell us about Esther and Mordecai?
 - 4.1. Even though they issued legislation with authority, they did it with kindness and love, not with austerity and harshness. There was nothing imperious about either of them.
 - 4.2. They continued to maintain and display an attitude of humility and love. even though they had great authority.
 - 4.3. They provided a carefully explained rationale ('truth') for the legislation they had issued.
 - 4.4. They endeavoured to build up the unity of God's covenant people.
 - 4.5. The expression, "words of peace and truth" has been utilized by Jewish and Christian letter writers since the time of Esther and Mordecai.²³⁵ Winston Churchill used the words in a speech he gave at Royal Albert Hall in London, on 1943-09-29 at a meeting of 6,000 women, to encourage them to face the future with courage.²³⁶
5. Where were the practices regarding Purim recorded?
 - 5.1. The ESV has "recorded in writing" (Est 9.32). The Hebrew has "written in a scroll". In this instance, the NIV ("written down in the records") and other translations (NASB, NKJV, KJV:

²³⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_of_Esther

²³⁵ E.g., William Huntington, *Gleanings of the Vintage, Or Letters to the Spiritual Edification of the Church of Christ*, Parts 1-5, Letter 21 (London: Huntington, 1813), p. 59; books.google.ca/books?id=xgULAAAAYAAJ&dq; Nathan Nata Hannover, *Abyss of Despair* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1950), p. 47; books.google.ca/books?id=RcRBAQAAQBAJ; "Words of Peace and Truth" is the title of a tract produced in 1782 by the Jewish scholar Naphtali Herz Wessely, to encourage Central European Jewry to accept the Edict of Toleration issued by Emperor Joseph II of Austria; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Words_of_Peace_and_Truth.

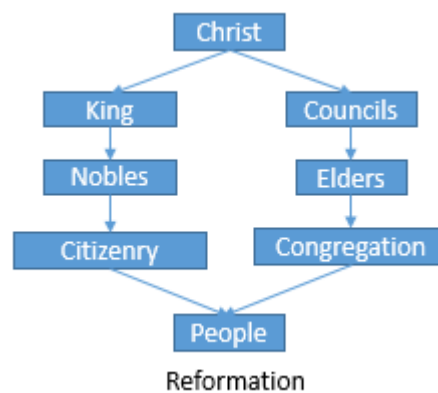
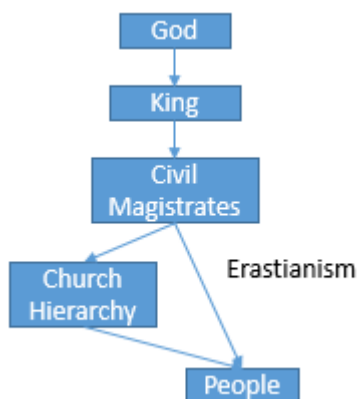
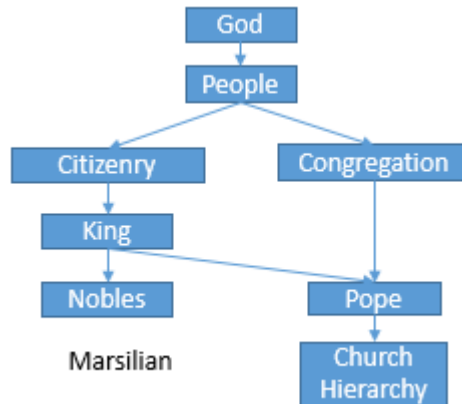
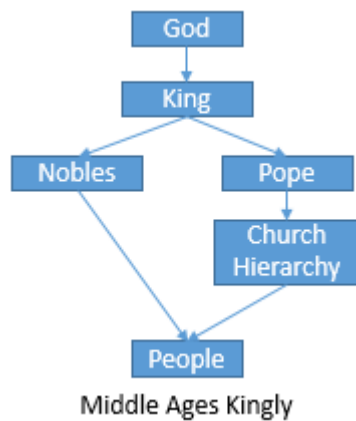
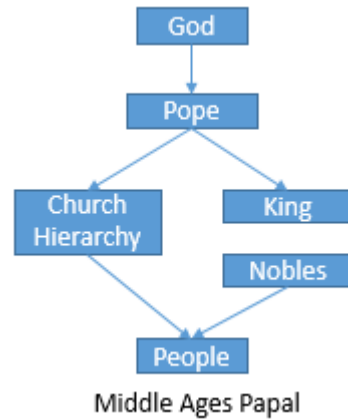
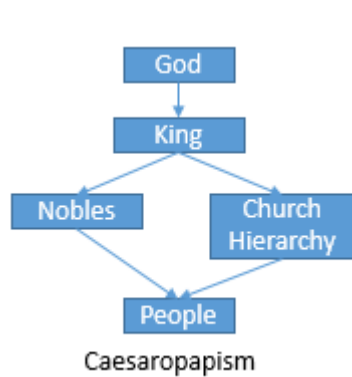
²³⁶ archive.org/stream/immortalword00chur/immortalword00chur_djvu.txt

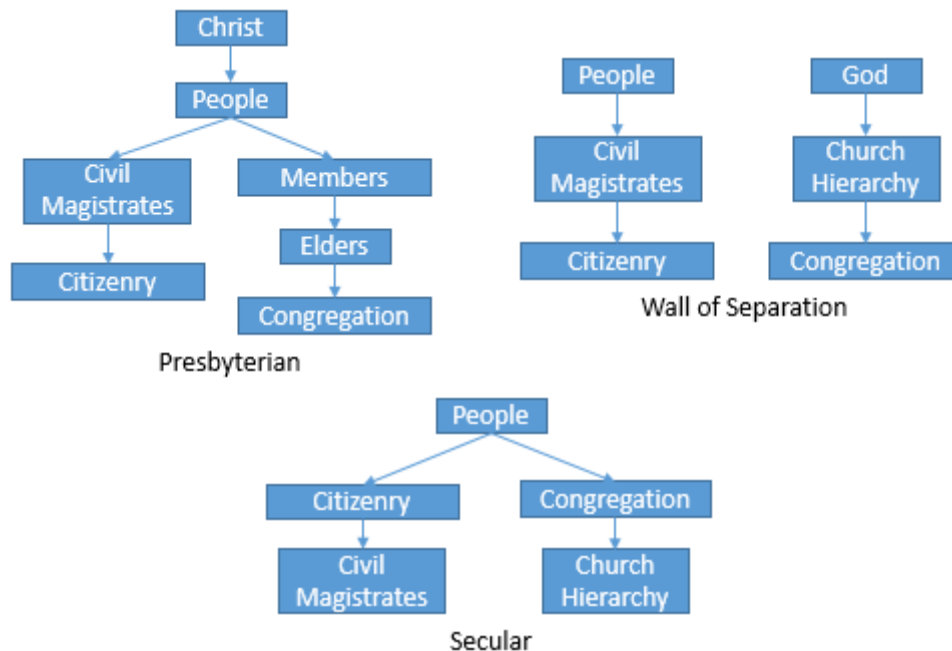
- “written in a book”) have a more literal translation than the ESV.
- 5.2. Esther and Mordecai had the practices of Purim written down in a book. This may have been the book we now call Esther, or it may have been a copy of the legislation and letters that had been distributed, which were added to the Persian archives (Est 2.23; Est 6.1; Est 10.2).
- 5.3. The practices were documented, authenticated, and preserved for future generations. This written record would be preferable to orally transmitted tradition for ensuring that the practices remained consistent and pure to the standards dictated by Mordecai.
6. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 9.29-32)
- 6.1. *Consideration* – Mordecai and Esther’s approach for dealing with the rift between the two groups about observance of days for Purim was:
- *Principled* – They decreed how Purim was to be observed. However, their decree was not based on mere human whim or opinion but was in accordance with the will of God. Mordecai, as a prophet, was following God’s leading in ordaining the observance of the festival.
 - *Peaceful* – They demonstrated a sincere desire to see harmony (peace) prevail within the covenant community.
 - *Prescribed* – They provided detailed, documented guidance for how the festival was to be observed.
 - *Permanent* – They established a festival which would endure for many generations, and which would honour the traditions of the past while engaging future generations.
 - *Pastoral* – They offered an approach for dealing with the division—creating a two-day observance, rather than picking a single day which would have offended one party or the other. By doing this, they ensured that both parties could comfortably adopt the practice.
- They set a good example for how leaders in the Church should work within their congregations and denominations. Churches need to be governed by men who approach their duties in a manner similar to that of Mordecai and Esther which is:
- *Principled* – Too often we see principles abandoned because pastors or churches wish to attract crowds or gain prestige, or because they don’t want to be bothered by the effort required to stand for their historical principles, or suffer potential losses (e.g., positions or pensions).
 - *Peaceful* – Pride is the downfall of many congregations and denominations. It should be one of our greatest desires to see peace maintained within the Church of Christ. However, the quest for peace must be founded on the principles of truth (Zech 8.16, 19). Both truth with discord, or peace without truth, lead to disaster.
 - *Prescribed* – Confessional unity and consistency are scoffed at today by many in the Church. They believe that carefully written statements of agreement cause discord, rather than unity. However, where there is no documented confession, confusion and disharmony are sure to follow. Two cannot walk together unless they have agreement (Amos 3.3). Confessional unity (e.g., a covenant of church membership or a statement of faith) in churches is a witness to a world which has abandoned every form of standard.
 - *Permanent* – The leaders of a congregation or denomination should be establishing a foundation for the future—the next generation and beyond. It is not the current leaders’ church, but Christ’s; and it is his desire that the Church fill the earth and encompass every generation (Ps 78.5; Mt 6.10; Mt 28.19-20; 2 Tim 2.2).
 - *Pastoral* – Leaders in the Church are not to be dictatorial tyrants lording it over God’s people, but pastors (shepherds) caring for the sheep (Jn 21.15-17; 2 Tim 2.24-25; 1 Thess 2.7; 1 Pt 5.1-3).
- 6.2. *Communication* – Mordecai and Esther sent letters containing *words* to the Jews describing the rationale for the observance of Purim and how it was to be observed. They also sent *words* of “peace and truth”. Their objective in sending their communique was to instruct and encourage the Jews. We must not underestimate the power of words.

- 6.2.1. What evidence shows that words are important?
- 6.2.1.1. God created the universe through words (Gen 1.3). His words will shake the creation (Heb 12.26-27).
 - 6.2.1.2. God communicated his will for mankind through words in the Bible. In popular thinking, a picture may be considered worth a thousand words. However, God did not communicate his permanent revelation through other media such as a painting or a graphical representation—for example, the plans for the Temple were given in words rather than with an architect's blueprint; and the boundaries for allocation of the land of Israel to the tribes were described in words, not documented in a map.
 - 6.2.1.3. All of our conscious thinking and ability to form concepts is dependent on the use of words. Consider for example, concepts or abstractions such as 'city', emotions such as 'love', or descriptions of physical attributes such as 'red'. All of these depend on our ability to use symbolic communication in words. Even when we communicate in images, for example through a painting, we often need words to describe the meaning of the image—consider for example, a piece of abstract art, which requires a title and often an explanation for it to be understood.
 - 6.2.1.4. Preaching is God's chosen instrument for the advance of his kingdom (Rom 10.14-15). Effective preaching is more than just informing, it is motivating. It is aimed at changing hearts and wills (through the power of the Holy Spirit).
 - 6.2.1.5. Teaching is accomplished through words as much as, or sometimes more than, by example or hands on practice (2 Tim 3.15-17).
 - 6.2.1.6. Words are important for communicating needs (Mt 6.9-13; Mt 7.7; Jam 1.5).
 - 6.2.1.7. Words can have consequences which for evil or good. They can inflame hatred and incite to war, or diffuse anger and restore peace (Prov 15.1-2). They form the basis of covenants and treaties of cooperation.
 - 6.2.1.8. Words declare people 'innocent' or 'guilty' in civil courts or in God's court (Mt 25.21).
 - 6.2.1.9. All of the promises of God to his people are shared with words (Josh 21.45; Josh 23.14).
 - 6.2.1.10. We are to encourage one another with words of eternal hope (1 Thess 4.18).
 - 6.2.1.11. We worship God by offering words of praise and adoration (Heb 13.15) and intelligible petitions through prayer (Mt 6.7-13).
- 6.2.2. Since words are so important, what must we do with them?
- 6.2.2.1. Guard our tongues so that only edifying words are spoken (Ps 39.1; Col 4.6; Jam 3.5-12).
 - 6.2.2.2. Keep our words free of gossip and slander and other forms of evil (2 Cor 12.20; Eph 4.29; Eph 5.4).
 - 6.2.2.3. Speak the truth in love (Eph 4.15). Words of truth are the only foundation of true peace. False words, at best, provide only an ephemeral sense of wellbeing.
- 6.3. *Cooperation* – We observed earlier that Mordecai held the office of a Biblical prophet.²³⁷ In this office he wrote a portion of the Bible (the book of Esther) and established Purim as a standing festival to be observed by all Jews. He also held the office of vizier in the Persian Empire. So, he held both a religious office and a civil office (using our modern terminology). He was like David who was both a prophet and a king, Daniel who was a prophet and a high official within the Babylonian and Persian administrations, and Nehemiah who was a prophet and a territorial governor (also within the Persian administration). Esther, as queen, also supported Mordecai in the establishment of the festival of Purim. From their example, and from other examples in the OT (Gen 47.1-12; Ezra 1.1-4; Ezra 6.6-12; Neh 13.19-22), we find the civil administration of a non-Christian nation supporting the Church. The relationship between Church and State has been

²³⁷ See the sections entitled *Prophet* and *Prescription*; Est 9.20-22.

a matter of discussion and debate since the time when Constantine endorsed Christianity within the Roman Empire. Various models have been proposed for defining the relationship between Church offices and civil offices, the source and flow of authority, and the origin of the right to govern. The diagrams below provide an overview of some of the models which have been proposed over the past 1,700 years:





6.3.1. In the past, supporters of some of these models believed that it was necessary to engage in extreme measures to establish their preferred model, such as civil disobedience, protests, creation and enforcement of laws, issuance of decrees and declarations, enforced tax collection, excommunication, and even war. Debates about the relationship between Church and State continue today. For example, there are many who question whether:

6.3.1.1. Church buildings should be tax exempt

6.3.1.2. The government should enforce the Ten Commandments

6.3.1.3. Prayer should be permitted in a government building

6.3.1.4. Library and school rooms can be rented for religious services

6.3.1.5. Money collected through taxes can be used to fund religion-based schools

6.3.1.6. Adherents of false religions have a right to practice their rituals and ceremonies (e.g., slaughtering animals within residential areas).

6.3.2. Views that dominate much of Western thinking today attempt to create a thick wall of separation between religious practices and a secular state. The proponents of the idea of a secular state, permitting religious pluralism, are unable to see the foolishness and dangers of their position, including the impossibility of:

6.3.2.1. Creating a secular (non-religious) state. The so-called ‘secular state’ takes a religious position, since it is anti-Christian and endorses the religion of secular humanism.

6.3.2.2. Defining morally legitimate laws (all law making involves making moral decisions) without an objective standard—God’s law summarized in the Ten Commandments.

6.3.2.3. Making pluralism work, because no ‘fair’ means of adjudicating between the conflicting systems and priorities can be defined.

6.3.2.4. Avoiding support for ‘the might makes right’, ‘the loudest voice gets preferential treatment’, or ‘who pays the most, wins’ approaches for allocating resources, rights, and privileges.

6.3.2.5. Avoiding the moral chaos and physical dangers which are the results of a society rejecting the law of God.

6.3.2.6. Avoiding the dangers associated with permitting and even endorsing the evil practices of false religions such as Islam.

6.3.3. Since all kings are to acknowledge God as their supreme master (Ps 2.10-12), the Biblical

requirement is for the civil magistrate to support the true religion—i.e., Christianity—and to prohibit the practice of false religions. This is the Bible’s teaching, since:

- 6.3.3.1. God’s Law, as given in the Bible, is not one of many possible ‘standards’, it is the only standard:
 - 6.3.3.1.1. All men know innately what God requires (i.e., there is a ‘natural law’), but men suppress the truth (Rom 1.18-31). God has also revealed his law in written form (Dt 4.13; Dt 5.6-22).
 - 6.3.3.1.2. God’s law is not just a standard for faith and personal holiness for Christians; it is the only definitive standard for morality.
 - 6.3.3.1.3. God’s law applies to all men through all time and in all nations and gives practical guidelines for all areas of human relationships (Gen 9.4-7; Lev 24.22; Neh 13.20, 21; Ps 2.1-7, 10-12; Ps 33.8; Jonah 3.1-10; Mt 14.3-5; Mt 24.14 [compare with Mt 28.19-20]; Acts 17.24-31; 2 Tim 3.15-17).
- 6.3.3.2. Every government is to be subject and subservient to God (2 Chron 20.6; Ps 2.1-12; Dan 5.21; Dan 4.25; Rom 13.1-7).
- 6.3.3.3. Christianity is the only true religion. All other religions are false, and impostors or imitators of the true religion (Jn 14.6; Acts 4.12; Phil 2.9-11).
- 6.3.3.4. Man does not have a right to proclaim atheism or any false religion, nor to endorse the existence of a plurality of religious views (Ex 20.4-6; Dt 8.19; Ps 53.1; Mt 4.10; Acts 17.22-31).
- 6.3.4. The idea that the civil magistrate is to establish and support Christianity as the only religion of a nation is not a popular or politically correct position today in our society or in the Church.
 - 6.3.4.1. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapter 23, ‘of the Civil Magistrate’, of the 1647 version) provides a good summary of the duty of the civil magistrate with respect to the Church: “The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide, that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.”
 - 6.3.4.2. Mordecai and Esther (along with Nehemiah and other OT prophets), and the original version of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, operate under the principle that the civil magistrate has a responsibility to ensure that the Church is functioning correctly. The basic model is one of a mutual responsibility within a separation of powers. Each sphere, under Christ, has the responsibility to administer within its sphere of authority and to call the other sphere to account as the case may arise.
 - 6.3.4.2.1. A proper role of the civil magistrate is to hold the Church accountable before God for the proper observance of Biblical principles of doctrine, worship and discipline, and the right administration of the sacraments.
 - 6.3.4.2.2. In the same way, the Church is to hold the civil magistrate accountable for the just administration of the laws of God, the execution of justice consistent with God’s standards and examples (e.g., capital punishment), and the pursuit of peace (police and military) within the realm.

Privileged Distinction (Est 10.1-3)

- 1. What does the account tell us that Ahasuerus did?
 - 1.1. He imposed a tax on the land, including the “coastlands (islands) of the sea”.
 - 1.2. It is generally agreed that the ‘islands of the sea’ is a reference to the islands in the Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea which were under the control of the Persian Empire at its peak—i.e., at

the time of Darius I Hystaspes (reigned 522-486 BC).

- 1.3. It appears that it was a policy reversal. Ahasuerus had previously granted a tax amnesty (Est 2.18); now taxes were being re-imposed.
 - 1.4. The imposition of taxes wasn't a new practice introduced during the time of the Persian Empire. Forms of trade tariffs and duties, poll taxes and wealth taxes had existed for over 1,000 years before the time of Esther.²³⁸ So, there must have been something significant or unique about this tax which Ahasuerus imposed. It may have been a revolutionary restructuring of the tax system (on the order of magnitude of the US or Canada changing their personal income tax systems to a flat percentage, or eliminating corporate income taxes entirely). Readers of the book of Esther, at the time the account was recorded in the national archives, would have known the context and understood the full significance of the imposition of this tax.
2. Why are we told about this taxation?
- 2.1. It provides the historical context for when the events recorded in the book of Esther took place. God, through the author, informs us that these events actually happened, and that the account is not an historical novella written centuries later to provide a justification for the observance of Purim or as a morale boosting adventure-story for use among the Jews being oppressed by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - 2.2. The reference to the taxation connects the power and authority of Ahasuerus with the abilities of his vizier, Mordecai. It informs us, without stating it in a way which would offend the king, that the greatness of the king was dependent on the wisdom of his vizier. The 'and' which begins verse 2 connects the statement about the taxation with the following and implies that it was a work of Mordecai. The change in tax policy and the imposition of the tax was at the advice of Mordecai, who recommended a new form of empire-wide taxation to replace the previous system for revenue generation, which was primarily based on conquest through war and plundering of treasuries. The new system of taxation would establish a consistent and reliable source of income for the government.
 - 2.3. Haman had proposed that in exchange for the destruction of the Jews he would remit to the treasury 10,000 talents of silver (Est 3.9). However, this would likely not have come from his own purse, but from the plunder which would have been taken from the Jews (Est 3.13). The wealth and property confiscated from the Jews should have belonged to Ahasuerus' treasury anyway, but Haman had probably planned on keeping some of it (Est 3.11)—depriving the treasury of potential revenue. However, the (re-)introduction of taxation indicates that as Haman's plan was overthrown the King's treasury was enriched. The implication is that the protection of the Jews enriched the king and contributed to the overall administration of the empire. Ahasuerus was blessed because of the presence of a Jew—in the seed of Abraham all nations on earth will be blessed (Gen 22.18).
 - 2.4. Instead of the Jews being plundered to fund the Persian treasury or the nobles' (e.g., Haman) debauched lifestyle, all the Persians were taxed, leaving the Jews with the bulk of their wealth and income. There is an irony in this—the Persian Empire was effectively plundered (Neh 4.4) to the benefit of God's covenant people—as the Jews did to the Egyptians at the time of the exodus (Ex 3.22; Ex 12.36). This was an indirect form of judgement on the Persian Empire.
3. What position did Mordecai hold? (Est 10.3)
- 3.1. He was second in rank to the king. This means that he was the prime (or, first) minister, the vizier, of the Persian Empire.
 - 3.2. Why are we told this, at this point in the narrative, since we were previously informed of it (Est 8.2)?
 - 3.2.1. The purpose is to remind the readers that Mordecai had replaced Haman, and that the enemy of the Jews had been deposed and executed and that a Jew had been elevated to a high

²³⁸ "Taxes in the Ancient World", *University of Pennsylvania Almanac*, www.upenn.edu/almanac/v48/n28/AncientTaxes.html

position.

4. What did Mordecai accomplish in his role as vizier? (Est 10.2)
 - 4.1. He performed “acts of power and might”.
 - 4.2. We are not told what his works were, but we can legitimately assume that during his tenure as vizier, the Persian Empire was well run and organized, since Mordecai, unlike his predecessor Haman, did not seek his own interests but worked for the welfare of his people, the good of Ahasuerus, and the good of the empire. By working for the good of the empire, he advanced the welfare of the Jews (Jer 29.4-7).
 - 4.3. His administration would have been based on God’s laws. During his tenure he would have treated people with fairness, equity, and justice. People would not have been afraid of capricious and arbitrary behaviour from the government; but would have felt that injustices would have been rectified.
5. What did Mordecai seek during his tenure as vizier? (Est 10.3)
 - 5.1. He sought the welfare of his people and peace.
 - 5.2. He had not grasped for recognition, it was thrust upon him. He knew that it was God who had placed him in his position. So, he strove to leave a legacy of good government. He did not utilize intrigue, duplicity, or ruthlessness to achieve personal goals. Rather, he lived a God-honouring life among the pagans so that the Jews would be kept free from harassment and oppression.
 - 5.3. He laid a foundation of peace within the Persian Empire that lasted for almost 200 years—until 330 BC. During that time the Jews enjoyed an unprecedented prosperity and peace. The Jews continued to have a measure of peace and prosperity for another 100 years after the breakup of Alexander’s empire into four smaller kingdoms.
 - 5.4. We are left with an image of Mordecai as a great and good statesman in the administration of the Persian government. He is set before us, like Daniel, as an example of what all administrators should strive for—the advancement of the welfare of their people and peace within their nations.
6. How was Mordecai regarded during his tenure as vizier?
 - 6.1. He was advanced with high honour. Whether this means more than his holding the position of vizier is not clear. However, it could mean that his wise and just governance was recognized by the king, who spoke highly of him. This would have been quite a contrast to a man like Haman. During Haman’s tenure as vizier, people would have been in constant fear before his pride, anger, and vengeful spirit.
 - 6.2. Mordecai was considered to be great among the Jews and was popular with them. They would have been relieved and proud to have a godly man administering the affairs of the empire.
 - 6.3. Even though Mordecai had a particular concern for the welfare of the Jews, he would not have played favourites to advance the Jews’ welfare above that of the other citizens in the empire. By being consistently fair, he would have supported the Jews and all people in the realm.
7. Where were the works of Mordecai recorded?
 - 7.1. In the “Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia”—a formula similar to that used to refer to the lives of the kings of Judah (2 Ki 8.23; etc.). The chronicles were first from Media and then from Persia, because the empire was founded by Cyrus the Mede, who expanded it first to the south into Persia and then to the east, north, and west until it became the largest kingdom, by extent and percentage of the world’s population.
 - 7.1.1. One way in which Mordecai was honoured was to have his achievements recorded in the archives of a pagan king.
 - 7.1.2. We have seen examples of this kind of honour, when Christians have been recognized for their achievements by the secular and popular media—e.g., as athletes (Eric Liddell, Kurt Warner, Mariano Rivera, and Curt Schilling), as survivors and prisoners of war (Louis

- Zamperini), as businessmen (Kraft, Heinz, and LeTourneau), and as politicians (Margaret Thatcher, George W. Bush).
- 7.2. The author of the book of Esther, challenges his contemporary readers to consult the archives to establish the facts of the narrative here recorded. By so doing, he intends for his readers, including us, to accept the record as an accurate account of events which transpired in the Persian Empire during the reign of Darius I, in the decade of 519-510 BC.
- 7.3. As we have noted often, the book of Esther has many examples of irony. Another example is found in the statement about the events of Mordecai's achievements being recorded in the permanent archives of the Persian Empire. The book of Esther has outlived the archives of Persia. While empires come and go, God's word cannot be destroyed (Mt 5.18; 1 Pt 1.24-25).
8. What are some lessons which we can derive from this section? (Est 10.1-3)
- 8.1. *Civil Servants* – Previously we noted²³⁹ examples of civil servants, who were faithful to God while serving under pagan governments, through whom God advanced the cause of the covenant community—including, Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. We also noted that it is legitimate for Christians to serve as civil magistrates. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapter 23, 'of the Civil Magistrate') states, in summarizing the Biblical position: "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth ..." In addition, we identified²⁴⁰ the attributes which are desirable in a civil servant: a person who fears God and is trustworthy, wise, understanding and respected; and who hates dishonest gain. The nature of Mordecai's service identified in this chapter, and the character of Mordecai and Esther given throughout the book, provide us with additional guidance on how Christians should act when serving in government positions. They should be:
- 8.1.1. *Competent and wise*. Mordecai exhibited his competency and wisdom by (re-)instituting a taxation system which provided a more effective means of funding government operations. A wise civil magistrate will consider carefully the implication of decrees and enact laws which are impartial and beneficial for all citizens within the nation.
- 8.1.2. *Seeking the citizens' welfare*. This does not mean that they will be socialists, who steal from the productive to fund the indolent, incompetent, and immoral. A civil magistrate who is watching out for the welfare of *all* citizens will emphasize transparent justice and fairness.
- 8.1.3. *Speaking peace*. Good civil magistrates will not engender class-warfare, pitting one segment of society against another, but will strive for the advancement of a common good.
- 8.1.4. *Christians*. The contrast between Haman's short time as vizier and that of Mordecai's shows that the ideal state of affairs is when a nation is governed by Christians who are competent leaders and skilled administrators. The power brokers of the Western nations today are of two minds when they consider what makes for good government. They want the benefits that Christian civil servants provide—good governance, morality, justice, fairness, and consistency. But they don't want civil servants who are vocal about their Christian faith and beliefs²⁴¹ or who oppose the popular 'politically correct' notions of our day—such as access to abortion, government sponsored same-sex marriage, elimination of capital punishment, high levels of government intervention in the economy, inequitable taxation models which penalize the productive, and meddling environmentalism (e.g., carbon taxes or cap-and-trade schemes). As the nations of the West drive out Christians from government service, we will see an increase in corruption, graft, and bribery, and an increase in poor service. Similarly, rapid decline will occur in countries dominated by Islam which have been driving out

²³⁹ *Patriarch*; Est 2.19-20

²⁴⁰ *Pondering*; Est 1.13-15

²⁴¹ "God, Gays and the Atlanta Fire Department", *New York Times*, 2015-01-13. www.nytimes.com/2015/01/13/opinion/god-gays-and-the-atlanta-fire-department.html?_r=1

Christians (e.g., Iraq, Egypt, and Syria). We should pray for our leaders (1 Tim 2.1-2), and that God will raise up men like Mordecai (and Daniel) who will provide good and wise governance.

- 8.2. *Caesar's Share* – Mordecai's involvement in re-instituting or re-organizing the Persian taxation system reminds us that taxation is required to finance government administrations. Taxation is legitimate, and Christians are to participate in paying taxes (Mt 22.17-21; Rom 13.6, 7). Since taxes are necessary and legitimate, an objective of governments, which care about the welfare and peace of their people, should be to put in place good tax systems. Based on Biblical principles and sound economics, a good tax system, should be:
- 8.2.1. *Fair and equitable*. Taxation should not be arbitrary or show partiality (Lev 19.15; Dt 16.19; although these references refer to *judicial* decisions they can apply generally to the administration of government).
- 8.2.2. *Universal, applied to everyone equally*. Since God instituted flat taxes (Lev 27.30; Ex 30.11-16; Dt 14.22) they must be the most equitable form of taxation—contrary to the position of economists and politicians who argue for 'progressive taxation' schemes. There should not be tax exemptions based on income levels or tax-reduction incentives (e.g., to attract a new manufacturing plant, support a sports team or particular industry, subsidize a profession or industry, support a charitable organization, support married couples or families with children, provide exemptions for handicaps, etc.). Flat taxes can be applied in various forms: property tax, consumption tax, income tax, poll tax, import duties. It appears that taxes on inherited estates should be excluded by God's consideration for families (Prov 13.22; 2 Cor 12.14).
- 8.2.3. *Transparent*. Taxation should be direct, obvious and visible. It should not be complex to understand and administer. Modern tax regulations, which are often many times longer than the entire text of the Bible, are too complex for anyone but full-time professionals to understand—and at times even professional 'tax-experts' cannot understand them!
- 8.2.4. *Unavoidable*. The form of taxation utilized should be designed to make it difficult for people to avoid paying their taxes. Consumption and income taxes can be avoided by those who utilize a black-market. Import duties can be avoided by smugglers (e.g., with cigarette smuggling into Canada). In addition, import or export taxes or duty hinder the free trade of goods and services and are therefore an indirect form of theft. In our modern globally-integrated economies, the best form of taxation may be property or poll taxes, because it is considerably more difficult to find ways to avoid paying them—basically, if you want to live in a country you are taxed either for the land you live on or for your physical presence in the country.
- 8.2.5. *For legitimate activities*. Taxes should be collected for funding only the legitimate and necessary activities of government, as defined by God—e.g., court administration, policing, or national defence. It is inappropriate for governments to use tax revenues, for example, to finance sporting events (e.g., to subsidize the Olympics) or to build sports venues, or to fund services which can be provided more effectively and efficiently by the private sector (e.g., electrical power generation, education or medical services), or private individuals, churches, religious organizations, or charitable organizations (e.g., welfare).
- 8.2.6. *Bearable and not oppressive*. Good economic theory asserts, and history proves, that high taxation rates, oppress the population and rob them of their wealth and wellbeing and motivation to act responsibly, rather than improving their quality of life and living conditions. A good principle appears to be that total government taxation should not exceed God's requirement of a 10% tithe. The more governments tax, the more 'services' they attempt to provide (e.g., education, healthcare, welfare, economic development) and the more they become paternalistic and a replacement for God. Limiting total taxes to 10% would remind those in government positions that they are not God and would compel individual citizens to take responsibility for their personal and family's welfare.

- 8.2.7. *Representative of the citizens*. For example, tax rates and increases could require the express permission of an absolute majority of the voting-age population (e.g., through plebiscite).
- 8.3. *Certified Statesmen* – We bemoan the fact that few statesmen are found in senior government positions. Although they may not be as overtly bad as Haman, many of the men who are found in these positions appear to be graspers after power or popularity. Mordecai had power thrust upon him; but he did not abuse his position. He exhibited the attributes of a true statesman, which we would wish to see in all leaders today. He was:
- 8.3.1. *Principled* – He did not compromise his foundational beliefs in God and his word in order to advance his own cause, or the cause of the Jews, by the means employed by the world. He relied on doing the right thing for God and had faith that God would work out his plan for the good of his covenant people.
- 8.3.2. *Wise* – The tax scheme he implemented contributed to the foundation of a strong central government which was able to control most of the rebellious provinces and establish a lasting peace.
- 8.3.3. *Humble* – Even though he was second in rank in the kingdom and had been given high honours by the king, he was held in great esteem among the Jews. He was respected because he was humble and put the welfare of others before his own. He wasn't like many who, when honoured by other men, think that they are more important than others and forget their roots and the people of their origin.
- 8.3.4. *Brave* – Mordecai spoke up for the welfare of the Jews. This would not have been a popular position, just like speaking out for Christians or Biblical truths today can jeopardize a person's career. But Mordecai did not have a concern about what might happen to him, his objective was to do what was right for the welfare of God's people.
- 8.4. *Centuries' Span* – The foundation of peace within the Persian Empire, established by Mordecai, lasted for over three centuries, beyond the end of the Persian Empire into the Hellenistic period. God worked through Mordecai, across the span of centuries, to put in place an environment in which his covenant people could flourish. During this time, the Jews established three major centres of habitation—in Palestine (in Jerusalem and Judea), Egypt (primarily in Alexandria), and Syria-Babylon—with smaller clusters throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. God was preparing for the arrival of the Messiah, and each community of the diaspora would play an important role: the Messiah was to be born in Judea (Mic 5.2); the Egyptian diaspora became a place of safety for the infant Jesus (Mt 2.13-15); the Syrian Jewish community produced the Apostle Paul (he was from Tarsus), and the Syriac translations of the Bible have contributed important textual validation for both the Hebrew text of the OT and the early Greek text of the NT. Despite the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes, many Jews survived throughout the territories which had been included in the Persian Empire. The presence of many Jews, from different parts of the diaspora, in Jerusalem on the Day Pentecost (Acts 2.9, 10), is a witness to the peace which Mordecai had established.

Principles Divulged

Over the course of our study of the book of Esther we have identified a total of about 150 lessons which we have derived from the approximately 50 sections we have considered. From these lessons, what are some over-arching principles which we take from our study of this book?

1. *Storied Past* – There are a number of indicators within the book of Esther which provide evidence that it is an historical account, and not a Jewish novella or polemic written in the 2nd century BC as many 'scholars' today suggest. The naming of individuals (Est 1.13-15; Est 9.7-8), the provision of specific details—such as the particulars relating to Ahasuerus' banquet (Est 1.5-8), the operations of the harem (Est 2.8-14), the assassination plot against Ahasuerus (Est 2.19-23), the specific names of the king's seven advisors (Est 1.10) and Haman's ten sons (Est 9.7-9), and the imposition of a tax known to the readers (Est 10.1)—and the implication that a reader could validate the account by consulting the

official Persian archives (Est 10.2), indicate that it was written by a contemporary of the events—whom we concluded was Mordecai. As an historical account it provides insight into the specific operations of the Persian monarchy and the general operations of ancient Middle Eastern monarchies. It is more than just a good story and accurate history. Even though it speaks of events which occurred over 2,500 years ago, it is the work of a person who acted in the capacity of an OT prophet. Therefore, it is a component of God's revelation and provides valuable instruction for us (2 Tim 3.15-17). We have discovered how relevant it is for providing guidance for Christians living in the 21st century, in a pagan society which despises God, his word, and his Christ.

2. *Sinner's Perversions* – Before the flood God declared, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen 6.5) Removing wicked men from the earth did not cleanse mankind's wicked hearts. Within a few generations, men had re-introduced empire building and false worship (Gen 11.1-9).
 - 2.1. In the book of Esther, we see numerous examples of how perversely wicked men can be, including:
 - 2.1.1. Exhibitions of excessive pride and holding grudges (Est 1.3-9; Est 3.1-6; Est 5.9-14), abuses of power and position (Est 2.1-4; Est 3.2b-6, 10-11, 8-15; Est 5.9-14), and lusting after pleasure (Est 1.3-9; Est 2.12-14).
 - 2.1.2. The sinful passions which accompany excessive use of alcohol (Est 1.10-12; Est 3.12-15).
 - 2.1.3. Espousal of a value system which delights in torture and death (Est 5.9-14).
 - 2.1.4. Persecution of God's people. This persecution can take many forms, including making false charges against them (Est 3.8-9).The corruption that almost invariably accompanies the human exercise of power (Est 3.10-15), including the persecution of Christians (Est 3.10-15; Est 5.9-14), emphasizes the need for Christians always to be vigilant (Est 9.23-28).
 - 2.2. We also encounter a number of examples of how different the worldview is of those who hold to pagan religions, in contrast to those who approach life with a Biblical worldview; for example:
 - 2.2.1. The poor treatment of women (Est 1.16-22), sex-slavery (Est 2.1-4), and polygamy (Est 2.5-8, 12-14).
 - 2.2.2. Belief in fatalism and dependence on superstitious practices (Est 3.7; Est 6.12-13).
 - 2.2.3. Living for the moment and service of self, rather than for the glory of God (Est 1.3-9).Islam and Hinduism are primary modern examples of the perversions of paganism which were found in ancient Persian culture.
3. *Supreme Providence* – God's control over every detail of life—including the disposition of kings, and the raising and dispersing of the nations—is exhibited in the book of Esther. The underlying, though unstated, demonstration of God's providential control is the most often observed aspect of the book of Esther. We see clear examples of God's supreme providence in:
 - 3.1. The identification of specific historical individuals (Est 1.13-15; Est 9.7-8), which indicates that every person who has lived, or ever will live, is known to God and is accountable to him.
 - 3.2. The occurrence of events which clearly are beyond the control of any person except God (Est 2.1-8, 12-14, 21-23; Est 3.7, 12-15; Est 4.1-3, 4-14; Est 6.1-3, 4-11; Est 9.1-4).
 - 3.3. The numerous examples of divine irony which permeate the book of Esther (e.g., Est 5.1-14; Est 6.4-11).
 - 3.4. How quickly God can reverse dangerous circumstances which appear to be intractable (Est 6.12-13).
4. *Sin's Punishment* – We learned from the examples given in the account that evil intentions and evil acts are known to God, if not immediately to men (Est 2.21-23); and that God will deal with them:
 - 4.1. God laughs at his enemies' petty plans to overthrow his anointed Messiah and his kingdom (Est 6.4-11).
 - 4.2. Their sins will often become publicly known, and some of the perpetrators, like Haman, will be

- remembered forever in history for their evil deeds (Est 7.3-5)—modern examples include Hitler, Idi Amin, and Osama bin Laden.
- 4.3. God often graciously sends signs to men, through various means, warning them to repent of their sins before it is too late. Haman’s wife and his own ‘wise’ men warned him that the honouring of Mordecai was a sign that Haman’s doom was near, but Haman chose to ignore their observation and to seek reconciliation with Mordecai (Est 6.14-7.2).
 - 4.4. Men should be terrified of having their sins known to God, since punishment looms before them (Est 7.6-7a). In many cases they see the evil they intended to perpetrate against others recoiling on their own heads (Est 7.7b-10). However, if they are not immediately punished in the temporal realm, they can be certain that eternal punishment awaits them if they remain stubbornly unrepentant (Est 9.5-17).
 - 4.5. Christians should not undertake personal vigilante activity to punish their enemies but leave retribution to God and to his appointed agent—civil magistrates (Est 7.7b-10).
 - 4.6. However, it is legitimate for Christians to rejoice and thank God when we see him punishing his and our enemies (Est 7.7b-10).
5. *Safety Provided* – A primary reason that Mordecai wrote this book and sent it to the Jews was to provide a witness to the fact that God is faithful to his covenant promises and is sovereignly watching over and protecting his people (Est 4.12-14)—even when they are not obedient to their covenant obligations and when they may not be able to see immediate evidences of his working in the temporal realm (Est 1.1-3; Est 2.5-8). As the original Jewish audience read this account, they would have been struck by the way God was sovereignly protecting them, often when they did not even know it. Likewise, the book of Esther should encourage Christians:
- 5.1. As we face the prospect of danger from those who hate the Trinitarian God, the God-man Jesus, and Jesus’ bride, the Church, we should pray for God’s help and deliverance (Est 4.1-3, 15-17; Est 8.3-6). Esther’s petition before Ahasuerus provides an analogy for how we can structure our petitions before the King of kings:
 - 5.1.1. Polite positioning
 - 5.1.2. Preservation plea
 - 5.1.3. People’s problem
 - 5.1.4. Potentate’s peace
 - 5.1.5. Political philanthropy
 - 5.2. In the face of imminent danger, Christians are permitted to defend their lives (Est 8.11-13; Est 9.5-17). Self-defence is a duty because we are to protect our life and the lives of others, against attack. The arguments in favour of the right to self-defence are similar to the arguments in favour of engaging in a just war:
 - 5.2.1. Declared by a competent authority
 - 5.2.2. For a legitimate reason
 - 5.2.3. Proportional
 - 5.2.4. Probability/prospect of success
 - 5.2.5. Exhaustion of peaceful means of resolution; last resort
 - 5.2.6. Right intention
 - 5.2.7. Force and violence limited to legitimate necessity
 - 5.2.8. Discriminatory; no direct, intentional attacks on non-combatants.
 - 5.3. God uses the persecution and preservation of the Church to advance his cause among the pagans (Est 8.15-17) and to bring about revival in the Church (Est 4.15-17).
 - 5.4. The persecuted righteous will eventually triumph and become the promoted righteous; they will go from being victims to victors (Est 8.1-2, 15).
 - 5.5. Like the Jews who rejoiced over God’s deliverance from Haman’s schemes, we should also rejoice and thank God for his protective care and acts of deliverance (Est 8.15-17).

6. *Supplicant's Profession* – Since we have seen how God worked for the preservation of his people at the time of Esther, and through other examples given in the Bible, we should trust God and believe that he knows what he is doing as he governs the world and believe that he is working in the best interests of his people (Rom 8.28, 31). The book of Esther teaches us that we should have a reverent and patient confidence in the God who controls the workings of men and nations (Est 3.1-2a, 7; Est 4.15-17; Est 9.1-4).
7. *Standard Precepts* – In our studies we encountered the proud claim that the laws of Persia could not be revoked (Est 1.19; Est 8.8). Human laws were treated as if they were absolute standards. Yet, the petulant and capricious king ignored or abused the rule of law when it suited his own selfish purposes—e.g., to depose Vashti (Est 1.19-22).
 - 7.1. We noted that kings and nations are subject to a higher moral and legal standard—God's law (Est 1.19, 21). We determined that law making authority ultimately comes from God (Est 1.20, 22) and that the rule of law is to be in accord with Biblically based constitutions, statute law, and common law precedent (Est 1.16-18, 20, 22). Today we see numerous examples of exceptions to God's law. For example, human rights commissions which rule in favour of anti-Christian religions or wicked practices which are contrary to Christian moral principles, or judges which make exceptions based on particular attributes of the accused (e.g., social status, income, or skin colour). In contrast to the laws of Persia, we identified key attributes of just laws (Est 1.19, 21); they must be:
 - 7.1.1. *Equivalent* – Human laws must legislate only what is consistent with God's law and moral requirements (Acts 10.35).
 - 7.1.2. *Even* – Human laws must not consider a person's position (Dt 1.17; Jam 2.1), but fair and equitable.
 - 7.1.3. *Enforceable* – Many silly laws are created by humans which are essentially unenforceable, unless people become tattletales. For example, 'A group of California legislators wants to punish waiters who offer "unsolicited" plastic straws to customers with a six-month jail sentence and a \$1,000 fine.'²⁴² How could anyone prove that the waiter gave an unsolicited straw. Would a waiter's asking, "Would you like a straw?" be an unsolicited offer?
 - 7.1.4. *Enforced* – Laws must be enforced consistently, regardless of social class or office—even the king is not above the law.
 - 7.1.5. *Equitable* – Laws must include punishments which are commensurate with the severity of the crime.
 - 7.2. It is a Christian's responsibility and duty to obey and to pray for the civil magistrate, even if he is evil (Est 2.21-23; Est 3.2b-6). However, there are times when it is right to disobey the civil magistrate's command (Est 3.2b-6; Est 4.15-17)—only when we are able to demonstrate clearly from the word of God that to follow the civil magistrate's command would result in a breach of God's law.
 - 7.3. In contrast to human laws, God's law is perfect because it deals not only with our interpersonal relationships but legislates against the invention of false religions, and it changes hearts and lives so that those who love the law want to live it (Est 3.8-9). Ultimately, the only way that a people can have freedoms in society, is if they live under the rule of God's law (Est 1.13-15).
 - 7.4. When we considered the introduction of the festival of Purim, and whether Christians should participate in similar festivals (Est 9.23-28), we noted that governments have introduced statutory holidays which glorify human persons or accomplishments (Est 9.20-22) but have spurned the only day of rest which can legitimately be *required* of men—the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath (Est 9.17-19).
8. *Statesman's Practices* – We observed that the book of Esther provides examples of good leadership in

²⁴²Tom Ciccotta, 2018-01-26; www.breitbart.com/tech/2018/01/26/california-bill-would-jail-and-fine-waiters-who-offer-unsolicited-plastic-straws/

civil government.

- 8.1. In contrast, when evil men surround themselves with stupid counsellors—who call good evil, and evil good—they provide poor advice (Est 6.12-13).
- 8.2. From a human perspective, government leaders should engage wise counsellors who know the times and understand law and judgement (Est 1.13-15).
- 8.3. However, God holds civil leaders to a higher standard, which is similar to the qualifications for an elder in a church congregation (Est 1.13-15). Those who are in the most senior positions of civil leadership must exercise care when selecting who they will promote and to whom they give subordinate authority (Est 3.1-2a).
- 8.4. From the examples given in the account, we identified the character traits of those who make good civil leaders:

Wise Counsellors (Est 1.16-18)	Statesmanship (Est 5.1-8)	Preparation (Est 7.3-5; Est 8.9-10, 13-14)	Civil Servants (Est 10.1-3)	Certified Statesmen (Est 10.1-3)
Truthful	Are experienced in the art of government; but not Machiavellian	Wise as serpents and innocent as doves	Competent and wise	Principled
Unflattering	Are modest, humble, self-controlled, and patient	Mature	Seeking the citizens' welfare	Wise
Just	Act on principle and are loyal to God and man	Able to create a strategy	Speaking peace	Humble
Reasonable	Have a deep understanding of human psychology	Apply careful preparation	Christians	Brave

- 8.5. We noted that the example of Mordecai and Esther (and others such as Daniel) teach us that it is legitimate for Christians to hold offices in civil government, even when the government is pagan (Est 2.19-20). Christians who are placed in positions of leadership have a great responsibility and are to be influences for good (Est 8.1-2, 15; Est 9.1-4).

9. *State's Priorities* – We noted, contrary to popular thinking today, that it is the civil magistrate's responsibility to cooperate with the Christian Church and not to establish a 'secular state' (Est 9.29-32). A 'secular state' cannot really exist, since the act of ruling against Christianity is a *religious* position endorsing the religion of secular humanism. Also, defining laws requires that legislators make moral decisions. A state not founded on God's law descends into chaos, and the void will be filled by false religions such as Islam or secular humanism (and its doctrine of evolution). The notion that religious pluralism can exist within a secular state is a myth because no system can be devised which can fairly arbitrate between the conflicting value systems of the world's religions. Religious neutrality can last at most for only a short time and then it turns into intolerance. From a Christian perspective, the only supportable position (thinking Biblically) is the establishment principle—that the civil magistrate is to establish Christianity as the foundation of the state (Est 8.9-10, 13-14).

- 9.1. We observed how Mordecai and Esther used the power and communication infrastructure (the scribes and courier systems) of the Persian Empire to advance the cause of God's covenant people (Est 8.9-10, 13-14).
- 9.2. As Paul teaches (Rom 13.3-4), the state should reward those who do good (Est 6.1-3) and punish those who do evil (Est 4:4-1).
- 9.3. We noted that Mordecai's involvement in re-instituting, or re-organizing, the Persian taxation system reminds us of the legitimacy of using taxation to finance government activities (Mt 22.17-21; Rom 13.6, 7). We extended our consideration to identify the attributes of a good taxation system, based on Biblical principles and sound economic principles. Such a tax system should be (Est 10.1-3):

9.3.1. *Fair and equitable.*

- 9.3.2. *Universal, applied to everyone equally.*
- 9.3.3. *Transparent.*
- 9.3.4. *Unavoidable.*
- 9.3.5. *For legitimate activities.*
- 9.3.6. *Bearable and not oppressive.*
- 9.3.7. *Representative of the citizens.*
- 9.4. We also noted that governments can enact foolish laws (Est 1.19, 21) and it will be necessary at times, for Christian administrators to find creative approaches for defeating or reversing the ineffective and harmful laws (Est 8.11-13). It is imperative that Christians be particularly attentive when laws are being proposed which may have unanticipated consequences and adversely affect the free exercise of Christian worship and practice (Est 8.3-6).
- 10. *Saintly Principles* – Finally, the examples of Esther, Mordecai, and the Jewish community provide us with examples of how Christian should live in a pagan culture.
 - 10.1. Since there is an objective (God-defined) standard for beauty, and God is the one who gives the gift of beauty (as he did to Esther), Christians need to watch that they aren't sucked into the world's quest for artificial beauty. We need to assess our motives and maintain a balance when using the world's means of 'beautification' such as grooming, cosmetics, and clothing (Est 2.9-11).
 - 10.2. Some of the model character traits we observed in Esther include:
 - 10.2.1. Patience (Est 2.12-14)
 - 10.2.2. Honesty (Est 2.15-18)
 - 10.2.3. Humility (Est 2.15-18)
 - 10.2.4. Holiness (Est 2.15-18)
 - 10.2.5. Hopefulness (Est 2.15-18)
 - 10.2.6. Selfless simplicity (Est 2.19-20)
 - 10.2.7. Steadfast submission (Est 2.19-20)
 - 10.2.8. Willingness to take responsibility (Est 4.15-17)
 - 10.2.9. Supportive of her larger community (Est 8.3-6).
 - 10.3. Some of the model character traits we observed in Mordecai include:
 - 10.3.1. Faithful, as shown by his reporting the assassination attempt (Est 2.21-23)
 - 10.3.2. Not expecting a reward for doing right (Est 2.21-23)
 - 10.3.3. Stifling conceit (Est 6.12-13)
 - 10.3.4. Creativeness (Est 8.7-8).
 - 10.4. When Christians receive recognition and rewards, they are to be received graciously. Our attitude toward personal recognition and rewards must be tempered by (Est 8.1-2, 15):
 - 10.4.1. A spirit of true thankfulness, rendered to God.
 - 10.4.2. A sense of the impermanence of temporal rewards.
 - 10.4.3. A suppression of the worldly love of money.
 - 10.5. Christians should be those who are willing to share their material blessings with those in need within the covenant community (Est 9.20-22).
 - 10.6. Christians should also strive for peace and unity within the covenant community (Est 9.17-19). Wherever church leaders (e.g., elders in a congregation or in presbytery) take action to resolve conflicts or define rules their efforts should be (Est 9.29-32):
 - 10.6.1. *Principled* – Consistent with Scripture.
 - 10.6.2. *Peaceful* – With a desire to see peace and harmony maintained.
 - 10.6.3. *Prescribed* – Documented, for example in a constitution or confession of faith.
 - 10.6.4. *Permanent* – Not addressing only temporary matters but laying a foundation for the future.
 - 10.6.5. *Pastoral* – Performed in loving caring manner.
 - 10.7. When the circumstances require it, Christians must be willing to make a public profession before the pagan world that they belong to the Lord (Est 2.9-11; Est 3.2b-6; Est 4.1-3; Est 8.15-17).

We have completed our study of the exciting drama of Esther—presented masterfully as a three-act play:

1. Act I (chapters 1 and 2) setting the stage.
2. Act II (chapters 3-7) establishing the dangerous conflict between the antagonist (Haman) and the protagonist (Esther).
3. Act III (chapters 8-10) providing the resolution to the conflict when the Jews proactively defended themselves with state-sponsored execution of their enemies.

God preserved his covenant people so that the promise given to Eve (Gen 3.15) would be fulfilled, and his Anointed (Messiah/Christ) would arrive 500 years later. When the Messiah arrived, he faced the same dangerous conflict, with Haman's spiritual master Satan, and he was victorious—defeating Satan through the resurrection. The eternal conflict is over—Christ has secured the victory—but God continues to protect his people from the ongoing attacks of Satan, as they await the second arrival of Jesus Christ. Just as Mordecai shared the good news of Haman's defeat with his generation, so the Church today is to share the good news that sin, and Satan have been conquered.

The book of Esther is a superb story, permeated with a Christian worldview. It demonstrates:

1. God's sovereign control over the lives of men and nations.
2. God's use of human actions as secondary causes (even those intended for evil) to fulfill his purposes.
3. The existence of ultimate, God-ordained, standards for right and wrong and good and evil.
4. The on-going perversion of men who reject the true religion.
5. That God holds men accountable for their evil practices and punishes them.
6. The contrast between human kings and their reigns, and the kingdom and reign of the Prince of Peace.
7. The confidence that believers in Christ can have that God is watching over and protecting them.

Bible References

01 Genesis

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ch. 1, v. 1, pg., 159 | ch. 9, v. 18, pg., 134 |
| ch. 1, v. 1-2.2, pg., 28 | ch. 9, v. 21, pg., 74 |
| ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 215 | ch. 10, v. 6, pg., 14 |
| ch. 1, v. 5, pg., 153 | ch. 10, v. 8-12, pg., 24 |
| ch. 1, v. 26, pg., 184 | ch. 10, v. 21, pg., 134 |
| ch. 1-6, pg., 69 | ch. 11, v. 1-9, pg., 224 |
| ch. 2, v. 3, pg., 208 | ch. 11, v. 7-8, pg., 24 |
| ch. 2, v. 18, pg., 46 | ch. 11, v. 28, 31, pg., 24 |
| ch. 2, v. 22b, 24, pg., 78 | ch. 12, v. 1-3, pg., 111, 123, 161 |
| ch. 2, v. 24, pg., 48, 54, 66, 86 | ch. 12, v. 3, pg., 198 |
| ch. 3, v. 1-5, pg., 102 | ch. 12, v. 5, pg., 134 |
| ch. 3, v. 15, pg., 111, 165, 229 | ch. 14, v. 1, pg., 16 |
| ch. 3, v. 17, pg., 125, 153 | ch. 14, v. 13, pg., 134 |
| ch. 3, v. 17-19, pg., 153 | ch. 15, v. 6, pg., 123 |
| ch. 4, v. 8, pg., 111 | ch. 15, v. 13-16, pg., 125 |
| ch. 4, v. 16, pg., 134 | ch. 17, v. 17, pg., 158 |
| ch. 5, v. 22, pg., 123 | ch. 18, v. 14, pg., 7, 121 |
| ch. 6, v. 3, pg., 125 | ch. 18, v. 17-18, pg., 150 |
| ch. 6, v. 4, pg., 24 | ch. 18, v. 18, pg., 111 |
| ch. 6, v. 5, pg., 78, 125, 149, 170, 176, 183, 224 | ch. 18, v. 25, pg., 115 |
| ch. 6, v. 9, pg., 123 | ch. 19, v. 1, pg., 84 |
| ch. 8, v. 21, pg., 158, 170 | ch. 21, v. 12, pg., 60 |
| ch. 9, v. 4, pg., 71, 218 | ch. 22, v. 18, pg., 193, 220 |
| ch. 9, v. 4-7, pg., 218 | ch. 23, v. 7, 12, pg., 95 |
| ch. 9, v. 6, pg., 189 | ch. 23, v. 10, pg., 84 |
| | ch. 23, v. 15-16, pg., 106 |

- ch. 24, v. 16, pg., 65
- ch. 24, v. 60, pg., 177
- ch. 26, v. 1, pg., 16
- ch. 27, v. 1-29, pg., 175
- ch. 27, v. 41, pg., 158
- ch. 33, v. 3, pg., 95
- ch. 33, v. 8-11, pg., 209
- ch. 35, v. 5, pg., 195
- ch. 36, v. 12, 16, pg., 92, 98
- ch. 37, v. 31-35, pg., 175
- ch. 37, v. 34, pg., 113, 117
- ch. 39, v. 1, 7, pg., 61
- ch. 41, v. 8, pg., 41
- ch. 41, v. 43, pg., 109
- ch. 41, v. 45, pg., 87
- ch. 42, v. 6, pg., 95
- ch. 43, v. 23, pg., 203
- ch. 45, v. 7, pg., 7
- ch. 47, v. 1-12, pg., 216
- ch. 48, v. 12, pg., 96
- ch. 49, v. 10, pg., 111, 123
- ch. 50, v. 19, 20, pg., 67
- ch. 50, v. 19-21, pg., 87
- ch. 50, v. 20, pg., 122, 153
- 02 Exodus
 - ch. 1, v. 15-22, pg., 97
 - ch. 1, v. 16, pg., 111
 - ch. 3, v. 22, pg., 220
 - ch. 7, v. 3-5, pg., 36
 - ch. 7, v. 11, pg., 41
 - ch. 8, v. 15, 19, pg., 7
 - ch. 8, v. 32, pg., 67
 - ch. 9, v. 16, pg., 123
 - ch. 10, v. 20, 27, pg., 39
 - ch. 12, v. 6, 18, pg., 108
 - ch. 12, v. 36, pg., 220
 - ch. 12, v. 38, pg., 193
 - ch. 15, v. 1-21, pg., 4
 - ch. 15, v. 9, pg., 175
 - ch. 17, v. 8-13, pg., 92
 - ch. 17, v. 8-16, pg., 97
 - ch. 17, v. 14, 16, pg., 92, 96
 - ch. 18, v. 21, pg., 43, 104
 - ch. 20, v. 4-6, pg., 218
 - ch. 20, v. 5, pg., 122
 - ch. 20, v. 8-11, pg., 208
 - ch. 20, v. 12, pg., 85, 86
 - ch. 20, v. 14, pg., 78
 - ch. 20, v. 16, pg., 55
 - ch. 21, v. 23-25, pg., 53
 - ch. 22, v. 1, pg., 54
 - ch. 22, v. 2-3, pg., 190
 - ch. 23, v. 7, pg., 53
 - ch. 23, v. 8, pg., 104
 - ch. 23, v. 19, pg., 71
 - ch. 24, v. 5, pg., 60
 - ch. 30, v. 11-16, pg., 222
 - ch. 30, v. 23-25, pg., 76
 - ch. 34, v. 11-16, pg., 67
 - ch. 34, v. 15, pg., 72
 - ch. 34, v. 26, pg., 71
- 03 Leviticus
 - ch. 11, v. 1-47, pg., 72
 - ch. 16, v. 29, pg., 115
 - ch. 18, v. 20, pg., 78
 - ch. 19, v. 15, pg., 222
 - ch. 19, v. 18, pg., 167, 202
 - ch. 19, v. 32, pg., 146
 - ch. 23, v. 1-44, pg., 206
 - ch. 23, v. 27, pg., 115
 - ch. 24, v. 17-22, pg., 53
 - ch. 24, v. 22, pg., 218
 - ch. 27, v. 30, pg., 222
- 04 Numbers
 - ch. 5, v. 11-31, pg., 54
 - ch. 5, v. 14-31, pg., 53
 - ch. 11, v. 27, pg., 60
 - ch. 12, v. 3, pg., 194
 - ch. 15, v. 16, pg., 19
 - ch. 16, v. 27, pg., 122
 - ch. 21, v. 18, pg., 19
 - ch. 22, v. 7, pg., 99
 - ch. 24, v. 7, pg., 92
 - ch. 27, v. 8, pg., 54
 - ch. 28-29, pg., 206
 - ch. 29, v. 7, pg., 115
 - ch. 30, v. 4-9, 16, pg., 54
 - ch. 32, v. 23, pg., 89, 170
- 05 Deuteronomy
 - ch. 1, v. 13-18, pg., 43
 - ch. 1, v. 17, pg., 226
 - ch. 2, v. 25, pg., 195
 - ch. 4, v. 8, pg., 102
 - ch. 4, v. 13, pg., 218
 - ch. 4, v. 19, pg., 101
 - ch. 4, v. 30-31, pg., 115
 - ch. 5, v. 6-22, pg., 218
 - ch. 7, v. 1-4, pg., 67
 - ch. 8, v. 11-14, pg., 155
 - ch. 8, v. 19, pg., 218
 - ch. 11, v. 3, pg., 11
 - ch. 11, v. 25, pg., 195
 - ch. 12, v. 23-25, pg., 71
 - ch. 14, v. 3-20, pg., 72
 - ch. 14, v. 21, pg., 71
 - ch. 14, v. 22, pg., 222
 - ch. 15, v. 7-11, pg., 209
 - ch. 16, v. 11, 14, pg., 203
 - ch. 16, v. 19, pg., 222
 - ch. 17, v. 3, pg., 101
 - ch. 17, v. 6, pg., 53, 54
 - ch. 19, v. 21, pg., 53

- ch. 21, v. 15-17, pg., 66
- ch. 21, v. 23, pg., 199
- ch. 22, v. 11-21, pg., 54
- ch. 25, v. 5-6, pg., 66
- ch. 25, v. 17-18, pg., 96
- ch. 25, v. 17-19, pg., 92, 173
- ch. 29, v. 29, pg., 75
- ch. 31, v. 6-7, pg., 136
- ch. 32, v. 35, pg., 176, 203
- 06 Joshua
 - ch. 1, v. 6, 7, 9, pg., 136
 - ch. 2, v. 8-11, pg., 195
 - ch. 2, v. 9-11, pg., 161
 - ch. 5, v. 1, pg., 195
 - ch. 7, v. 24, pg., 122
 - ch. 8, v. 3-29, pg., 75
 - ch. 8, v. 29, pg., 199
 - ch. 9, v. 24, pg., 195
 - ch. 20, v. 3-5, pg., 53
 - ch. 20, v. 4, pg., 84
 - ch. 21, v. 45, pg., 124, 215
 - ch. 23, v. 14, pg., 124, 215
- 07 Judges
 - ch. 7, v. 10, pg., 60
 - ch. 14, v. 12-14, pg., 82
 - ch. 15, v. 1, pg., 16
 - ch. 20, v. 26, pg., 115
- 08 Ruth
 - ch. 1, v. 1, pg., 16
 - ch. 1, v. 16, pg., 134
 - ch. 4, v. 1, pg., 84
- 09 1 Samuel
 - ch. 1, v. 4, 5, pg., 70
 - ch. 2, v. 30, pg., 160
 - ch. 9, v. 1, pg., 64
 - ch. 15, v. 1-35, pg., 96
 - ch. 15, v. 2-34, pg., 92
 - ch. 15, v. 3, 9, 26, pg., 200
 - ch. 15, v. 3, pg., 161
 - ch. 15, v. 8, 33, pg., 92
 - ch. 16, v. 2-3, pg., 75
 - ch. 24, v. 8, pg., 95
 - ch. 25, v. 8, pg., 207
 - ch. 27, v. 1, pg., 158
- 10 2 Samuel
 - ch. 1, v. 11-12, pg., 113
 - ch. 3, v. 31, pg., 117
 - ch. 7, v. 12-13, pg., 123
 - ch. 7, v. 12-17, pg., 111
 - ch. 11, v. 1-27, pg., 175
 - ch. 11, v. 2, pg., 65
 - ch. 12, v. 7, pg., 172
 - ch. 12, v. 22, pg., 115
 - ch. 13, v. 1-30, pg., 175
 - ch. 13, v. 19, pg., 113
 - ch. 14, v. 2, pg., 70
- ch. 14, v. 4, pg., 96
- ch. 15, v. 2, pg., 84
- ch. 15, v. 30, pg., 160
- ch. 16, v. 5, pg., 64
- ch. 16, v. 20-23, pg., 175
- ch. 18, v. 28, pg., 96
- ch. 21, v. 1, pg., 16
- 11 1 Kings
 - ch. 1, v. 2-3, pg., 59
 - ch. 1, v. 16, pg., 96
 - ch. 7, v. 50, pg., 32
 - ch. 8, v. 47-53, pg., 115
 - ch. 11, v. 2, pg., 84
 - ch. 16-22, pg., 35
 - ch. 18, v. 43, pg., 60
 - ch. 21, v. 1-16, pg., 148
 - ch. 21, v. 7-16, pg., 177
 - ch. 21, v. 27-29, pg., 132
- 12 2 Kings
 - ch. 5, v. 3, pg., 121
 - ch. 5, v. 22, pg., 82
 - ch. 6, v. 19, pg., 75
 - ch. 8, v. 23, pg., 221
 - ch. 9, v. 30, pg., 70
 - ch. 11, v. 1, pg., 35, 111
 - ch. 11, v. 1-3, pg., 165
 - ch. 20, v. 18, pg., 85
 - ch. 24, v. 14-16, pg., 64
 - ch. 25, v. 1, pg., 27
- 13 1 Chronicles
 - ch. 4, v. 43, pg., 92
 - ch. 12, v. 32, pg., 26, 41
- 14 2 Chronicles
 - ch. 20, v. 6, pg., 218
 - ch. 26, v. 5, pg., 16
 - ch. 36, v. 22-23, pg., 17
- 15 Ezra
 - ch. 1, v. 1-4, pg., 102, 216
 - ch. 1, v. 7, pg., 32
 - ch. 1, v. 8, 11, pg., 16
 - ch. 2, v. 2, pg., 63, 65
 - ch. 2, v. 64, pg., 111
 - ch. 3, v. 11, pg., 203
 - ch. 4, v. 5, 24, pg., 11
 - ch. 4, v. 6, pg., 8, 10, 103
 - ch. 5, v. 5-7, pg., 11
 - ch. 5, v. 14, 15, pg., 32
 - ch. 5, v. 14, 16, pg., 16
 - ch. 5, v. 17, pg., 48
 - ch. 6, v. 1, 12-15, pg., 11
 - ch. 6, v. 1, pg., 19
 - ch. 6, v. 2, pg., 15
 - ch. 6, v. 6-12, pg., 216
 - ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 90
 - ch. 6, v. 14, pg., 11
 - ch. 6, v. 14-15, pg., 8, 11

- ch. 7, v. 1?, pg., 8, 11
ch. 7, v. 6, pg., 87
ch. 7, v. 14, pg., 42
ch. 8, v. 21-23, pg., 132
ch. 8, v. 31, pg., 126
ch. 9, v. 1, pg., 67
ch. 9, v. 5, pg., 115, 133
ch. 9-10, pg., 67, 68
- 16 Nehemiah
- ch. 1, v. 1, pg., 37
ch. 1, v. 4, pg., 115, 133
ch. 2, v. 1, pg., 16
ch. 2, v. 1-2, pg., 180
ch. 2, v. 1-4, pg., 119
ch. 2, v. 2, pg., 115
ch. 2, v. 5, 7, pg., 48
ch. 2, v. 8, 12, 20, pg., 126
ch. 2, v. 16, pg., 19
ch. 4, v. 1-14, pg., 191
ch. 4, v. 4, pg., 220
ch. 4, v. 9, pg., 126
ch. 7, v. 5, pg., 126
ch. 7, v. 7, pg., 63
ch. 8, v. 1, pg., 68
ch. 8, v. 10, 12, pg., 70, 203
ch. 9, v. 1-2, pg., 113
ch. 9, v. 32-35, pg., 114
ch. 10, v. 10, pg., 68
ch. 10, v. 30, pg., 67
ch. 12, v. 22, pg., 11
ch. 13, v. 14, 22, 31, pg., 69
ch. 13, v. 19-22, pg., 216
ch. 13, v. 20, 21, pg., 218
ch. 13, v. 23-24, pg., 55
ch. 13, v. 23-30, pg., 67, 68
- 17 Esther
- ch. 1, v. 1, pg., 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22, 55, 128, 150, 186
ch. 1, v. 1, pg., 14
ch. 1, v. 1-2, pg., 20
ch. 1, v. 1-3, pg., 1, 4, 11, 24, 108, 225
ch. 1, v. 2, pg., 9, 11, 66, 163
ch. 1, v. 2-22, pg., 20
ch. 1, v. 2-9, pg., 9
ch. 1, v. 3, 14, 18, 19, pg., 27
ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 1, 12, 19, 20, 26, 27, 36, 76, 83, 178, 224, 225
ch. 1, v. 3?, pg., 27
ch. 1, v. 3-2.23, pg., 1, 26
ch. 1, v. 3-22, pg., 20
ch. 1, v. 3-8, pg., 76
ch. 1, v. 3-9, pg., 1, 26, 36, 178, 224, 225
ch. 1, v. 4, pg., 12, 22
ch. 1, v. 4-8, pg., 22
ch. 1, v. 5, pg., 15, 22, 42, 163, 172, 224
ch. 1, v. 5-8, pg., 224
- ch. 1, v. 6, pg., 19
ch. 1, v. 8, pg., 19, 76
ch. 1, v. 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, pg., 34
ch. 1, v. 9, pg., 34, 163
ch. 1, v. 10, pg., 1, 22, 37, 40, 60, 87, 174, 224
ch. 1, v. 10-11, pg., 128
ch. 1, v. 10-12, pg., 1, 37, 40, 60, 224
ch. 1, v. 11, pg., 29, 45, 51, 59, 65, 70, 82, 139
ch. 1, v. 11-12, pg., 139
ch. 1, v. 12, pg., 72, 172
ch. 1, v. 13-15, pg., 1, 41, 43, 141, 221, 224, 225, 227
ch. 1, v. 13-22, pg., 1, 41
ch. 1, v. 14, pg., 9, 11, 12, 22, 38, 60, 108
ch. 1, v. 15, 16, pg., 65
ch. 1, v. 15, pg., 39, 65
ch. 1, v. 16, 17, pg., 49
ch. 1, v. 16, 21, pg., 43
ch. 1, v. 16-18, 20, 22, pg., 226
ch. 1, v. 16-18, pg., 1, 44, 46, 226, 227
ch. 1, v. 16-22, pg., 225
ch. 1, v. 19, 21, pg., 1, 48, 51, 226, 228
ch. 1, v. 19, pg., 1, 6, 13, 22, 33, 34, 48, 49, 51, 59, 63, 76, 104, 107, 133, 181, 226, 228
ch. 1, v. 19-21, pg., 104
ch. 1, v. 19-22, pg., 13, 226
ch. 1, v. 20, 22, pg., 1, 51, 55, 56, 213, 226
ch. 1, v. 20, pg., 1, 45, 51, 52, 55, 56, 213, 226
ch. 1, v. 21, pg., 50
ch. 1, v. 22, pg., 108, 139, 147
ch. 2, v. 1, 4, 17, pg., 34
ch. 2, v. 1, pg., 51, 138
ch. 2, v. 1-18, pg., 1, 20, 58
ch. 2, v. 1-23, pg., 20
ch. 2, v. 1-4, pg., 1, 10, 12, 58, 61, 224, 225
ch. 2, v. 1-8, 12-14, 21-23, pg., 225
ch. 2, v. 2, 3, pg., 65
ch. 2, v. 2, pg., 64, 70
ch. 2, v. 2-4, pg., 51, 76, 104
ch. 2, v. 3, 14, pg., 37
ch. 2, v. 3, pg., 37, 65, 69
ch. 2, v. 4, pg., 129
ch. 2, v. 5, pg., 1, 62, 67, 68, 92, 225
ch. 2, v. 5-8, 12-14, pg., 225
ch. 2, v. 5-8, pg., 1, 62, 67, 225
ch. 2, v. 6, pg., 13, 21, 68
ch. 2, v. 7, 22, pg., 68
ch. 2, v. 7, pg., 19, 68, 70, 73, 81, 129, 137, 140
ch. 2, v. 8, 14, pg., 22
ch. 2, v. 8, 15, pg., 60
ch. 2, v. 8, pg., 22, 60, 84, 224
ch. 2, v. 8-14, pg., 224
ch. 2, v. 8-9, pg., 22
ch. 2, v. 9, 15, pg., 81
ch. 2, v. 9, pg., 1, 42, 60, 69, 73, 74, 76, 81, 86, 228, 229

- ch. 2, v. 9-11, pg., 1, 69, 73, 86, 228, 229
ch. 2, v. 10, 20, pg., 94
ch. 2, v. 10, pg., 64, 73, 94, 164
ch. 2, v. 11, 22, pg., 85, 117
ch. 2, v. 11, pg., 85, 114, 117
ch. 2, v. 12, pg., 1, 10, 12, 33, 59, 70, 74, 75, 77, 224, 228
ch. 2, v. 12-14, pg., 1, 75, 77, 224, 228
ch. 2, v. 13, pg., 79
ch. 2, v. 14, 17, pg., 119
ch. 2, v. 14, pg., 22, 49, 60, 81, 119
ch. 2, v. 15, 17, pg., 69
ch. 2, v. 15, pg., 1, 69, 73, 79, 83, 228, 229
ch. 2, v. 15-17, pg., 138
ch. 2, v. 15-18, pg., 1, 79, 83, 228, 229
ch. 2, v. 16, pg., 10, 59, 93
ch. 2, v. 17, pg., 13, 73, 137
ch. 2, v. 18, 21, pg., 87
ch. 2, v. 18, pg., 26, 87, 163, 219
ch. 2, v. 19, 21, pg., 84
ch. 2, v. 19, pg., 1, 5, 13, 20, 22, 64, 68, 72, 80, 84, 86, 87, 177, 221, 224, 228, 229
ch. 2, v. 19-20, pg., 1, 84, 86, 221, 228, 229
ch. 2, v. 19-23, pg., 1, 5, 20, 80, 84, 224
ch. 2, v. 21, pg., 1, 13, 38, 69, 85, 87, 89, 117, 160, 225, 227, 229
ch. 2, v. 21-23, pg., 1, 87, 89, 225, 227, 229
ch. 2, v. 22, pg., 138, 151
ch. 2, v. 23, pg., 200, 214
ch. 3, v. 1, 2, pg., 66
ch. 3, v. 1, pg., 92, 138, 145, 155, 158
ch. 3, v. 1-15, pg., 1, 91
ch. 3, v. 1-2, pg., 1, 20, 91, 94, 180, 197, 226, 227
ch. 3, v. 1-2a, 7, pg., 226
ch. 3, v. 1-2a, pg., 1, 91, 94, 180, 197, 226, 227
ch. 3, v. 1-6, pg., 20, 224
ch. 3, v. 1-7.10, pg., 1, 91
ch. 3, v. 2, 3, pg., 84
ch. 3, v. 2, pg., 1, 5, 68, 84, 94, 97, 116, 224, 227, 229
ch. 3, v. 2b-6, 10-11, 8-15, pg., 224
ch. 3, v. 2b-6, pg., 1, 94, 97, 116, 224, 227, 229
ch. 3, v. 3-7, pg., 20
ch. 3, v. 4, 6, pg., 92
ch. 3, v. 4, pg., 73, 85, 92, 94, 114, 123, 146
ch. 3, v. 4-5, pg., 146
ch. 3, v. 5, pg., 92, 158
ch. 3, v. 6, pg., 92
ch. 3, v. 7, 12-15, pg., 225
ch. 3, v. 7, pg., 1, 5, 20, 42, 92, 94, 98, 100, 108, 161, 209, 225
ch. 3, v. 7-15, pg., 20
ch. 3, v. 7-8, pg., 92
ch. 3, v. 8, pg., 2, 17, 20, 51, 92, 97, 98, 101, 104, 167, 170, 224, 227
ch. 3, v. 8-11, pg., 51
ch. 3, v. 8-4.17, pg., 20
ch. 3, v. 8-9, pg., 2, 17, 92, 101, 104, 224, 227
ch. 3, v. 9, 13, pg., 92
ch. 3, v. 9, pg., 48, 92, 145, 158, 167, 220
ch. 3, v. 10, 12, pg., 170
ch. 3, v. 10, pg., 20
ch. 3, v. 10-11, pg., 2, 105, 107, 178
ch. 3, v. 10-15, pg., 224
ch. 3, v. 11, pg., 141, 197, 220
ch. 3, v. 12, 13, pg., 158
ch. 3, v. 12, 14-15, pg., 186
ch. 3, v. 12, pg., 2, 19, 20, 107, 108, 112, 158, 168, 170, 185, 186, 201, 224
ch. 3, v. 12-13, pg., 20
ch. 3, v. 12-14, pg., 201
ch. 3, v. 12-15, pg., 2, 107, 112, 168, 224
ch. 3, v. 13, 15, pg., 109
ch. 3, v. 13, pg., 19, 99, 104, 108, 109, 122, 128, 167, 179, 185, 188, 189, 194, 220
ch. 3, v. 14, pg., 20, 108
ch. 3, v. 15, pg., 26, 33, 76, 116, 118, 120, 148, 150, 164, 170, 186, 192
ch. 3, v. 15-4.3, pg., 116
ch. 4, v. 1, pg., 112, 158, 160
ch. 4, v. 1-17, pg., 2, 20, 113
ch. 4, v. 1-3, 15-17, pg., 226
ch. 4, v. 1-3, 4-14, pg., 225
ch. 4, v. 1-3, pg., 2, 113, 116, 132, 225, 226, 229
ch. 4, v. 2, 4, pg., 160
ch. 4, v. 2, 6, pg., 84
ch. 4, v. 2, pg., 22, 84, 119, 160
ch. 4, v. 3, pg., 132, 186, 192
ch. 4, v. 4, pg., 2, 85, 117, 120, 121, 228
ch. 4, v. 4-1, pg., 228
ch. 4, v. 4-11, pg., 2, 117, 120
ch. 4, v. 4-16, pg., 85
ch. 4, v. 5, pg., 22, 69, 72, 117
ch. 4, v. 5-16, pg., 69
ch. 4, v. 5-6, 9, pg., 117
ch. 4, v. 7, pg., 106, 167
ch. 4, v. 8, pg., 118, 123
ch. 4, v. 9, pg., 121
ch. 4, v. 10-16, pg., 143
ch. 4, v. 11, pg., 15, 22, 77, 78, 116, 117, 133, 137, 142, 144
ch. 4, v. 12-14, pg., 2, 121, 123, 225
ch. 4, v. 13, pg., 22, 68, 119, 127, 169
ch. 4, v. 13-14, 17, pg., 68
ch. 4, v. 13-14, pg., 68, 119, 127, 169
ch. 4, v. 14, pg., 7, 123, 126, 130, 136, 144, 148, 169
ch. 4, v. 15-16, pg., 75
ch. 4, v. 15-17, pg., 2, 131, 135, 226, 227, 229
ch. 4, v. 16, pg., 123, 137, 144, 169, 182, 210

- ch. 4, v. 17, pg., 128
ch. 5, v. 1, pg., 15, 139, 144
ch. 5, v. 1-14, pg., 225
ch. 5, v. 1-2, pg., 136
ch. 5, v. 1-2?, pg., 138
ch. 5, v. 1-8, pg., 2, 20, 21, 136, 143, 227
ch. 5, v. 2, 3, 12, pg., 138
ch. 5, v. 2, pg., 69, 138
ch. 5, v. 3, 6, pg., 181
ch. 5, v. 3, pg., 136, 181
ch. 5, v. 4, 8, pg., 48, 144
ch. 5, v. 4, pg., 48, 144
ch. 5, v. 5, pg., 27, 136, 140, 142, 164
ch. 5, v. 5-8, pg., 27, 164
ch. 5, v. 5b-8, pg., 136
ch. 5, v. 6, pg., 129
ch. 5, v. 6-8, pg., 69
ch. 5, v. 7-8, pg., 142
ch. 5, v. 8, pg., 166
ch. 5, v. 9, 13, pg., 84, 146
ch. 5, v. 9, pg., 2, 20, 21, 84, 92, 136, 144, 146, 148, 224, 225
ch. 5, v. 9-14, pg., 2, 20, 21, 136, 144, 148, 224, 225
ch. 5, v. 11, pg., 92, 157, 158
ch. 5, v. 11-12, pg., 92
ch. 5, v. 13, pg., 85, 158, 161
ch. 5, v. 14, pg., 92, 146, 148, 174, 200
ch. 6, v. 1, pg., 19, 20, 68, 141, 204, 214
ch. 6, v. 1-11, pg., 20, 91
ch. 6, v. 1-13, pg., 2, 150
ch. 6, v. 1-14, pg., 21
ch. 6, v. 1-2, pg., 22
ch. 6, v. 1-3, 4-11, pg., 225
ch. 6, v. 1-3, pg., 2, 5, 6, 136, 150, 152, 225, 228
ch. 6, v. 2, pg., 38, 87
ch. 6, v. 3, pg., 89
ch. 6, v. 4, pg., 2, 22, 137, 151, 152, 155, 158, 225
ch. 6, v. 4-11, pg., 2, 155, 158, 225
ch. 6, v. 4-6, pg., 152
ch. 6, v. 4-9, pg., 137
ch. 6, v. 6, pg., 5, 92, 145, 157
ch. 6, v. 7-9, pg., 179
ch. 6, v. 9, 11, pg., 109
ch. 6, v. 10, 12, pg., 84
ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 84, 102, 137, 156, 170
ch. 6, v. 10-11, pg., 137
ch. 6, v. 12, pg., 2, 20, 137, 159, 162, 174, 175, 177, 179, 225, 227, 229
ch. 6, v. 12-13, pg., 2, 159, 162, 225, 227, 229
ch. 6, v. 12-14, pg., 20, 137
ch. 6, v. 13, pg., 24, 98, 164
ch. 6, v. 14-7.2, pg., 2, 163, 165, 225
ch. 6, v. 14-7.6, pg., 2, 163
ch. 7, v. 1, 2, 3, 5-8, pg., 173
ch. 7, v. 1-10, pg., 20, 21
ch. 7, v. 1-6, pg., 137, 140, 164
ch. 7, v. 1-6a, pg., 137
ch. 7, v. 2, pg., 69, 129, 181
ch. 7, v. 2-8, pg., 69
ch. 7, v. 3, pg., 2, 48, 142, 144, 166, 170, 181, 225, 227
ch. 7, v. 3-4, pg., 144
ch. 7, v. 3-5, pg., 2, 166, 170, 181, 225, 227
ch. 7, v. 4, pg., 19, 73, 106, 168
ch. 7, v. 4-6, pg., 73
ch. 7, v. 6, pg., 2, 92, 137, 168, 171, 172, 177, 182, 225
ch. 7, v. 6-7a, pg., 2, 171, 172, 225
ch. 7, v. 6b-8a, pg., 137
ch. 7, v. 7, 8, pg., 15
ch. 7, v. 7, pg., 2, 15, 142, 148, 170, 173, 175, 183, 225
ch. 7, v. 7-8, pg., 142
ch. 7, v. 7a, pg., 173
ch. 7, v. 7b-10, pg., 2, 173, 175, 225
ch. 7, v. 8, pg., 5, 22, 29, 42, 92, 137
ch. 7, v. 8b-10, pg., 137
ch. 7, v. 9, pg., 5, 68, 147, 174, 175
ch. 7, v. 9-10, pg., 5
ch. 7, v. 10, pg., 9, 39, 146, 150
ch. 8, v. 1, 11, pg., 106
ch. 8, v. 1, pg., 13, 21, 85, 169, 174, 180
ch. 8, v. 1-17, pg., 2, 20, 21, 176
ch. 8, v. 1-2, 15, pg., 2, 176, 179, 226, 228, 229
ch. 8, v. 1-2, pg., 2, 13, 64, 176, 179, 226, 228, 229
ch. 8, v. 1-9.19, pg., 2, 176
ch. 8, v. 2, 15, pg., 68
ch. 8, v. 2, pg., 42, 68, 96, 105, 118, 122, 200, 220
ch. 8, v. 3, pg., 2, 133, 179, 180, 182, 192, 226, 228, 229
ch. 8, v. 3-6, pg., 2, 179, 182, 226, 228, 229
ch. 8, v. 5, pg., 48, 49, 144, 201
ch. 8, v. 5-6, 9-14, pg., 144
ch. 8, v. 5-8, pg., 49, 201
ch. 8, v. 6, pg., 180
ch. 8, v. 7, pg., 2, 139, 183, 184, 229
ch. 8, v. 7-8, pg., 2, 183, 184, 229
ch. 8, v. 8, 11-13, pg., 186
ch. 8, v. 8, pg., 22, 49, 106, 107, 140, 178, 185, 186, 213, 226
ch. 8, v. 8-9, pg., 185
ch. 8, v. 9, pg., 2, 9, 13, 125, 185, 186, 187, 197, 213, 227, 228
ch. 8, v. 9-10, 13-14, pg., 2, 185, 187, 213, 227, 228
ch. 8, v. 10-12, pg., 201
ch. 8, v. 10-14, pg., 201

ch. 8, v. 11, 16, pg., 19
ch. 8, v. 11, pg., 2, 19, 188, 190, 200, 201, 226, 228
ch. 8, v. 11-13, pg., 2, 188, 190, 201, 226, 228
ch. 8, v. 12, pg., 99, 128, 185, 194
ch. 8, v. 15, pg., 2, 96, 191, 193, 194, 201, 226, 229
ch. 8, v. 15-17, pg., 2, 191, 193, 226, 229
ch. 8, v. 16, pg., 192
ch. 8, v. 17, pg., 27, 33, 76, 164, 192, 207, 210
ch. 9, v. 1, pg., 99, 185, 189, 194
ch. 9, v. 1-17, pg., 21
ch. 9, v. 1-19, pg., 2, 194
ch. 9, v. 1-2, pg., 20
ch. 9, v. 1-4, pg., 2, 194, 195, 225, 226, 228
ch. 9, v. 2, pg., 196
ch. 9, v. 2-22, pg., 213
ch. 9, v. 3, pg., 196, 201
ch. 9, v. 3-11, pg., 20
ch. 9, v. 3-4, 29, pg., 68
ch. 9, v. 3-4, pg., 68, 193
ch. 9, v. 4, pg., 194
ch. 9, v. 5, 16, pg., 196
ch. 9, v. 5-12, 16, pg., 189
ch. 9, v. 5-17, pg., 2, 196, 201, 225, 226
ch. 9, v. 7, pg., 22, 68, 145, 196, 224, 225
ch. 9, v. 7-10, pg., 145, 196
ch. 9, v. 7-8, pg., 224, 225
ch. 9, v. 7-9, pg., 22, 224
ch. 9, v. 9, pg., 13, 213
ch. 9, v. 9-16, pg., 213
ch. 9, v. 10, 15, 16, pg., 189, 200, 201
ch. 9, v. 10, 24, pg., 177
ch. 9, v. 10, pg., 177, 189, 199, 200, 201
ch. 9, v. 12-15, pg., 112
ch. 9, v. 12-17, pg., 20
ch. 9, v. 13, pg., 48, 122, 196
ch. 9, v. 13-15, pg., 196
ch. 9, v. 17, pg., 2, 20, 27, 164, 203, 206, 227, 229
ch. 9, v. 17-19, pg., 2, 203, 206, 227, 229
ch. 9, v. 17-32, pg., 20, 27
ch. 9, v. 18, pg., 21, 164, 204
ch. 9, v. 18-19, pg., 204
ch. 9, v. 18-32, pg., 21
ch. 9, v. 19, 22, pg., 203, 207
ch. 9, v. 19, pg., 203, 207
ch. 9, v. 20, pg., 2, 68, 69, 193, 203, 204, 207, 213, 216, 227, 229
ch. 9, v. 20-10.3, pg., 2, 204
ch. 9, v. 20-22, pg., 2, 193, 203, 204, 207, 213, 216, 227, 229
ch. 9, v. 20-23, pg., 68
ch. 9, v. 20-32, pg., 2, 204
ch. 9, v. 21, 27, pg., 209
ch. 9, v. 21, pg., 204, 209

ch. 9, v. 22, pg., 164, 207
ch. 9, v. 22-32, pg., 164
ch. 9, v. 23, pg., 2, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 225, 227
ch. 9, v. 23-28, pg., 2, 209, 210, 225, 227
ch. 9, v. 24, pg., 209
ch. 9, v. 27, pg., 213
ch. 9, v. 29, pg., 2, 35, 206, 212, 214, 228, 229
ch. 9, v. 29-32, pg., 2, 35, 212, 214, 228, 229
ch. 9, v. 30, pg., 197, 213
ch. 9, v. 32, pg., 214
ch. 10, v. 1, pg., 2, 9, 12, 20, 21, 22, 219, 221, 224, 227, 228
ch. 10, v. 1-3, pg., 2, 20, 219, 221, 227, 228
ch. 10, v. 1-3, pg., 21
ch. 10, v. 2, pg., 22, 68, 127, 194, 214, 220, 224
ch. 10, v. 2-3, pg., 68
ch. 10, v. 3, pg., 87, 128, 220

18 Job

ch. 1, v. 6, pg., 4
ch. 1, v. 20, pg., 113
ch. 2, v. 1, pg., 4
ch. 12, v. 10, pg., 148
ch. 13, v. 15, pg., 136
ch. 14, v. 5, pg., 159
ch. 16, v. 2, pg., 161
ch. 38-41, pg., 6

19 Psalms

ch. 2, v. 1-12, pg., 25, 218
ch. 2, v. 1-3, pg., 143
ch. 2, v. 1-4, pg., 143
ch. 2, v. 1-7, 10-12, pg., 218
ch. 2, v. 2, pg., 184
ch. 2, v. 4, pg., 141, 159, 176, 203, 210
ch. 2, v. 10-12, pg., 187, 218
ch. 3, v. 7, pg., 171
ch. 6, v. 4, pg., 171
ch. 7, v. 14-16, pg., 170, 175
ch. 7, v. 15, pg., 148, 159
ch. 7, v. 15-16, pg., 148
ch. 10, v. 6, 11, 13, pg., 158
ch. 10, v. 11, pg., 101
ch. 14, v. 1, pg., 143, 158
ch. 18, v. 6, pg., 115
ch. 19, v. 7, pg., 105
ch. 30, v. 5, pg., 179
ch. 31, v. 15, pg., 159
ch. 33, v. 8, pg., 218
ch. 33, v. 10-11, pg., 6, 159
ch. 34, v. 7, pg., 203
ch. 34, v. 14, pg., 7
ch. 35, v. 13, pg., 113, 132
ch. 37, v. 1, pg., 94
ch. 37, v. 2, pg., 94
ch. 37, v. 11, 34-36, pg., 179
ch. 39, v. 1, pg., 216

- ch. 42, v. 9, pg., 101
- ch. 44, v. 21, pg., 89
- ch. 45, v. 8, pg., 75
- ch. 47, v. 7, pg., 155
- ch. 53, v. 1, pg., 158, 218
- ch. 55, v. 22, pg., 125
- ch. 63, v. 5, 6, pg., 154
- ch. 67, v. 4, pg., 115
- ch. 71, v. 13, 24, pg., 194
- ch. 73, v. 3, 17, pg., 94
- ch. 73, v. 3, pg., 93, 94
- ch. 73, v. 18-20, pg., 94
- ch. 73, v. 23, pg., 7
- ch. 77, v. 2, pg., 117
- ch. 77, v. 9, pg., 101
- ch. 78, v. 5, pg., 215
- ch. 82, v. 4, pg., 121
- ch. 84, v. 10, pg., 207
- ch. 90, v. 10, pg., 24
- ch. 91, v. 11, pg., 152
- ch. 94, v. 8-11, pg., 6
- ch. 96, v. 13, pg., 116
- ch. 98, v. 9, pg., 116
- ch. 102, v. 22, pg., 193
- ch. 103, v. 2, pg., 155
- ch. 103, v. 8-13, pg., 90
- ch. 107, v. 2, pg., 168
- ch. 107, v. 6, pg., 115
- ch. 111, v. 1, pg., 203
- ch. 116, v. 11, pg., 69
- ch. 116, v. 12-14, pg., 209
- ch. 116, v. 12-14, pg., 179
- ch. 119, v. 60, pg., 155
- ch. 119, v. 84, pg., 125
- ch. 121, v. 4, pg., 150
- ch. 122, v. 1, pg., 135
- ch. 122, v. 6, pg., 182, 212
- ch. 127, v. 2, pg., 154
- ch. 127, v. 5, pg., 84
- ch. 135, v. 6, pg., 6
- ch. 145, v. 16, pg., 209
- ch. 146, v. 3, pg., 212
- ch. 147, v. 1, pg., 155
- 20 Proverbs
 - ch. 1, v. 8, pg., 176
 - ch. 2, v. 17, pg., 48
 - ch. 3, v. 25, 26, pg., 125
 - ch. 4, v. 16-17, pg., 112
 - ch. 5, v. 21, pg., 170
 - ch. 5, v. 22, pg., 170
 - ch. 6, v. 14, 18, pg., 170
 - ch. 6, v. 16, pg., 92, 148
 - ch. 6, v. 16-19, pg., 92
 - ch. 7, v. 17, pg., 75
 - ch. 9, v. 9, pg., 83
 - ch. 9, v. 10, pg., 143
- ch. 11, v. 13, pg., 75
- ch. 11, v. 14, pg., 46
- ch. 11, v. 29, pg., 175
- ch. 13, v. 18, pg., 83
- ch. 13, v. 22, pg., 177, 222
- ch. 14, v. 29, pg., 39
- ch. 15, v. 1-2, pg., 215
- ch. 16, v. 1, 9, pg., 113
- ch. 16, v. 4, pg., 123
- ch. 16, v. 14, pg., 173
- ch. 16, v. 18, pg., 36, 94, 142, 148, 159
- ch. 16, v. 19, pg., 159
- ch. 16, v. 32, pg., 39
- ch. 16, v. 33, pg., 100, 194
- ch. 17, v. 8, 23, pg., 104
- ch. 17, v. 15, pg., 53
- ch. 18, v. 13, pg., 107
- ch. 19, v. 12, pg., 173
- ch. 19, v. 21, pg., 113
- ch. 20, v. 1, pg., 34, 74
- ch. 20, v. 24, pg., 7
- ch. 21, v. 1, pg., 6, 36, 67, 127, 140, 150
- ch. 21, v. 18, pg., 177
- ch. 21, v. 26, pg., 179
- ch. 21, v. 27, pg., 148
- ch. 21, v. 30, pg., 159
- ch. 22, v. 6, pg., 80
- ch. 22, v. 8, pg., 175
- ch. 22, v. 29, pg., 93, 178
- ch. 23, v. 30, 31, pg., 34
- ch. 23, v. 30, pg., 34, 74
- ch. 23, v. 31, pg., 40
- ch. 24, v. 11, pg., 121
- ch. 25, v. 15, pg., 39
- ch. 25, v. 26, pg., 120
- ch. 26, v. 27, pg., 143, 148, 175, 196
- ch. 27, v. 2, pg., 148
- ch. 27, v. 9, pg., 70
- ch. 27, v. 20, pg., 149
- ch. 28, v. 10, pg., 175
- ch. 28, v. 26, pg., 146
- ch. 29, v. 23, pg., 36, 148, 159
- ch. 30, v. 5, pg., 69
- ch. 31, v. 4, pg., 34, 40
- ch. 31, v. 4-9, pg., 34
- ch. 31, v. 10-31, pg., 78, 148
- ch. 31, v. 30, pg., 74
- 21 Ecclesiastes
 - ch. 2, v. 19, pg., 123
 - ch. 3, v. 21, pg., 123
 - ch. 5, v. 12, pg., 154
 - ch. 6, v. 12, pg., 123
 - ch. 7, v. 2-4, pg., 115
 - ch. 8, v. 1, pg., 123
 - ch. 9, v. 3, pg., 183
 - ch. 11, v. 1, pg., 209

22 Song of Solomon

- ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 70
- ch. 4, v. 1, pg., 74
- ch. 5, v. 14, pg., 30

23 Isaiah

- ch. 1, v. 11, pg., 55
- ch. 1, v. 12-14, pg., 211
- ch. 2, v. 6, pg., 101
- ch. 3, v. 18-24, pg., 74
- ch. 5, v. 11, pg., 34, 74
- ch. 6, v. 3, pg., 20
- ch. 7, v. 1, pg., 16
- ch. 9, v. 6-7, pg., 121, 123
- ch. 11, v. 10, pg., 150
- ch. 14, v. 13, pg., 158
- ch. 19, v. 23-25, pg., 193
- ch. 25, v. 6, pg., 37
- ch. 28, v. 7, pg., 74
- ch. 36-37, pg., 36
- ch. 37, v. 14-20, pg., 134
- ch. 40, v. 10, pg., 162
- ch. 42, v. 6, pg., 193
- ch. 44, v. 5, pg., 193
- ch. 44, v. 24-26, pg., 210
- ch. 46, v. 4, pg., 125
- ch. 47, v. 10, pg., 158
- ch. 47, v. 13, pg., 42, 210
- ch. 48, v. 20, pg., 17
- ch. 55, v. 1, pg., 37
- ch. 56, v. 12, pg., 74
- ch. 58, v. 4-5, pg., 132
- ch. 58, v. 6, pg., 121
- ch. 62, v. 11, pg., 162
- ch. 64, v. 6, pg., 114

24 Jeremiah

- ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 16
- ch. 4, v. 30, pg., 74
- ch. 6, v. 26, pg., 117
- ch. 12, v. 1, pg., 93
- ch. 14, v. 3, pg., 160
- ch. 17, v. 9, pg., 148, 183
- ch. 17, v. 10, pg., 89
- ch. 23, v. 5-6, pg., 150
- ch. 29, v. 4-7, pg., 90, 220
- ch. 29, v. 7, pg., 88
- ch. 29, v. 10, pg., 17
- ch. 31, v. 15, pg., 117
- ch. 44, v. 30, pg., 11
- ch. 48, v. 5, pg., 168
- ch. 50, v. 8, pg., 17
- ch. 50, v. 29, pg., 53
- ch. 50, v. 35, pg., 41, 42
- ch. 50, v. 35-36, pg., 42
- ch. 51, v. 6, pg., 17

26 Ezekiel

- ch. 18, v. 4, pg., 198

- ch. 18, v. 20, pg., 185
- ch. 21, v. 21, pg., 99
- ch. 23, v. 40, pg., 74
- ch. 27, v. 18, pg., 32
- ch. 30, v. 16, pg., 168

27 Daniel

- ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 37, 42
- ch. 1, v. 3-4, pg., 42
- ch. 1, v. 8-16, pg., 97
- ch. 2, v. 21, pg., 36
- ch. 2, v. 27, pg., 42, 48
- ch. 2, v. 27-45, pg., 48
- ch. 2, v. 34-35, 44-45, pg., 194
- ch. 2, v. 39, pg., 36
- ch. 2, v. 44, pg., 25, 123
- ch. 2, v. 48, pg., 41
- ch. 3, v. 1-30, pg., 36, 52
- ch. 3, v. 8-28, pg., 97
- ch. 3, v. 16-18, pg., 136
- ch. 4, v. 1-37, pg., 36
- ch. 4, v. 14, pg., 59
- ch. 4, v. 17, 34, 35, pg., 36
- ch. 4, v. 19, pg., 48, 90
- ch. 4, v. 19-27, pg., 48
- ch. 4, v. 25, pg., 218
- ch. 4, v. 28-33, pg., 146
- ch. 4, v. 30, pg., 151
- ch. 4, v. 34, 35, pg., 6
- ch. 4, v. 34, pg., 6, 20, 193
- ch. 4, v. 34-35, pg., 193
- ch. 5, v. 1, pg., 27
- ch. 5, v. 1-30, pg., 36
- ch. 5, v. 2, pg., 35
- ch. 5, v. 4, pg., 32
- ch. 5, v. 15, pg., 42
- ch. 5, v. 17-28, pg., 48
- ch. 5, v. 21, pg., 218
- ch. 5, v. 28, pg., 27
- ch. 5, v. 29, pg., 178
- ch. 5, v. 30, pg., 146
- ch. 5, v. 31, pg., 10, 11
- ch. 6, v. 1, pg., 11, 14
- ch. 6, v. 1-5, pg., 195
- ch. 6, v. 5, pg., 103
- ch. 6, v. 6-9, pg., 52
- ch. 6, v. 8, 12, 15, pg., 27, 181
- ch. 6, v. 8, 12, pg., 27, 133, 181
- ch. 6, v. 8, 15, pg., 49
- ch. 6, v. 8, pg., 27, 49, 107, 133, 181
- ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 97
- ch. 6, v. 12, pg., 59
- ch. 6, v. 21-23, pg., 48
- ch. 6, v. 24, pg., 122, 194
- ch. 7, v. 10, pg., 43
- ch. 7, v. 14, 18, pg., 20
- ch. 8, v. 2, pg., 29, 34, 134

- ch. 8, v. 3-4, pg., 99
- ch. 8, v. 4-7, pg., 36
- ch. 8, v. 20, pg., 27
- ch. 9, v. 1, pg., 8, 10, 11
- ch. 9, v. 2, pg., 17
- ch. 9, v. 3, pg., 113, 132
- ch. 9, v. 24-27, pg., 123
- ch. 10, v. 2, 3, pg., 132
- ch. 11, v. 1, pg., 11
- ch. 11, v. 1-45, pg., 69
- ch. 11, v. 2, 3, pg., 36
- 28 Hosea
 - ch. 4, v. 11, pg., 74
- 29 Joel
 - ch. 1, v. 8, pg., 117
 - ch. 1, v. 14, pg., 115, 132
 - ch. 2, v. 12, pg., 115, 132
 - ch. 2, v. 12-13, pg., 132
- 30 Amos
 - ch. 3, v. 3, pg., 215
 - ch. 5, v. 14-15, pg., 7
 - ch. 6, v. 6, pg., 70, 112
 - ch. 8, v. 5, pg., 211
- 31 Obadiah
 - v. 15, pg., 53
- 32 Jonah
 - ch. 3, v. 1-10, pg., 218
 - ch. 3, v. 5, pg., 193
 - ch. 3, v. 6-9, pg., 113
- 33 Micah
 - ch. 5, v. 2, pg., 150, 153, 194, 224
 - ch. 6, v. 8, pg., 160
- 35 Habakkuk
 - ch. 2, v. 8, pg., 53
- 37 Haggai
 - ch. 1, v. 1, 15, pg., 11
 - ch. 2, v. 10, pg., 11
- 38 Zechariah
 - ch. 1, v. 1, 7, pg., 11
 - ch. 7, v. 1, pg., 11
 - ch. 8, v. 16, 19, pg., 215
 - ch. 8, v. 19, pg., 115
 - ch. 8, v. 23, pg., 193
- 39 Malachi
 - ch. 2, v. 14, pg., 48
 - ch. 2, v. 14-16, pg., 66
 - ch. 3, v. 10, pg., 209
- 40 Matthew
 - ch. 2, v. 13-14, pg., 194
 - ch. 2, v. 13-15, pg., 224
 - ch. 2, v. 16, pg., 109, 111
 - ch. 2, v. 16-18, pg., 109
 - ch. 4, v. 1-11, pg., 102
 - ch. 4, v. 10, pg., 218
 - ch. 5, v. 3-10, pg., 136
 - ch. 5, v. 5, pg., 179
 - ch. 5, v. 10-11, pg., 125
 - ch. 5, v. 11-12, pg., 212
 - ch. 5, v. 16, pg., 75
 - ch. 5, v. 18, pg., 24, 221
 - ch. 5, v. 21-48, pg., 72
 - ch. 5, v. 21-6.18, pg., 105
 - ch. 5, v. 27, pg., 78
 - ch. 5, v. 32, pg., 66
 - ch. 5, v. 38, pg., 53
 - ch. 5, v. 44, pg., 90, 203
 - ch. 6, v. 7-13, pg., 216
 - ch. 6, v. 9, pg., 171, 215
 - ch. 6, v. 9-13, pg., 215
 - ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 113, 171, 215
 - ch. 6, v. 11, pg., 171
 - ch. 6, v. 17-18, pg., 116
 - ch. 6, v. 19-21, pg., 179
 - ch. 6, v. 25-34, pg., 136
 - ch. 6, v. 34, pg., 78
 - ch. 7, v. 2, pg., 53
 - ch. 7, v. 7, pg., 215
 - ch. 8, v. 24, pg., 154
 - ch. 9, v. 23, pg., 113
 - ch. 9, v. 38, pg., 123
 - ch. 10, v. 16, pg., 142, 171, 188
 - ch. 10, v. 23, pg., 212
 - ch. 10, v. 29-31, pg., 6
 - ch. 11, v. 8, pg., 115
 - ch. 11, v. 28, pg., 121
 - ch. 14, v. 3-5, pg., 218
 - ch. 16, v. 18, pg., 194, 212
 - ch. 16, v. 25, pg., 136
 - ch. 18, v. 6, pg., 54
 - ch. 18, v. 21-22, pg., 173
 - ch. 19, v. 3-8, pg., 67
 - ch. 19, v. 3-9, pg., 48
 - ch. 19, v. 4-5, pg., 78
 - ch. 19, v. 9, pg., 51, 55
 - ch. 19, v. 19, pg., 202
 - ch. 19, v. 26, pg., 121
 - ch. 19, v. 28-30, pg., 196
 - ch. 22, v. 1-14, pg., 37
 - ch. 22, v. 2-3, pg., 163
 - ch. 22, v. 17-21, pg., 222, 228
 - ch. 23, v. 6, pg., 93
 - ch. 23, v. 12, pg., 36, 148
 - ch. 24, v. 9, pg., 212
 - ch. 24, v. 14, pg., 218
 - ch. 25, v. 21, pg., 91, 152, 155, 215
 - ch. 25, v. 21-23, pg., 155
 - ch. 25, v. 41, pg., 173, 203
 - ch. 25, v. 41-46, pg., 203
 - ch. 26, v. 49, pg., 172
 - ch. 28, v. 7, 10, pg., 54
 - ch. 28, v. 18-20, pg., 7
 - ch. 28, v. 19, pg., 25, 54, 187, 194, 215, 218

- ch. 28, v. 19-20, pg., 54, 187, 194, 215, 218
- 41 Mark
- ch. 6, v. 22, 28, pg., 128
 - ch. 6, v. 23, pg., 129, 140
 - ch. 7, v. 24-30, pg., 54
 - ch. 8, v. 38, pg., 75
 - ch. 12, v. 41-44, pg., 121
- 42 Luke
- ch. 1, v. 37, pg., 121
 - ch. 2, v. 1, pg., 194
 - ch. 2, v. 1-7, pg., 153
 - ch. 10, v. 7, pg., 160
 - ch. 11, v. 10-13, pg., 166
 - ch. 11, v. 23, pg., 187
 - ch. 12, v. 2, pg., 170
 - ch. 12, v. 16-21, pg., 146
 - ch. 14, v. 7-11, pg., 159
 - ch. 14, v. 11, pg., 162
 - ch. 18, v. 1-8, pg., 166
 - ch. 20, v. 46, pg., 93
 - ch. 21, v. 33, pg., 124
 - ch. 22, v. 17, pg., 74
 - ch. 23, v. 2, 5, pg., 105
 - ch. 23, v. 43, pg., 30
 - ch. 24, v. 9, pg., 54
 - ch. 24, v. 28, pg., 75
- 43 John
- ch. 2, v. 9, pg., 40, 74
 - ch. 3, v. 16-17, pg., 209
 - ch. 3, v. 27, pg., 148
 - ch. 4, v. 7-27, pg., 54
 - ch. 5, v. 1, pg., 207
 - ch. 5, v. 2-9, pg., 207
 - ch. 5, v. 9, 16, pg., 207
 - ch. 6, v. 9, pg., 121
 - ch. 6, v. 35, pg., 37
 - ch. 8, v. 24, pg., 54
 - ch. 8, v. 44, pg., 102, 144
 - ch. 10, v. 35, pg., 24
 - ch. 14, v. 6, pg., 218
 - ch. 14, v. 15, 23, pg., 155
 - ch. 15, v. 20, pg., 105
 - ch. 19, v. 39, pg., 75
 - ch. 20, v. 30, pg., 209
 - ch. 21, v. 15-17, pg., 215
 - ch. 21, v. 25, pg., 209
- 44 Acts
- ch. 1, v. 24, pg., 89
 - ch. 2, v. 9, 10, pg., 224
 - ch. 2, v. 23, pg., 7, 67
 - ch. 2, v. 41, 47, pg., 193
 - ch. 4, v. 12, pg., 218
 - ch. 4, v. 19, pg., 97
 - ch. 4, v. 27, 28, pg., 67
 - ch. 4, v. 27-28, pg., 7
 - ch. 5, v. 29, pg., 39, 78, 86, 97, 134
 - ch. 6, v. 1, 7, pg., 204
 - ch. 6, v. 2-6, pg., 204
 - ch. 7, v. 22, pg., 42
 - ch. 8, v. 27, pg., 37
 - ch. 9, v. 25, pg., 121
 - ch. 10, v. 2, pg., 193
 - ch. 10, v. 35, pg., 52, 226
 - ch. 12, v. 20-23, pg., 36
 - ch. 13, v. 13, pg., 124
 - ch. 13, v. 48, pg., 153
 - ch. 15, v. 8, pg., 89
 - ch. 15, v. 20, pg., 78
 - ch. 15, v. 36-41, pg., 124
 - ch. 16, v. 1-3, pg., 124
 - ch. 16, v. 14, pg., 193
 - ch. 16, v. 21-22, pg., 105
 - ch. 17, v. 21, pg., 212
 - ch. 17, v. 22-31, pg., 218
 - ch. 17, v. 24-31, pg., 218
 - ch. 17, v. 25-28, pg., 6
 - ch. 17, v. 28, pg., 36, 135, 148
 - ch. 18, v. 7, pg., 193
 - ch. 19, v. 29-34, pg., 188
 - ch. 20, v. 24, pg., 136
 - ch. 20, v. 34-35, pg., 209
 - ch. 21, v. 13, pg., 136
 - ch. 23, v. 3-5, pg., 96
 - ch. 23, v. 16, pg., 89, 121
 - ch. 23, v. 16-17, pg., 89
 - ch. 26, v. 8, pg., 121
 - ch. 27, v. 1-44, pg., 4
- 45 Romans
- ch. 1, v. 16, pg., 75, 97
 - ch. 1, v. 18, pg., 21, 78, 105, 176, 218
 - ch. 1, v. 18-22, 28-32, pg., 78
 - ch. 1, v. 18-22, 32, pg., 105
 - ch. 1, v. 18-23, pg., 176
 - ch. 1, v. 18-31, pg., 218
 - ch. 1, v. 19-20, pg., 130
 - ch. 1, v. 21, pg., 36, 143, 163, 183
 - ch. 1, v. 21-23, pg., 143, 183
 - ch. 1, v. 29, pg., 78
 - ch. 2, v. 16, pg., 89
 - ch. 3, v. 3, pg., 26
 - ch. 3, v. 18, pg., 145
 - ch. 3, v. 23, pg., 131
 - ch. 5, v. 6, pg., 116, 125, 134, 159
 - ch. 5, v. 6-9, pg., 134
 - ch. 7, v. 1, 20, pg., 114
 - ch. 7, v. 7-24, pg., 101
 - ch. 8, v. 15, 23, pg., 68
 - ch. 8, v. 28, 31, pg., 226
 - ch. 8, v. 28, pg., 8, 77, 84, 89, 101, 113, 124, 130, 136, 159, 212, 226
 - ch. 8, v. 28-30, pg., 101
 - ch. 8, v. 28-31, pg., 159

- ch. 8, v. 31, pg., 136
- ch. 9, v. 16, pg., 135
- ch. 9, v. 17, pg., 6
- ch. 9, v. 21-22, pg., 123
- ch. 10, v. 14-15, pg., 123, 215
- ch. 10, v. 14-17, pg., 203
- ch. 12, v. 9-12, pg., 155
- ch. 12, v. 10, pg., 135
- ch. 12, v. 13, pg., 209
- ch. 13, v. 1, pg., 36
- ch. 13, v. 1-4, pg., 56
- ch. 13, v. 1-7, pg., 56, 90, 97, 202, 218
- ch. 13, v. 3-4, pg., 228
- ch. 13, v. 4, pg., 43, 176
- ch. 13, v. 6, 7, pg., 222, 228
- ch. 13, v. 7, pg., 97, 146
- ch. 13, v. 9, pg., 78
- ch. 13, v. 13, pg., 40
- ch. 14, v. 5, pg., 205
- ch. 15, v. 4, pg., 24
- 46 1 Corinthians
 - ch. 1, v. 20, pg., 124, 143
 - ch. 1, v. 26-29, pg., 121
 - ch. 1, v. 26-30, pg., 179
 - ch. 1, v. 27, pg., 85
 - ch. 4, v. 7, pg., 148
 - ch. 4, v. 15-17, pg., 47
 - ch. 7, v. 5, pg., 78
 - ch. 7, v. 13, pg., 55
 - ch. 10, v. 13, pg., 125
 - ch. 10, v. 20, 21, pg., 72
 - ch. 10, v. 24, pg., 209
 - ch. 10, v. 31, pg., 36, 47
 - ch. 10, v. 31-11.1, pg., 47
 - ch. 14, v. 34-35, pg., 155
 - ch. 15, v. 32, pg., 36
 - ch. 15, v. 33-34, pg., 107
 - ch. 16, v. 22, pg., 173
- 47 2 Corinthians
 - ch. 4, v. 17, pg., 125
 - ch. 5, v. 10, pg., 89
 - ch. 9, v. 6, 10, pg., 209
 - ch. 9, v. 7, pg., 209
 - ch. 11, v. 23-28, pg., 125
 - ch. 12, v. 3, pg., 30
 - ch. 12, v. 14, pg., 222
 - ch. 12, v. 20, pg., 39, 216
- 48 Galatians
 - ch. 3, v. 1, pg., 211
 - ch. 3, v. 7-9, pg., 111
 - ch. 3, v. 28, pg., 40
 - ch. 4, v. 4, pg., 125, 159
 - ch. 5, v. 22, 23, pg., 136
 - ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 179
- 49 Ephesians
 - ch. 1, v. 10, pg., 125
- ch. 1, v. 11, pg., 6
- ch. 2, v. 12, pg., 149
- ch. 4, v. 15, pg., 216
- ch. 4, v. 25, pg., 75
- ch. 4, v. 28, pg., 7, 179, 209
- ch. 4, v. 29, pg., 216
- ch. 4, v. 32, pg., 145
- ch. 5, v. 1-2, pg., 47
- ch. 5, v. 4, pg., 216
- ch. 5, v. 18, pg., 40, 74
- ch. 5, v. 19, pg., 155
- ch. 5, v. 20, pg., 125, 145, 155, 193
- ch. 5, v. 22-23, 28, 33, pg., 48
- ch. 5, v. 22-23, 33, pg., 58
- ch. 5, v. 22-33, pg., 78
- ch. 5, v. 23, 28-29, 33, pg., 58
- ch. 5, v. 25, 28, 31, pg., 40
- ch. 6, v. 1, pg., 85
- ch. 6, v. 10-18, pg., 203
- ch. 6, v. 11, pg., 135
- ch. 6, v. 12, pg., 152, 182
- ch. 6, v. 18, pg., 135, 182
- ch. 6, v. 18-19, pg., 135
- 50 Philippians
 - ch. 2, v. 1-5, pg., 83, 86
 - ch. 2, v. 3-8, pg., 162
 - ch. 2, v. 4, pg., 209
 - ch. 2, v. 9-11, pg., 58, 218
 - ch. 2, v. 10-11, pg., 159, 187
 - ch. 3, v. 9, pg., 114
 - ch. 4, v. 4, pg., 125
 - ch. 4, v. 5, pg., 145
 - ch. 4, v. 11, 12, pg., 150
 - ch. 4, v. 14-19, pg., 155
 - ch. 4, v. 14-20, pg., 209
 - ch. 4, v. 22, pg., 87
- 51 Colossians
 - ch. 2, v. 16-17, pg., 205
 - ch. 3, v. 16, pg., 155
 - ch. 3, v. 17, pg., 155
 - ch. 3, v. 18, pg., 48, 58
 - ch. 3, v. 18-19, pg., 48
 - ch. 3, v. 19, pg., 40
 - ch. 3, v. 20, pg., 85
 - ch. 4, v. 3, 8, pg., 135
 - ch. 4, v. 6, pg., 216
 - ch. 4, v. 18, pg., 135, 171
- 52 1 Thessalonians
 - ch. 1, v. 5-10, pg., 47
 - ch. 2, v. 7, pg., 215
 - ch. 2, v. 13-14, pg., 47
 - ch. 4, v. 18, pg., 216
 - ch. 5, v. 17-18, pg., 193
 - ch. 5, v. 24, pg., 26
- 53 2 Thessalonians
 - ch. 3, v. 3, 4, pg., 26

- ch. 3, v. 6-12, pg., 47
- ch. 3, v. 10-12, pg., 7
- 54 1 Timothy
 - ch. 1, v. 5, 19, pg., 149
 - ch. 2, v. 1-2, pg., 56, 90, 97, 222
 - ch. 2, v. 9-10, pg., 74
 - ch. 2, v. 11-15, pg., 155
 - ch. 3, v. 2, 5, pg., 44
 - ch. 3, v. 2, pg., 44
 - ch. 3, v. 3, pg., 44, 74
 - ch. 3, v. 4-5, pg., 44
 - ch. 3, v. 6, pg., 44, 94
 - ch. 3, v. 7, pg., 44
 - ch. 4, v. 2, pg., 111
 - ch. 5, v. 23, pg., 40, 74
 - ch. 6, v. 7-8, pg., 78
 - ch. 6, v. 8, pg., 125, 150
 - ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 179
- 55 2 Timothy
 - ch. 1, v. 8, pg., 75
 - ch. 2, v. 2, pg., 215
 - ch. 2, v. 13, pg., 26
 - ch. 2, v. 24-25, pg., 215
 - ch. 3, v. 15-17, pg., 215, 218, 224
 - ch. 3, v. 16, 17, pg., 7
 - ch. 3, v. 16-17, pg., 8, 24
 - ch. 4, v. 3-4, pg., 162
 - ch. 4, v. 7-8, pg., 91
 - ch. 4, v. 8, pg., 152
- 56 Titus
 - ch. 1, v. 2, pg., 159
 - ch. 1, v. 6, pg., 44
 - ch. 1, v. 7, pg., 44
 - ch. 1, v. 8, pg., 44
 - ch. 1, v. 9, pg., 44
 - ch. 3, v. 1, pg., 56, 97
- 58 Hebrews
 - ch. 1, v. 3, pg., 6
 - ch. 4, v. 9, pg., 204
 - ch. 4, v. 13, pg., 89
 - ch. 6, v. 9-12, pg., 47
 - ch. 6, v. 13, pg., 22
 - ch. 10, v. 1-18, pg., 55
 - ch. 10, v. 23, pg., 26, 97
 - ch. 11, v. 1-40, pg., 182
 - ch. 11, v. 24-26, pg., 169
 - ch. 12, v. 22, pg., 212
 - ch. 12, v. 26-27, pg., 215
 - ch. 13, v. 3, pg., 123, 135, 171
 - ch. 13, v. 4, pg., 78
 - ch. 13, v. 5, pg., 125
 - ch. 13, v. 7-9, pg., 47
 - ch. 13, v. 15, pg., 155, 216
- 59 James
 - ch. 1, v. 2-3, pg., 125
- ch. 1, v. 5, pg., 215
- ch. 1, v. 17, pg., 36, 148, 179, 209
- ch. 1, v. 19, pg., 39
- ch. 1, v. 27, pg., 123
- ch. 2, v. 1, pg., 52, 226
- ch. 2, v. 20, pg., 97
- ch. 3, v. 5-12, pg., 216
- ch. 3, v. 13, pg., 97
- ch. 4, v. 6, pg., 36, 148, 162
- ch. 4, v. 17, pg., 122
- 60 1 Peter
 - ch. 1, v. 24-25, pg., 221
 - ch. 2, v. 13-14, 17, pg., 56, 97
 - ch. 2, v. 13-14, pg., 56, 97
 - ch. 2, v. 21, pg., 48
 - ch. 3, v. 1, pg., 48
 - ch. 3, v. 1-6, pg., 79, 82, 83
 - ch. 3, v. 3-4, pg., 59, 74
 - ch. 3, v. 13-17, pg., 203
 - ch. 3, v. 15-16, pg., 75, 97, 171, 194
 - ch. 4, v. 8, pg., 135
 - ch. 5, v. 1-3, pg., 215
 - ch. 5, v. 5, pg., 83, 86, 145
 - ch. 5, v. 6, pg., 162
 - ch. 5, v. 7, pg., 125
 - ch. 5, v. 8, pg., 135, 184
- 61 2 Peter
 - ch. 1, v. 5-7, pg., 136
 - ch. 1, v. 20-21, pg., 24
 - ch. 3, v. 8, pg., 125
- 62 1 John
 - ch. 1, v. 9, pg., 145
 - ch. 3, v. 16-17, pg., 121
- 64 3 John
 - v. 11, pg., 7
- 65 Jude
 - v. 14-15, pg., 173
- 66 Revelation
 - ch. 2, v. 7, pg., 30
 - ch. 2, v. 19, pg., 155
 - ch. 4, v. 11, pg., 124
 - ch. 6, v. 10, pg., 125
 - ch. 6, v. 15-17, pg., 173
 - ch. 11, v. 17-18, pg., 204
 - ch. 13, v. 18, pg., 171
 - ch. 19, v. 1-2, pg., 162
 - ch. 19, v. 9, pg., 37, 204
 - ch. 20, v. 11-15, pg., 176, 203
 - ch. 20, v. 12, pg., 43, 197
 - ch. 20, v. 12-13, pg., 197
 - ch. 20, v. 14, 15, pg., 191
 - ch. 21, v. 4, pg., 125, 179, 204
 - ch. 21, v. 25, pg., 154
 - ch. 22, v. 2, pg., 37
 - ch. 22, v. 12, pg., 162

Index

—9—

95 theses, 211

—A—

Abednego, 52

Abel, 111, 165

Abraham, 24, 66, 87, 95, 98, 106, 111, 116, 123, 134,
150, 161, 220

Abram, 121, 198

abstinence, 40, 132

accident, 116, 137, 153

accusation, 51, 85, 93, 95, 102, 103, 105, 118, 120,
140, 141, 142, 163, 172, 173, 181, 198

Achaemenes, 40

acropolis, 15, 18, 29

Acton, Lord, 61, 104

actor, 86

Adam, 28, 62, 148, 149, 153, 165, 198

adar, 190

adoption, 64, 68, 72, 85, 117, 118, 122, 123, 177, 178

Advertising

profits to Christian organization, 191, 203

sex sells, 61

Aegean Sea, 12, 25, 219

affection, 41, 50, 166, 167, 181

affliction, 168

Afghanistan, 14

Africa, 18, 75, 108, 163

Agag, 91, 92

Agagite, 91, 92, 107, 180, 181

agricultural fair, 191

Ahab, 113

Ahaziah, 165

Akkad, 24

Akkadian, 98, 209

alabaster, 31

Alcohol

alcohol, 27, 33, 40, 74, 111, 149, 150, 205, 210,
224

heavy drinker, 27

no compulsion to partake, 32

poisoning, 27

those under correctional supervision, 40

whisky, 79

wine, 27, 32, 33, 34, 39, 40, 72, 77, 87, 88, 111,
113, 141, 148, 163

Alexander, 14, 17, 25, 27, 32, 76, 184, 220

Alexandria, 129, 224

alphabet, 17, 108, 186

Amalek, 94, 98, 199

Amalekites, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 107, 146, 161,
173, 180, 197, 198, 199, 200, 212

Amestris, 12, 59

Amish, 74

Ammonites, 186

Amorites, 24, 125

Amshaspands, 38

Amyntas, 38

Anabaptist, 201

Ananias, 96

anathema, 187

Anatolia, 25, 110

Angel

in false religion, 38, 46

Passover, 209

protecting, 152

role, 130

animal slaughter, 71, 218

anointing oil, 76

antediluvian world, 24

Antigone, 18

Antiochus Epiphanes, 25, 191, 219, 224

anti-vaccine, 163

anxiety, 27, 78, 108, 136, 164

apocalyptic vision, 18

Apocrypha

Apocrypha, 11, 13, 23, 127, 128, 129, 132

colophon to Eshter, 128

fabrication, possible, 128, 133

apologist, Paul, 162

apostasy, 54, 55

Apostle, 24, 74, 204, 208, 212

Aquila, 129

Aquinas, Thomas, 201

Arab, 88, 98

Arabian Peninsula, 14, 134

Arachosia, 15

Archaeology

archaeology, 13, 22, 23, 70, 99, 133, 178

excavation, 15, 60

architect, 215

architecture, 74

Arians, anti, 211

aristocracy, 132

Aristophanes, 18

Aristotle, 136

Armenia, 110

Armenians, 110

Art

abstract, 215

artisans, 15

arts, 74, 131

drawing, 74

- painting, 74, 91, 215
- Artaxerxes, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 23, 42, 87, 157, 178, 199
- asceticism, 18
- Asia, 76, 108
- Assur, 98
- Assyria, 25, 35, 85, 98
- Assyrian, 15, 36, 63, 98, 110, 190, 209
- Athaliah, 35, 111, 165
- Athanasius, 116
- atheism, 100, 153, 218
- Athenian, 17, 18, 212
- Athens, 17, 18
- athlete, 86, 149, 171, 195, 221
- Athos, Mount, 17
- Atilla the Hun, 25
- Atonement, Day of, 115
- Atossa, 11, 12, 35
- Augustine, 201
- awnings, 30
- B—**
- Babe Ruth, 35
- Babel, 24, 153, 187
- Babelites, 198
- Babylon, 12, 15, 17, 24, 25, 26, 32, 59, 64, 83, 85, 90, 102, 103, 126, 150, 197
- Babylonian, 10, 15, 21, 29, 35, 41, 62, 63, 71, 83, 87, 106, 114, 123, 178, 188, 190, 216
- bacteria, streptococcus, 183
- Bactria, 14, 15
- Baghdad, 15, 36
- bakery, 91
- Balaam, 92
- ballet, 158
- banishment, 139, 162
- banquet, 4, 5, 12, 16, 19, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 51, 59, 69, 82, 124, 128, 136, 138, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 152, 159, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169, 224
- barrenness, 121
- bashfulness, 136
- Basil the Great, 201
- bathing, 70, 76
- Bathsheba, 65
- Beauty
 - artificial, 228
 - attractiveness, 41, 48, 70, 71, 77, 81, 137, 153
 - cross cultural, 73
 - enhancement, 60
 - equilateral triangles, 74
 - Esther's, 19, 65, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 81, 82, 83, 122, 140, 141
 - feminine, 4, 59, 60, 61, 65, 66, 69, 73, 76, 77, 83
 - gift from God, 65, 74, 228
 - God-defined, 73, 228
 - lost with aging, 59
 - natural, 60, 70, 73, 79, 137, 140
 - pageant, 59, 76, 78
 - preparations
 - diet, 60, 70, 76
 - process, 70, 75, 76, 78, 83, 228
 - show off, 4, 37, 38, 66, 83, 84
 - spots, 70
 - standard, 73, 74, 228
 - subjective, claim, 73
 - treatments, 19, 60, 70, 74, 76, 205
 - Vashti's, 51, 59, 65, 70
- bedchamber, 35, 41, 49, 61, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 87, 119, 130, 137, 138, 141, 150, 181
- beef, 72
- beer, 111
- begging for life, mercy, forgiveness, 5, 142, 164, 166, 173, 180
- Believer
 - adopted by God, 68
 - adversity, 78, 194
 - believer, 47, 87, 123, 132, 135, 136, 152, 153, 179, 193, 194, 204, 230
 - brother and sister, 135, 136
 - coheir with Christ, 62
 - devotion to God, 63, 83
 - divine purpose, 139
 - elect, 152
 - eternal
 - hope, 216
 - life, 43
 - salvation, 204
 - eternal position, 68
 - everlasting life, 62
 - fixated on ephemeral and inconsequential, 26
 - godly, 48, 90, 221
 - holiness, 84
 - obey God out of love not by threat, 105
 - persevere in God's strength, 121
 - resurrection, 211
 - steadfast profession, 97
 - upright, 44
 - willing to lose temporal life, 136
- Belshazzar, 27, 32, 36, 146
- benevolence, 64, 80, 83, 168, 183
- Benjamin of Tudela, 134
- Benjaminites, 63, 64, 92, 96
- Bethesda, pool of, 207
- Bethlehem, 43, 109, 153, 184, 194
- Biblical
 - civil disobedience, 97, 135
 - constitutions, 47, 226
 - thinking, 228
 - traditions, 212
- Bigtha, 38, 87
- birthday, 82, 100, 128
- Black Sea, 14

Blessing

- children, 145
- false, 99
- from God, 8, 28, 105, 112, 123, 124, 125, 134, 145, 152, 154, 162, 165, 193, 198, 208, 220, 229
- in trials, 125

Blindness

- physical, 116
- spiritual, 36, 40, 145, 159, 163

Blood

- drained, 71
- excitement, 34
- in meat, 71
- not to eat, 71
- of Christ covering sin, 90, 149
- Passover lamb, 210
- royal, 60
- running cold, 172

BMI, 74

bodyguards, 87, 88, 119

Bohemia, 36, 211

Boldness

- false, 161
- refrained, 138
- true, 23, 172, 180

Bolsheviks, 29

boredom, 76, 80, 120, 140, 151, 154

Bow

- prostrate, 93, 138
- to human, 4, 93, 94, 95, 96, 100, 103, 114, 118, 129, 135, 138, 145, 146, 158, 173, 180
- to idol, 97
- to Jesus, 58, 187

bravery, 114, 180, 223, 227

bricks, 15

British Museum, 105

brocades, 31

brothels, 120

Buddha, 18

Buddhism, 5, 18, 100

Business

- Christian, 191
- commercial, 67, 94, 119, 142, 162, 211
- deal, 212
- district, 202
- facilities, 211
- king's, 84, 138, 141, 155, 160, 195
- leaders, 86, 171
- owners, 116
- partner, 34, 110
- profits, 191
- small, 202
- statutory holidays, 208

butcher shop, 202

—C—

Caesar

- Augustus, 153, 194
- Caesar, 11, 25, 87, 153, 194, 222
- Julius, 25

Cain, 111, 148, 153

calcium carbonate, 31

Calendar

- ancient Middle East, 107
- converter, 207
- Gregorian, 207
- Jewish, 185
- Persian, 38, 108

calfskin, parchment, 55

Caligula, 19

Calvin, John, 201

Calvinist, 110

Cambyes, 8, 10, 14, 27, 40, 103

camel, 14

Canaan, 67

Canaanites, 198

canal, 134

cancer, 168

cannibals, 105

capital city, 15, 108, 116, 134, 197, 203, 213

Captivity

- Egyptian, Babylonian, 16, 17, 21, 63, 64, 106, 125, 188
- return from, 8, 17, 26, 65, 87, 153, 161, 178
- returnees, 63, 65, 126

carnelian, 15

carpenter, 104

Casiphia, 102

Caspian Sea, 14

caste system, 59

castration, 61, 87

Causation

- causation, 6, 67, 100
- cause-consequence, 6
- cause-effect, 6
- chain of events, 124, 152, 153
- chance, 5, 6, 79, 100, 122, 130, 152, 153, 210
- contingency, 101
- first, 101
- force-fate, 5
- genes or environment, claim, 101
- impersonal, 5, 6
- intelligent agent, 5
- law of large numbers, 5, 125, 149, 179, 191
- master of own destiny, claim, 36
- mechanistic, 6
- not accident, 122
- supernatural, 100
- temporal or spatial proximity, 5

cedar timber, 15

celebrity, 48, 145

- Celestial objects
 - celestial objects, 28, 99, 159
 - Jupiter, 28
 - Mars, 28
 - Mercury, 28, 185
 - moon, 28, 91, 94
 - planets, 42
 - revolution, 28
 - Saturn, 28
 - star, 19, 64, 99
 - sun, 28
 - Venus, 28
- censorship, book-burning, 43
- censure of behaviour, 39, 78
- census of Augustus, 153, 194
- ceremonial guard, 152
- Chaldeans, 24, 98, 161
- champion, 116
- chariot, 105
- charity, 54, 145, 191, 205, 210, 222, 223
- Charlemagne, 153
- Charles II, 36
- Charles IX, 110
- chastity, 78, 79
- cheese, 71
- chevon, 72
- childbirth, 66
- childlessness, 77
- China
 - China, 14, 18, 25, 28, 102, 103, 108, 112
 - Chou dynasty, 18
 - Great Leap Forward, 110
 - Xai dynasty, 25
- Christian Reconstructionists, 44
- Christianity, 40, 61, 62, 78, 98, 100, 105, 143, 146, 187, 216, 218, 228
- Christmas, 211
- chronicles, 4, 5, 13, 68, 69, 89, 151, 154, 155, 159, 176, 221
- chronology, 9, 34
- Church
 - and state, 43
 - apparel, 138
 - attendance, 130
 - bride of Christ, 179, 198, 226
 - compromise, 135
 - congregation, 43, 135, 171, 210, 227, 229
 - denominations, 74, 135, 162, 210, 214, 215
 - discord, 215
 - disharmony, 215
 - eternal, 79
 - excommunication, 54, 217
 - government, 207, 214
 - Jesus', 135, 194, 215
 - keys, 219
 - leaders
 - abandon principles, 214
 - men, 214
 - not dictatorial, 215
 - proud, 86
 - responsibilities, 215, 229
 - sinful, 171
 - membership, 215
 - one generation from extinction, 212
 - power of the keys, 219
 - provide social services, 223
 - statement of faith, 215
 - synod, 206, 219
 - worldwide institution, 194
- Churchill, Winston, 214
- Cimmerians, 199
- Circumcision
 - female, 78
 - male, 193
- circumnavigation, Africa, 18
- circumstantial evidence, 14, 53
- citadel, 15, 16, 22, 26, 29, 31, 34, 71, 134, 154, 186, 199
- Citizenship
 - citizens
 - gathered, 188
 - representative of, 223, 228
 - Susa/Persia, 116, 192, 193, 221, 222
 - dual, 73
 - good, 154, 155
 - heaven, 182
 - poor example, 47
 - responsibilities, 90, 102, 222, 223
 - rights, 188
- Civil
 - authority, 202, 207, 208, 210
 - councillors, 43
 - disobedience, 1, 37, 45, 50, 95, 96, 97, 133, 135, 217, 227
 - duty, report unlawful actions, 90
 - infrastructure, 187, 188, 228
 - magistrate
 - administrative duties, 61, 63, 93, 118, 160
 - administrator, 43, 44, 56, 64, 90, 95, 97, 102, 107, 108, 127, 176, 185, 187, 188, 195, 198, 200, 218, 219, 221, 222, 225, 227, 228
 - ambassador, 29
 - arbitrary, 43, 53, 112, 195
 - authority, 207
 - benefits from having Christians, 222
 - bureaucrat, 187, 194
 - chancellor, 92
 - Christian, 87, 102, 221, 228
 - clerical, 177
 - competent, 27, 190, 195, 216, 221, 222
 - cooperate with Church, 219, 228
 - envoy, 38

- establishment principle, 187, 228
- functionary, 29, 97
- godly men, 7, 48, 84, 87, 90, 176, 178, 179, 187, 194, 221
- governor, 14, 27, 28, 51, 62, 86, 108, 129, 186, 187, 194, 206, 216
- incompetent, 120, 195, 222
- Jewish, 118, 178
- lawful, 56, 87, 198, 221
- local, 109
- lower-level, 85, 185
- mandate, 56, 217
- minister, 42, 92, 95, 96, 98, 112, 118, 121, 126, 141, 145, 146, 152, 162, 165, 172, 177, 178, 220
- office, 43, 216, 227, 228
- officers, 27, 28, 61, 90, 91, 137, 146, 172
- officials, 48
- ordained by God, 47, 56
- president, 89, 138, 162, 192
- provincial, 195, 201
- qualifications, 44
- restraining evil, 41, 53, 105
- royal, 47, 178
- secretary of state, 92
- Sergeant-at-Arms, 152
- steward, 87
- support Church, 206, 216, 218
- tax collectors, 84
- tribute due, 56, 97
- visiting dignitaries, 77
- vizier, 13, 64, 67, 92, 95, 96, 98, 101, 179, 180, 183, 185, 189, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 200, 201, 206, 212, 213, 216, 219, 220, 221, 222
- wicked, 42, 64, 85, 90, 112, 155, 195
- servants, 90, 155, 221, 222, 227
- service, 68, 168
- civility, 145
- civilization, 18, 108, 162, 165
- class-warfare, 222
- Clay
 - cube, dice, 98
 - cup, 32
 - king in hand of God, 140
 - tablets, 24, 55, 108, 109
- clemency, 145
- Clement, of Alexandria, 129
- Cleopatra, 127, 128
- coaches, 195
- coastlands, 9, 12, 219
- cocaine, metaphor, 149
- coincidence, 5, 130, 152, 153, 159
- coins, 12, 82, 104, 121
- colleges, 105
- comedy routine, 158
- comfort, 17, 26, 117, 118, 125, 151, 209
- comforters, 161
- commerce, 52, 84, 102
- commoner, 82, 122, 124, 142
- Communication
 - blogs, 54, 188
 - courier service/system, 25, 104, 108, 109, 186, 187, 188, 197, 198, 205, 228
 - e-mail, 112, 119, 188
 - empire wide, 25, 109
 - facial expressions, 120, 122
 - images, 29, 215
 - inscription, 10, 12, 42, 56, 89, 98, 99, 105, 151
 - letters, 215
 - misinterpretation, 122, 189
 - oral, 118, 214
 - oration, 18
 - power of words, 215
 - subtle, 33, 45, 49, 137
 - symbolism, 32, 34, 36, 99, 105, 117, 137, 138, 139, 140, 144, 147, 178, 179, 208, 215
 - texting, 188
 - transcribed, 55, 108
 - worldwide via internet, 47
- companionship, 209
- compassion, 52, 200, 201
- concealment, 13, 20, 66, 72, 73, 75
- Concubine
 - auxiliary wives, 77
 - concubine, 4, 22, 37, 38, 49, 55, 59, 60, 65, 66, 70, 71, 76, 77, 82, 120, 130, 139, 141, 143, 150, 151
 - female companion, 49, 77
 - lawful wife, 66
 - mistress, 77
 - sex-slave, 77, 82, 84, 225
- Confession
 - allegiance to Christ, 58, 75
 - confessional unity, 212, 215, 229
 - constitution, biblically based, 47, 226, 229
 - of sin
 - national, 114
 - public, 116
 - repentance, 113, 114, 149
 - spurned, 145
- Confidence
 - false, 49
 - in God, 94, 123, 196
 - in person, 140
- Confucius, 18
- Congo, 110
- Conscience
 - good, 149, 171, 195
 - hard, 150
 - nagging, 154
 - obedience, 56, 97

- seared, 111
- unchecked, 112
- considerate, 97, 116
- conspiracy theory, 163
- Constantine, 191, 216
- contentment, 77, 150
- cooperative, 83
- copper, 15, 121
- copying others, 46, 47, 48
- coronation, 9, 26, 82, 83, 163
- Corporate
 - executives, 86, 113
 - leaders, 195
- Cosmetics
 - adornment, 70, 74, 79, 82
 - almond oil, 70
 - Botox injections, 83
 - chickpeas, 70
 - cleansing, 60, 75
 - complexion, 74
 - correct imperfections, 70
 - cosmetics, 60, 70, 74, 83, 228
 - cosmetology, 70
 - cultural mean, 74
 - cultural norms, 70, 74
 - enhancement, 70, 79, 83
 - eye liner, 70
 - fragrances, 76
 - henna, 70, 100
 - hydrated iron oxide, 70
 - immodest, claim, 74
 - implants, 83
 - khaal, 70
 - lead sulfide, 70
 - lighten skin or hair, 70, 76
 - makeup, 70, 74
 - milk, 70, 71
 - myrrh, 70, 75
 - Myrrh, 75
 - ochre, 70
 - oil, 70
 - oil of myrrh, 75
 - ointments, 75
 - olive oil, 70
 - painted face, 70
 - perfumes, 19, 70, 83
 - powder, 70
 - rhinoplasty, 83
 - rouge, 70
 - sandalwood, 70
 - sesame oil, 70
 - skin treatments, 60, 70, 74, 75, 76
 - spices, 70, 75
 - starch, 70
 - surgery, 83
 - tattoo, 100
 - turmeric, 70
 - yellow starch powder, 70
- cotton, 19, 30
- couch, 5, 31, 32, 76, 174
- Council
 - government, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 57, 59, 60, 62, 93, 97, 104, 106, 114, 162
 - of seven, 12, 41, 42, 43
 - town, 58
- Counsel
 - abundance, 46
 - coworkers, 166
 - directed by God, 51, 67, 127, 137
 - favoured counselor, 142
 - foolish, 46, 47, 50, 51, 56, 60, 67, 136, 161, 162, 170, 213, 227
 - frustrated by God, 62, 113
 - good, 46, 47
 - unjust, 47
 - wise, 46, 59, 137, 143, 227
- courage, 19, 58, 97, 133, 136, 139, 182, 195, 214
- Court
 - civil, 215
 - civil or criminal, 54
 - God's, 215
 - human, 54
 - pagan, 96
 - royal, 19, 37, 43, 87, 153
 - testimony, 54
- courtesy, 48, 89, 145, 146, 163
- courtier, 37, 38, 39, 46, 50, 70, 128, 137, 155, 157, 159, 165, 177
- cousin, 63, 64, 65, 67, 122, 177
- Covenant
 - children, 135
 - Christian, 127
 - church membership, 215
 - community, 75, 214, 221, 229
 - covenants, 48, 98, 123, 215
 - family, 80, 200
 - love, 69
 - new, 202
 - obligations, 26, 225
 - people, 7, 8, 16, 25, 36, 62, 68, 92, 94, 98, 104, 105, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 122, 126, 127, 132, 141, 161, 175, 179, 184, 185, 187, 191, 197, 198, 200, 203, 205, 210, 212, 214, 220, 223, 224, 228, 229
 - promises, 8, 26, 161, 225
 - punishment, 122
- Covenanter, 43, 202, 211
- craftsman, 32
- Creation
 - natural revelation, 130
 - new, 154, 179, 193
 - of Eve, 153

of time by God, 159
of universe by God, 7, 28, 120, 153, 215
or mankind, image bearers of God, 78, 131, 184
over six days, 28
to be shaken, 215
creativity, 184, 191, 229
Crete, 25
Crime
 accusation/conviction
 false, 51, 53, 54
 true, 53, 172, 174, 177
 capital, 53, 189
 conviction of, 40, 53
 liable, 175
 of Adam and Eve, 148
 partner discord, 89, 171
 'perfect', 171
 punishment required, 170
 witness testimony, 54
crops, robust, 163
crown, 38, 39, 82, 96, 150, 177, 178, 179, 191, 201
crying, 173, 180
Ctesias, 27
cubit, 49, 147, 174
Culture
 cultural Jews, 191
 degeneration, 74
 holiday, 206
 Middle Eastern
 meal discussions, 33, 141, 142
 women, 38, 46, 66, 67, 76
 modern
 escape from, 120
 fixation on news, 25
 pop, 114
 women, 54
 pagan, 143, 205
 pagan, living in, 7, 228
 Persian, 74, 123, 126, 225
 post-modernist, 155
 subjective morality, claim, 129, 198
 tenacity, 211
 trends, 26, 41
 view about many sons, 145
 wedding traditions, 82
cuneiform, 10, 55, 105, 108
cup, 31, 32, 33
cupbearer, 16
curiosity, 81, 140, 142, 150, 164, 166
Curse
 another person, 64, 198
 by God, 152, 161, 162, 173, 198, 199
 on creation/sin, 6, 125, 153, 184
 public, 199
curtains, 19, 30
Cush, 14, 102

Customs
 Persian
 alcohol, 33
 bowing to king, 96
 court, 37, 119, 133, 174
 gift of clothing, 117
 local, 55
 local permitted, 103
 Susā, 68
 trends, 41
Cyrus, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 25, 26, 27, 29, 32, 34,
 35, 37, 39, 40, 47, 50, 56, 86, 102, 103, 123, 126,
 161, 178, 194, 221
—D—
DACA, 182
Damascus, 32, 121
damsel - κοράσιον, 128
dancers, 34, 35
dancing, 35, 37, 66, 165
Darius, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 25,
 27, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 48, 52, 59, 60,
 61, 62, 64, 76, 83, 88, 99, 103, 105, 126, 139, 145,
 186, 194, 219, 221
Darwin Awards, 196
daughter, 11, 12, 35, 37, 39, 50, 61, 64, 65, 66, 68,
 71, 72, 78, 85, 86, 124, 128, 177
de' Medici, Catherine, 110
deacon, 44
Dead Sea, 128
Dead Sea Scrolls, 128
Death
 spiritual, 7, 121
 temporal, 146, 148, 180, 199
Decay
 moral, 8
 physical, 6
Defence
 apologetical, 171
 ethical question, 190
 government by power of sword, 56
 national, 190, 223
 of others, 2, 4, 26, 50, 77, 88, 102, 118, 119, 121,
 122, 129, 133, 137, 141, 166, 169, 171, 176,
 177, 180, 190, 196, 198, 220, 226
 of personal actions, 172, 173
 self-defence, 2, 20, 176, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191,
 193, 194, 195, 196, 198, 200, 201, 202, 226,
 229
 whining, 172
Delphi, oracle, 18
demons, 182
deposing from office/role, 4, 12, 18, 25, 34, 35, 39,
 49, 50, 51, 59, 60, 83, 85, 88, 101, 122, 124, 160,
 165, 220, 226
derision, 184, 203
desert, 13, 92

- despair, 16, 196
- dessert, 77, 210
- detective, 75
- devil, 94, 141
- diadem, 191
- diaspora, 68, 206, 224
- dice, 98
- didactic purpose, 18, 213
- Dining
 - area, 30, 174
 - diners, 29
 - dinner, 2, 4, 34, 35, 38, 82, 124, 136, 144, 145, 148, 174
- Dionysian cult, 27
- disability, 124
- disadvantaged people, 182
- disappointments, 154
- Disaster
 - disaster, 124, 135, 161, 166, 167, 179, 209, 210
 - natural, 8
 - pending, 117, 144
 - pestilence, 135
- discernment, 26, 81, 83, 120, 130
- disciples of Jesus, 171, 204, 207, 209
- discipline, 44, 120, 124
- discouragement, 94, 143, 161, 186
- disease, 8, 135, 163
- disgrace, 45, 50, 51
- dishonour, 40, 152
- Disney, 86
- distress, 16, 66, 115, 117, 118, 168, 181
- DNA, 53
- doctor, 136, 195
- Doctrine
 - false, 130
 - human, 187, 228
 - true, 23, 155, 159, 212, 219
 - true rejected, 6, 100, 159
- dog, 91, 202
- Domitian, 36
- donkey, 40, 145
- dove, 142, 171, 227
- Dracula, house of, 174
- dragon, 99, 138
- dream, 87, 128, 179
- drug dealers, 197
- drugs, non-prescription, 44, 47, 111, 154, 197, 200
- Druids, 191
- dungeon, 96
- Dura, 97
- E—
- Eber, 134, 150
- Ecbatana, 15
- Economics
 - collapse, 8, 135
 - development, 223
 - economics, 222
 - economists, 222
 - economy, 162, 222
 - free trade, 223
 - globally-integrated, 223
 - minimum-wage, 91, 162
 - policy, 91
 - principles, 228
 - theory, 223
- Eden, 153
- ego, 56, 61, 86, 104, 133, 144, 149, 157, 162
- Egypt, 11, 13, 14, 15, 24, 39, 41, 55, 67, 75, 87, 92, 95, 99, 102, 106, 108, 109, 123, 125, 150, 153, 178, 180, 184, 186, 193, 197, 220, 222, 224
- Elam, 15
- Elder
 - Jewish or Church, 4, 13, 43, 44, 48, 64, 94, 132, 185, 206, 227, 229
 - qualifications, 43, 227
 - reputation with outsiders, 44
 - resolve conflicts, 229
- electricity, 154, 223
- electromagnetism, 6
- Electronic devices
 - gadgets, 154
 - iPods, 54
 - 'smart' phones, 154
 - TV, 154
- Elisha, 75
- Elizabeth II, 34
- embarrassment, 36, 58, 97, 142, 160, 189
- Emergency
 - national, 115
 - services, 195
- emotions, 75, 143, 144, 169, 172, 215
- encouragement, 4, 47, 50, 56, 57, 80, 122, 127, 136, 153, 155, 165, 175, 209
- Enemies
 - abstract, 102
 - keep close, 140
 - of believers, 135, 179, 184, 190, 191, 202, 213, 225
 - of Christ, 173
 - of Daniel, 194
 - of God, 73, 90, 96, 152, 159, 198, 203, 225
 - of Greeks, 10
 - of Haman, 147, 161
 - of Jews, 17, 21, 75, 92, 93, 103, 107, 112, 126, 130, 141, 143, 146, 159, 160, 165, 168, 169, 171, 175, 177, 179, 180, 182, 186, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 210, 220, 225, 229
 - of the king, 168, 182
 - of US, 96
 - personal, 159, 168, 190, 201

engineers, 80, 195
entertainers, 171
entertainment, 34, 38, 48, 60, 70, 77, 120, 128, 141, 150, 151, 154
entitlement, 36, 62, 144
entrepreneur, 81
EPA, 191
Ephron, 106
epistemology, 23
equal opportunity, 53
equality of outcome, 53
equity, 50, 53, 220
Eritrea, 14
Esau, 92, 94, 95, 98, 175, 199
Eschatology
 end-times theology, 131
 eschatological dimension, 203
Esdras, 11
Essenes, 128
estate (property), 13, 21, 177, 178, 179, 200, 222
esteem, 223
ethanol, 57
Ethiopia, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 45, 102, 186
ethnic background/group, 52, 72, 85, 192, 196
etiquette, 37, 76, 152
Etruscan, 18
eulogy, 69
Eunuch
 effeminate appearance, 61
 eunuch, 13, 37, 38, 60, 61, 65, 69, 72, 73, 85, 87, 88, 114, 117, 121, 138, 163, 175
 mutilated before puberty, 37
 no hormonal changes, 61
Euphrates, 134
Euripides, 18
Evangelicals, 211
Evangelism
 chain of events, 124
 evangelism, 26
 ineffective technique, 75
Eve, 82, 148, 149, 153, 165, 198, 229
evolution, 196, 228
exaggeration, 70, 95, 129, 147, 149
exasperation, 121, 146
excrement, 91
exhortation, 18, 129, 171, 190
Exile
 assimilation, 102, 126
 exile, 65, 90, 178
 exiles, 9, 16, 65, 87, 90
 post-captivity, 206
 postexilic, 13, 22, 63, 133
exodus from Egypt, 180, 220
eyewitness, 22, 32, 53, 68, 115
—F—
fabric, 31

fairness, 47, 50, 53, 62, 220, 222, 228
Faith
 dead, 212
 false, 62
 from God, 125
 household of, 209
 in God, 68, 75, 97, 118, 121, 123, 130, 133, 136, 140, 148, 182, 193, 194, 196, 218, 222, 223
 in Jesus, 125, 135
 living, 212
 nominal, 135
 profession of, 97
 statement of, 215
faithfulness, 64, 65, 87, 89, 112, 118, 141, 155, 160, 177, 178, 194, 221, 229
fame, 15 minutes, 160
familial relationship, 64, 200
famine, 16, 135
fascism, 62
Fasting
 72-hour fast, 132
 annual, 115
 ashes on head, 113, 115, 116, 117, 126, 160
 bread and water, 132
 duration, 132
 Fast of Esther, 213
 fasting, 20, 115, 116, 123, 126, 132, 133, 134, 137, 138, 143, 146, 182, 185, 192, 208, 210, 213
 less than two days, 132
 Mosaic law, 115
 not to cause pain or irritability, 132
 signs, 126
 three-day, 131, 137
 total abstention from food, 132
 weight loss, 132
 what God delights in, 132
Fear
 concern, 72, 144
 for life, 107, 177
 of God, 24, 44, 46, 78, 79, 145, 195, 221
 of man, 46, 66, 71, 75, 114, 116, 126, 135, 147, 161, 189, 193, 195, 196, 201, 203, 206, 220, 221
 of reprisal, 46
 of unknown, 100, 154
 superstitious, 147, 162
 tactics, 200
Feast
 feast, 4, 10, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 50, 82, 92, 93, 119, 120, 126, 140, 141, 146, 163, 164, 185, 192, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 211
 invitation, 27, 29, 37, 50, 124, 140, 142, 144, 146, 163
 party, 116

seven-day, 28
fellowship, 209
females, 29, 34, 46, 49, 50, 54, 55, 70, 73, 74, 78,
111, 121, 209
feminist, 46
Ferdinand, Franz, Archduke, 152
Festivals
 authority to institute, 206
 cultural, 206
 ecclesiastical authority, 207
 God-ordained, 207, 208, 210
 Jewish, 205, 211
 manmade, 26, 206, 208, 210, 211, 227
Mosaic
 Feast of Booths, 207
 Feast of Dedication, 206
 Feast of Ingathering, 207
 Feast of Tabernacles, 207
 festival days, 206, 208, 210
 Passover, 108, 209, 210
no NT festivals, 207, 210, 211
observed by Jesus, 207
Purim, 2, 4, 16, 21, 27, 69, 92, 119, 128, 134, 164,
193, 199, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209,
210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 219, 227
Purim costumes, 210
feudalism, 18
fiction, 5, 8, 21, 46, 130, 179
Figure of speech
 chiasm, 20, 136
 euphemism, 64
 figuratively, 15, 113
 idiom, 39, 60, 110, 192
 irony, 4, 5, 19, 38, 51, 56, 58, 64, 78, 87, 88, 93,
99, 108, 129, 130, 141, 143, 146, 147, 150,
154, 156, 158, 160, 161, 165, 173, 174, 175,
179, 193, 205, 210, 211, 213, 220, 221, 225
 metaphor, 192
 metonymy, 4, 126
 parable, 130, 146, 171
 proverb, 107
 synecdoche, 4, 126
Financial
 assets, 177
 hardship, 125
 investment, 104
 issue, 116, 166
 reporting, 182
 resources, 147
 security, 118
 support, 10, 66
fingerprints, 53
fire, 16, 46, 116, 190
firstborn, 35, 106
fish, 121, 166
fleece, Gideon's test, 116

flowers, 19, 77
Food
 and wine taster, 88, 119
 food, 70, 71, 211
 kosher, 71
 non-kosher, 71
 scarcities, 163
Foolishness
 actions, 107, 191, 210
 Ahasuerus', 39, 46, 51, 67, 104, 106, 126, 158,
172, 180, 189
 by world's standards, 85, 121
 culture, 205
 deceptive, 173
 depending on riches, 146
 disobedience to God, 8
 drunkenness, 33
 duped, 126, 172, 178, 181
 evil plots, 141
 fool, 31, 39, 107, 158
 government officials, 90
 Haman's, 40, 146
 human error, 89
 intellectual, 143
 mankind's, 175
 pluralism, 218
 pride, 184
 superstition, 209
football field, 29
forfeiture, 124, 177
Forgiveness
 forgiveness, 82, 161, 166, 173
 ἄφεσις, 82
Fortification Tablets, 13, 34
fossil fuels, 162
freedom, 6, 43, 52, 162, 188, 227
French
 resistance, 195
 Revolution, 29
friendly interest, 81, 164
friendship, 209
Funeral
 funeral, 113
 oration, 18
 sobbers, 113
Furnace
 Nazi, 110
 Nebuchadnezzar's, 136
—G—
Gabatha, 13
gallows, 4, 5, 130, 147, 148, 149, 156, 160, 161, 162,
174, 175, 199, 200, 209
gambling, 86, 120
Gandara, 15
gang, 192, 197
Garden

- Eden, 149, 153
- expulsion of Adam and Eve, 154
- garden, 5, 15, 22, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 115, 172, 174
- Garments
 - apparel, 38, 82
 - bulletproof vest, 137
 - clothing, 73, 74, 77, 79, 82, 115, 117, 137, 167, 228
 - concubine, 139
 - custom-fit suit, 34
 - dressing
 - appropriately, 138
 - to impress, 70, 138
 - garments, 117, 138
 - mourning, 22, 114, 115
 - penitent, 114
 - regal, 38
 - reserved for royalty, 20, 140, 178, 191
 - robe, 82, 137, 138, 152, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 178, 179, 191
 - shawl, 38, 82, 160
 - signs of royalty, 139
- gasoline with ethanol, 57
- gastronomy, 132, 150
- gate of city, 5, 13, 22, 62, 64, 69, 84, 85, 88, 96, 109, 114, 117, 118, 134, 146, 157, 158, 160
- Gaumata, 11, 35, 42, 60
- geisha, 70
- Gender
 - change, 46
 - confused, 58
 - imbalance, 66
 - neutral, 162
 - sensitive restrooms, 58
- genealogy, 19, 68, 107
- generosity, 33, 82, 83, 156, 177, 208, 209
- Geneva, 211
- Genghis Khan, 14, 25
- Genizah, Cairo, 129
- Gentile, 20, 67, 132, 193, 197, 206
- gentleness, 40, 97, 132
- gentry, landed, 132
- ghetto, 120
- Gideon, 66, 116
- Gifts
 - from God, 36, 122, 179, 182
 - giving to others, 77, 82, 83, 145, 158, 203, 205, 207, 208, 210, 211
 - reception
 - graciously, 179, 225, 229
 - policies, 53
- gladness, 192, 203, 205, 206
- global warming, 162
- goatskin parchment, 55
- God's attributes
 - confounds world, 99, 121
 - counsel of own will, 6, 101
 - creator, 6, 100, 101, 131, 148, 160, 171
 - deliverer of his people, 5, 7, 27, 94, 108, 114, 122, 123, 126, 164, 203, 204, 205, 206, 208, 209, 211, 226
 - despises sin, 92
 - dominion, 210
 - eternal, 100, 182
 - eternal decrees, 62, 67, 84, 101
 - faithfulness, 8, 26, 124, 136, 225
 - fore-knowledge, 6, 101
 - forgiving, 67
 - general grace, 47, 98, 103, 183
 - glory, 6, 7, 8, 21, 36, 43, 56, 77, 84, 101, 113, 123, 124, 130, 136, 149, 152, 159, 160, 162, 165, 171, 194, 225
 - goodness, 6, 101, 148, 209
 - governor of all, 6, 7, 79, 101, 162, 226
 - graciousness, 26, 125, 136, 148, 209, 225
 - holy, 6, 166
 - humour, 141, 210
 - immutable counsel of his will, 6, 101
 - infallibility, 6, 101
 - infinite, 6
 - just judge, 6, 24, 25, 53, 94, 101, 115, 162, 171, 173, 176, 189, 196, 200, 220
 - laugh, 159, 175, 225
 - loving, 101
 - merciful, 6, 101, 135, 148, 208
 - not
 - absent from world, 196
 - respector of persons, 52
 - tolerate challenge to kingdom of Christ, 25
 - patience, 8
 - plan of redemption, 79
 - power, 108, 121, 124, 162, 215
 - promise keeping, 111, 115, 123, 124, 125, 150, 165, 193, 198, 215, 229
 - protects his people, 6, 7, 8, 25, 26, 68, 97, 121, 125, 141, 181, 182, 183, 193, 210, 225, 226, 229, 230
 - providence
 - dispensations, 208
 - fulfills his purposes, 6, 67, 101, 123, 124, 127, 150
 - overthrows man's plans, 6, 36, 40, 51, 62, 67, 127, 141, 159, 180, 213, 220, 225
 - predestination, 7, 101, 124, 159, 161
 - providence, 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 24, 39, 47, 62, 67, 69, 72, 79, 84, 89, 100, 101, 121, 123, 125, 126, 127, 129, 142, 150, 153, 155, 156, 159, 162, 193, 196, 198, 203, 204, 205, 208, 209, 225
 - superintending events, 67, 72, 178
 - timing of events, 5, 93, 125, 130, 152, 153, 159, 176, 194
 - restraining evil, 98

- revealer of
 - dreams, 87
 - secrets, 87
- self-existent, 23, 100
- sovereignty, 5, 6, 7, 23, 33, 56, 62, 84, 101, 113, 124, 130, 140, 141, 210, 218, 225, 229
- transcendent, 100
- trinity, 155, 179, 226
- unrevealed will, 134
- vindication, 166
- wisdom, 6, 44, 101, 191
- God's law
 - above manmade laws, 97
 - being driven out of institutions, 105
 - breach, 97, 227
 - ceremonial
 - law, 53, 135, 206
 - rites, 126
 - system, 17
 - unclean food, 71
 - contravention, 51, 91
 - disobedience, 8, 17, 67, 124, 126
 - disregarded/rejected, 8
 - holy, 105
 - immutable, 49
 - innate knowledge, 218
 - jurisprudence, 53
 - legal standard, 226
 - moral standard, 229
 - natural law, 6, 218
 - obedience, 124, 134
 - righteous requirements, 102, 105, 176
 - Ten Commandments, 57, 95, 105, 176, 187, 190, 196, 218
- God's names
 - Adoni, 127
 - Jehovah, 127
 - LORD, 67, 121, 161, 203
- Gold
 - articles / vessels, 31, 32
 - gold, 14, 15, 32, 70
 - standard, 198
 - statue, 13
- Golden Age, Athens, 17
- Golden Ratio, 73
- golden-mean, virtues, 136
- goldsmiths, 15
- good day, greeting, 192, 203, 207
- Gospel, 7, 40, 62, 75, 121, 123, 144, 153, 166, 188
- gossip, 45, 164, 216
- Goth, 74
- Government
 - absolutism challenged, 43
 - abuse
 - bad policies, 162
 - conservative organizations, 112
 - consolidate power, 10, 12, 24, 194
 - personal agenda, 105
 - alignment to polls, 42
 - alliances, 17, 59, 77
 - archives, 89, 127, 214, 219, 221, 224
 - art of, 143, 227
 - autocracy, 62
 - Christians governing, 222
 - communism, 62, 191
 - confiscation of property, 104, 106, 179, 220
 - cradle-to-grave care, 6
 - democracy, 62, 184
 - district, 14, 46, 108
 - district, region, province, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 22, 27, 42, 45, 51, 55, 56, 58, 59, 63, 65, 66, 82, 83, 91, 102, 103, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 150, 186, 192, 194, 195, 197, 203, 204, 205, 213, 223
 - dynasty, 18, 24, 25, 27, 37, 88
 - election
 - buying, 187
 - representation, 42
 - empire
 - building re-introduced, 224
 - emperor, 17, 27, 90, 191, 214
 - empire, 14, 24, 25, 221
 - not eternal, 184
 - federal, 43, 112, 195, 205
 - finances, 58, 222, 223, 228
 - government-funded workforce, 104
 - intolerance, 103, 187, 212
 - legislation, 47, 57, 109, 137, 162
 - liberalism, 78
 - monarchy, 32, 48, 224
 - monitoring worship, 188
 - oligarchy, 62
 - parliament, 42, 43, 152, 187
 - paternalism, 57, 58, 223
 - political chaos, 8, 24, 45, 181
 - political theory, 43
 - politics, 7, 12, 36, 52, 54, 59, 88, 94, 104, 105, 126, 142, 187, 196
 - power
 - autocratic, 6, 44
 - balance of, 141
 - brokers of, 222
 - of sword, 56
 - used for good, 6, 19, 21, 35, 36, 51, 84, 85, 93, 99, 127, 139, 143, 144, 145, 169, 178, 179, 182, 187, 188, 189, 195, 212, 220, 223, 228
 - resistance, 129, 135, 136
 - right to govern, 216
 - right to wage war, 201
 - scandal, 47, 112, 210
 - senate
 - Canadian, 54, 112, 113

senate, 187
 separatist minority, 17
 socialism, 25, 222
 spending, 162
 sponsor sin, 120, 222, 229
 statecraft, 102
 statesmanship, 143, 144, 221, 223, 227
 statist, 25
 stewardship, 188
 subservient to God, 218
 suzerainty, 206
 totalitarian, 52, 188
 wicked, 52
 worldwide human, 25
 Grace
 false, 12
 personal, 71, 81
 graciousness, 155
 graffiti, 91
 Gratitude
 gratitude, 155, 178, 193, 208
 to God, duty, 155
 to men, duty, 155
 gravity, 6
 Greece, 10, 14, 17, 28, 31, 32, 59, 103, 108
 Greek
 campaigns, 10, 17, 31, 59, 83
 dynasty / culture, 10, 18, 25
 historians, 89
 names, 13, 171
 person, 9, 10, 12, 17, 23, 27, 31, 36, 59, 110, 136, 150
 grief, 113
 groceries, 124
 grocery bags, 181
 Grooming
 hair / beard, 73, 82, 85, 228
 inner, 74
 guards, 85, 87, 88, 142, 174
 guileless, 144
 guilt, 53, 122, 138, 142, 154, 160, 170, 171, 172, 173, 177, 215
 gypsum, 31
—H—
 Hadassah, 19, 62, 63, 64, 65, 73
 Hair
 beard, 73
 beardless, 39
 beautiful, 60
 brushing, 76
 colouring, 70
 dressing, 83
 facial, 61
 female, 74, 76
 plucking, 76
 style, 47

hallelujah, 203
 Ham, 14, 24, 197
 Hamans, 98, 112
 Hammedatha, 91, 107, 180, 181
 Hammurabi, 24, 25
 Hanukkah, 206
 Harbona, 174, 175
 harem, 4, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 37, 41, 48, 49, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 71, 72, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 114, 116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 124, 130, 133, 139, 140, 150, 177, 178, 205, 224
 harmony (peace), 213, 214, 229
 hashshashin, 88
 Hathach, 69, 117, 118, 121
 head covering, 73, 160, 174
 headache, 132
 headdress, 38, 82, 137, 157, 178
 healing, 125, 207, 211
 health, 26, 70, 107, 182
 healthcare, 6, 182, 223
 heart (mind), 40, 57, 67, 78, 79, 82, 89, 98, 105, 107, 117, 122, 123, 140, 141, 148, 149, 150, 157, 162, 170, 176, 196, 224
 heathen, 66, 113, 128
 heathenism, 94
 Heaven
 abode of God, 118, 166, 171, 175
 abode of the elect, 124, 130, 132, 152, 182, 219
 applied to God, 113
 glory, 125, 152
 new heavens and earth, 125, 191
 Hebraism, 20, 110, 115
 Hebrew
 alphabet, 17
 idiom, 37, 60, 192
 language, 13, 17, 68, 129, 186
 letters, 171
 manuscript, 128
 Masoretic, 129
 midwives, 97
 name, 19, 21, 60, 83, 127
 origin of word, 134
 OT, 7, 8, 32, 33, 37, 127
 OT text, 16, 207
 proto-consonantal, 186
 text, 17, 60, 61, 63, 64, 69, 76, 82, 84, 98, 128, 170, 171, 184, 203, 207, 212, 214, 224
 translation into English, 60
 word, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 29, 31, 32, 49, 60, 66, 69, 70, 71, 96, 98, 105, 121, 137, 139, 151, 168, 171, 184, 209, 213
 Hegai, 60, 61, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 77, 79, 80, 83, 84, 139
 Heir

- familial, 21, 35, 40, 41, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 60, 90, 100, 105, 124, 132, 135, 149, 179, 188
- kingdom, 34, 62
- spiritual, 193
- Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, 6
- hell, 94, 113, 146, 176, 185
- Hellenistic
 - era, 13, 21
 - Hellenists, 31, 204
 - Jews, 206
 - period, 62, 68, 224
- Hellespont, 17
- helpers, 46
- Henchman
 - monarch's, 192
 - Satan's, 184
- herd mentality, 47
- heresy, 219
- heretic, 36, 155
- hero, 129, 182
- Herod
 - Agrippa, 36
 - Antipas, 43, 128, 140
 - Herod, 19, 36, 43, 109, 111, 128, 140, 184, 191, 194
- Herodias, 128
- Herodotus, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 25, 31, 33, 37, 38, 39, 41, 62, 75, 76, 89, 94, 99, 103, 104, 108, 119, 145, 157, 199
- heroic, 85, 119
- heroine, 19, 138, 143, 182
- Hezekiah, 134
- hieroglyphs, 55, 108, 186
- highway, 25, 93, 104
- Hinduism, 5, 13, 18, 34, 100, 162, 225
- Hippocrates, 18
- historian, 18, 23, 24, 25, 35, 59, 89, 154, 212
- historiographers, 89
- History
 - 'secular', 126
 - boring, 151
 - events controlled by God, 33, 58, 71, 126
 - full of tyrants, 19, 36, 52, 113, 177, 225
 - key points, 111, 126, 150, 165
 - lessons of, 182
 - recitation of, 158
 - redemption, 8, 176
 - Scripture records, 23, 61, 63, 69, 224
 - study of, despised, 26, 154
 - women in, 141
- Hitler, 19, 25, 36, 120, 177, 225
- Hittites, 95, 98
- Holiday
 - holiday, 27, 82, 192, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 227
 - holy, 206, 207
 - sanctioned by God, 207
 - statutory, 205, 207, 208, 227
- holiness, 218, 229
- Hollywood, 36
- Holy Spirit, 71, 134, 136, 148, 157, 208, 209, 215
- Holy-days, 208, 210
- homage, 32, 93, 94, 96
- home-ownership, 182
- homonym, 63
- homophobic, 105
- honesty, 80, 83, 113, 148, 179, 228
- honorarium, 54
- Honour
 - of another person
 - vain, 5, 52, 62, 93, 95, 96, 104, 145, 148, 149, 151, 153, 156, 159, 160, 218
 - valid, 2, 4, 20, 40, 52, 63, 68, 80, 82, 136, 137, 142, 146, 148, 149, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 165, 167, 176, 178, 179, 184, 192, 193, 219, 221, 223, 225
 - of civil magistrates, 97, 146
 - of God, 32, 52, 148, 211
 - of husbands, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 97, 213
 - of parents, 86
- Hooker, Richard, 207, 208
- Hope
 - false, 84, 114, 194
 - hopelessness, 149
 - true, 84, 150, 229
- Horse
 - Arabian, 186
 - Caspian, 186
 - horse, 6, 25, 80, 104, 109, 157, 160, 161, 186, 188
 - horseshoe, 6, 152
 - horseshoe nail, 6, 152
 - stud, 186
 - thoroughbred, 186
- hospital, 191
- hospitality, 38
- hostage, 71
- household, 37, 51, 55, 56, 58, 72, 87, 98, 132, 147, 161, 177, 209
- housemaster, 55, 56
- HRCs, 116
- Huguenots, 110
- human capital, 168
- humble, 36, 39, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86, 93, 132, 133, 135, 138, 141, 143, 148, 155, 159, 160, 162, 164, 166, 193, 223, 227
- humbling, 20, 138, 159, 160, 165
- humiliation, 37, 39, 58, 88, 142, 158, 160, 161, 163, 174, 179
- humility, 86, 136, 143, 145, 149, 160, 174, 175, 182, 214, 229
- Huss, John, 36
- Hussites, 36, 211

- hymns, 23, 155
- hyperbolic action, 139, 164
- Hystaspes, 11, 15, 105, 219
- hysteria, 180
- I—
- icon, pop, 47
- Idolatry
 - Baal, 99
 - deities, 46, 60, 95, 99, 185
 - fire-worship, 197
 - food consecrated to, 72
 - giving glory to human, 15, 20, 21, 32, 36, 160, 181, 227
 - god of storms, 99
 - idolatry, 5, 95, 96
 - semi-divine king, 147
 - winged symbol of Ahuramazda, 105
 - worship of idol, 10, 28, 67, 72, 97, 105
- illness, 125, 154
- imagination, 79, 153
- imitation, 47
- immigration amnesty, 182
- impalement, 147, 174, 175, 199, 203
- imprisonment, 97
- incandescent light bulb, 57
- incense, 77
- Income
 - corporate, 219
 - personal, 47, 219, 220, 222, 223, 226
- India, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 25, 34, 36, 45, 102, 112, 186
- Indus
 - River, 12, 13, 25, 28, 34, 35, 36, 102
 - Valley, 13
- infinite regress, 22
- info-commercials, 154
- inheritance, 54, 56, 179, 222
- injustice, 48, 51, 114, 122
- ink, 55, 109
- Innocent
 - as doves, 171, 227
 - declared, 122, 215
 - defend, 190
 - false conviction, 53
 - presumption of, 53
- Inquisition, 191
- insanity, Nebuchadnezzar, 146
- insomnia, 5, 152
- Institutes, Calvin, 201
- Insurance
 - health, 107
 - unemployment, 162
- intelligence, 59, 78, 122
- intercession, 118, 173, 176
- Interpretation
 - dream, 128
 - evidence, 154, 174
 - facts, 23
 - law, 54, 71
 - truth, 102
- investiture, 178
- Ionia, 15
- Ionians, 15
- Iran, 15, 25, 88, 105, 186, 199
- Iraq, 15, 25, 94, 98, 110, 222
- Iraq-Iran, 15
- IRS, 112
- Ishmael, 98
- Islam
 - Al Qaeda-backed terrorists, 89
 - Allah, 55, 127
 - caliphate, 96, 105
 - criticizing Muhammad, 54
 - criticizing Qur'an, 54
 - Imam, 202
 - ISIS, 89, 110, 112, 120, 124, 176, 190, 194, 200, 202
 - Islam, 5, 46, 54, 55, 62, 78, 94, 96, 98, 105, 120, 152, 162, 187, 202, 212, 218, 222, 225, 228
 - Islamists, 202
 - jihadist, 112, 202
 - male witnesses to rape, 54
 - mosque, 202
 - Muhammad a prophet, claim, 54
 - Muslim, 36, 54, 55, 94, 98, 105, 162, 163, 191, 194, 202, 212
 - Muslim-dominated lands, 212
 - people of crescent moon, 94
 - Sharia, 54, 105
 - Shiite sect, 191
 - Sunni sect, 112
 - treatment of non-Muslims, 54, 55, 78
- islands, 9, 12, 219
- Israel, 25, 35, 63, 65, 92, 94, 106, 124, 178, 193, 215
- Israelites, 25, 75, 92, 94, 99, 198
- Issachar, 41
- Italic race, 109
- ivory, 15
- J—
- jail, 40, 86, 182, 227
- Jair, 64
- Japheth, 153, 199
- jealousy, 50, 94, 180
- Jeconiah, 13, 64
- Jedi Master, 19
- Jerome, 128, 129
- Jerusalem
 - dedication of walls, 68
 - Jerusalem, 32, 63, 64, 65, 68, 87, 113, 126, 134, 182, 186, 191, 205, 206, 207, 212, 224
 - rebuild the city, 87, 126
- Jesus

- anointed, 159, 225, 229
- betrayal, 165, 172
- conqueror
 - enemies, 204
 - Satan, 135, 229
 - sin and death, 116
- crucifixion, 176, 200, 210
- died as substitute for sinners, 185
- divine, 155
- eternal kingdom, 123
- eternal victor, 204, 229
- God-man, 179, 226
- government, world-encompassing, 25
- incarnation, 200
- infant, 224
- Jesus, 17, 24, 25, 36, 37, 40, 48, 53, 54, 58, 66, 72, 74, 75, 93, 105, 109, 116, 121, 125, 130, 132, 135, 136, 146, 153, 154, 164, 165, 166, 170, 171, 172, 176, 179, 187, 190, 193, 194, 198, 199, 202, 207, 208, 209, 211, 224, 226, 229
- Lamb, 164, 204
- master communicator, 171
- Messianic
 - kingdom, 191
 - line, 165
- Prince of Peace, 36, 121, 229
- protected from Herod, 194
- redeemer, 7, 8, 123, 165
- resurrection, 164, 191, 229
- return, 194, 196
- sacrificial work, 210
- saviour, 144
- Son, 25, 198
- temptation, 165
- jewelry, 38, 77, 79, 82, 83, 137, 167, 183
- Jew-haters, 72, 98, 102, 177, 178, 194, 196, 197, 198
- Jewish congregation, 4, 92, 210
- Jewry, European, 214
- Jezebel, 35, 70, 113, 148
- Joash, 111, 165
- John the Baptist, 43, 128
- Joiakim, 68
- Jong, Korean dictator, 10, 36, 79
- Jordan River, 99
- Joseph
 - II of Austria, 214
 - Mary's husband, 153, 194
 - son of Jacob, 87, 122, 153, 175
- Josephus, 23, 65, 119, 129, 133
- Joy
 - invalid, 144
 - merriment, 211
 - valid, 37, 83, 136, 192, 203, 209
- Judah, 63, 64, 65, 98, 111, 123, 134, 198, 221
- Judaism, 5, 24, 129
- Judas, 165, 172
- Judea, 8, 14, 16, 17, 26, 63, 68, 102, 113, 116, 126, 206, 224
- Judean, 63
- judgmental, Christians accused of being, 105
- Justice
 - certain in eternal realm, 94, 176
 - charges
 - false, 105, 224
 - true, 173
 - court, 119, 146, 180, 191
 - death sentence, 114, 142, 174, 175, 176, 190, 194, 199
 - death sentence, unjust, 114
 - human concept, 57
 - human judge
 - administration, 92, 146
 - qualifications, 43, 44
 - unjust, 47, 53, 133, 166, 226
 - human judgements
 - equivocal, 6, 51, 87, 131, 185, 221
 - just, 42, 43, 47, 53, 84, 87, 114, 131, 165, 173, 189, 196, 200, 201, 219, 220, 221, 222, 227
 - not on hearsay, 88
 - Type I and Type II errors, 53
 - unjust, 57, 62, 120, 121, 168, 170, 182, 201
 - jury foreman, 44
 - prosecution of crime, 2, 47, 164, 171, 172, 175
 - sentencing, 138, 173, 174, 175, 227
 - temporal realm, 94, 170, 176, 225
 - use of force, 201, 226
- K—
- Karkheh River, 29, 134
- Kazakhstan, 14
- Khorsabad, 32
- khshayarsha, 10
- kidnapping, 67, 197
- Killing
 - animal, 17, 95, 197
 - enemies, 4, 17, 21, 190, 197
 - honour, 78
 - murder, 153, 167, 200
 - time (1680-1688), 202
- Kim II Sung, 110
- kindness, 69, 124, 129, 139, 143, 145, 165, 175, 214
- Kingdom
 - God's, 182
 - human, 6, 19, 21, 24, 59, 127, 185, 220
 - Jesus', 25, 116, 188, 193, 203
 - Messiah's, 184
- Kish, 64
- kiss, 39, 172, 173, 174, 193
- KISS, 80
- kneeling, 138, 174
- Korea, North, 10, 79, 110, 187, 212
- L—
- labour, 110, 204

- labour strike, 77
- labourer, 104, 154, 168
- lamb, 210
- lamentation, 113, 114, 115, 116, 143, 213
- landfills, 182
- landscaping, 90
- Language
 - Arabic, 88, 127
 - Aramaic, 17, 55, 65, 87, 102, 109, 186
 - crude, 47
 - diphthong, 13
 - Greek, 17, 68
 - languages, 24, 55, 56, 108, 127
 - Latin, 17, 40, 128, 171
 - linguistic studies, 10, 13
 - loanword, 27, 30, 32, 42, 98
 - noun, 31
 - script, 17, 55, 108, 186
 - Semitic, 42, 98
 - verb, 209
- lapis lazuli, 15
- Las Vegas, 86
- Law
 - authority for law-making, 56
 - code, 24, 42, 49, 105
 - edict, 49, 84, 121, 184, 214
 - impartial, 222
 - incomprehensible, 43
 - law-abiding, 102, 112
 - lawful commands to be obeyed, 56, 97
 - legal
 - authority, 56, 97, 213
 - convention, 49
 - framework, 66
 - judgement, 53
 - language, 189
 - opinion, 45, 57
 - precedence, 45
 - standing, 77
 - system, 50, 54
 - transactions, 84
 - legislation, 181, 182, 191, 213, 214
 - legislators, 52, 184, 191, 227, 228
 - legislatures, 191
 - not immutable, 49, 51
 - principles, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 190, 208, 213, 226, 227
 - repeal, 51, 140, 184
 - Society of Upper Canada, 52
 - unjust, 52, 116, 181, 189, 201
- lawsuit, 58, 112, 162, 191, 202
- layoffs, 113
- Leadership
 - good, 227
 - not quarrelsome, 44
 - qualities, 43, 44, 50, 94, 143, 182, 215
 - responsibility, 228
- toxic, 113
- wise, 143
- Lebanon, 15
- leisure activities, 154
- Lemuel, 34
- Lenin, Vladimir, 110
- Lennon, John, 146
- Leopold II, 110
- Levant, 198
- Levite, 206
- Lewis, C. S., 130, 153
- Lex Rex, 43
- liberality, 82, 136
- library, 89
- Libya, 14, 112
- Liddell, Eric, 221
- Lifestyle
 - comfortable, 17, 26
 - debauched, 220
 - pagan, 19
- lily, Susa, 15
- limestone, 31
- linen, 30
- lion, 87, 105, 194
- lion-rampant, 105
- Literature
 - adventure-story, 151, 219
 - ancient, 139
 - artistry, 143
 - drama, 5, 18, 20, 21, 45, 148, 152, 172, 229
 - extra-Biblical, 18, 131
 - literary
 - analysis, 175
 - feature, 18, 42, 107
 - form, 18, 140
 - modern, 19
 - not agenda-driven, 130
 - novel, 130
 - novelization, 66
 - novella, 18, 62, 219, 224
 - polemic, 21, 109, 115, 117, 197, 207, 224
 - propositional discourse, 18
 - proverb, 6, 107, 142, 148, 152
 - stories, 18, 125, 130, 131, 132
 - suspense, 19, 38, 58, 65, 85, 138, 140, 143, 169
- Locke, John, 43
- Logic
 - antinomy, 67
 - antitheses, 136
 - argument, 6, 22, 64, 67, 102, 181, 209
 - circular reasoning, 22
 - conundrum, 7, 124
 - deductive, 6
 - inductive, 6
 - logic, 6, 22

- proves own existence, 23
- reductio ad absurdum, 6
- self-attestation, 22
- loneliness, 77
- lord/master, 38, 45, 148
- Lord's Day
 - Christian Sabbath, 97, 164, 204, 205, 208, 210, 211, 212, 227
 - holy, 205, 208, 210
 - services, 135
- Lord's Supper, 105, 210
- lottery tickets, 100
- Love
 - care for others, 167, 169
 - endearment, 139
 - human mercy, 166, 173, 200, 201, 204, 208, 211
 - love, 6, 10, 26, 36, 40, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 52, 58, 68, 69, 72, 80, 81, 105, 117, 119, 121, 124, 125, 130, 132, 143, 145, 155, 164, 166, 175, 179, 183, 190, 194, 202, 203, 211, 214, 215, 216, 227, 229
 - no expectation of recompense, 81
- loveliness, 26, 59, 65, 82, 141, 168
- Loyalty
 - pretend, 185
 - to God, 134, 227
 - to king, 42, 72, 88, 96, 165
 - to man, 134, 144, 168
- Luther, 97, 116, 128, 201, 211
- Lutherans, 211
- luxury, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 60, 66, 77, 93, 112, 113, 115, 169, 205, 208
- Lydia, 14, 79, 82
- M—
- Maccabees, 68, 128
- Maccabeus, Judas, 206
- Macedonian, 27, 38, 76
- Machiavellian, 50, 102, 144, 227
- MADD, 168
- Magadha, 18
- Magi, 6, 98, 103, 161
- magnanimity, feigned, 141, 166
- maiko, 70
- males, 29, 45, 46, 54, 61, 66, 73, 80, 106, 109, 111, 142, 200
- malice, 88
- Mankind
 - bag of electrically charged chemicals, claim, 143
 - supreme, claim, 187
 - volitional, 67, 108
- Mankind's sinful nature
 - abortion
 - abortifacients, 107
 - abortion, 46, 52, 78, 95, 97, 105, 110, 113, 115, 116, 120, 136, 148, 191, 196, 222
 - abortionists, 148, 162, 191
 - buffer zones, 52
 - lives of babies determined by vote, 107
 - number of infants, 110
 - pro-abortion, 113
 - Roe vs Wade, 182
 - slaughter of post-birth, 162
 - slaughter of unborn, 115, 116
- Abortion
 - to require hospital-level standards, 191
- adulterer, 66, 67, 172
- adultery, 44, 51, 52, 55, 66, 74, 105, 166, 171, 175
- aggrandizement, 200
- aggression, 190, 196, 197, 201, 202
- ambition, 24, 36, 79, 88, 148, 149, 170
- ambush, Paul, 121
- amorality, 78
- anger
 - anger, 4, 5, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 48, 50, 56, 59, 61, 88, 96, 97, 98, 124, 139, 146, 147, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 181, 215, 221
 - fickleness, 121, 163, 175
 - madness, 192
 - rage, 50
 - unjust, 40, 160
- antagonism, 92, 189, 191, 229
- anti-Semitism, 98, 199
- arbitrariness, 36, 41, 43, 61, 147, 168, 192, 220, 222
- arrogance, 159
- arson, 192
- assassin, 88, 89, 119, 153, 155, 176
- assassination, 4, 21, 38, 45, 80, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 96, 102, 110, 117, 129, 142, 147, 149, 151, 152, 153, 158, 159, 176, 202, 224, 229
- assault, 174, 183
- autonomy, 33
- barbarians, 108
- barbaric, 174, 181
- beheading, 36, 200
- belligerence, 190, 200
- betrayal, 89, 143
- bigotry, 45
- blasphemy, 52, 146, 219
- bloodthirsty, 94, 200
- boastfulness, 28, 33, 37, 69, 88, 92, 136, 144, 145, 146, 148, 171, 173, 175
- bombast, 129, 174
- boorishness, 136
- bribery, 92, 93, 101, 102, 104, 106, 110, 112, 145, 164, 222
- brutality, 41, 50, 109
- buffoonery, 136, 160
- bullying, 189
- callousness, 103, 112, 147

- capriciousness, 10, 39, 42, 45, 49, 51, 61, 62, 85,
93, 95, 97, 107, 112, 119, 133, 143, 145, 165,
173, 175, 205, 214, 220, 226
- complacency, 36, 135
- complicity, 95, 107, 169, 181
- compromise
did, 96
did not, 87, 129, 223
- conceit, 83, 162, 229
- confrontation with authorities, 166
- connivance, 92, 93
- conspire to murder, 20, 21, 96
- contempt, 45, 86, 146
- court-intrigue, 160
- covert actions, 89, 195
- covetousness, 81, 144, 149, 175
- cowardice, 119, 120, 136, 196
- craftiness, 184
- create hardship for others, 113
- criticizing, 149
- cruelty, 39, 43, 51, 113, 174, 200
- crushing others, 112
- culpability, 107, 200
- cunning, 102, 107
- currying favour, 160
- cynicism, 43, 166
- debauchery, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 84, 112, 220
- decadence, 27
- deceit, 55, 75, 104, 107, 158, 163, 170
- delight in causing misery, 113
- delinquency, 120
- depravity, 98, 172, 182
- despising another person, 84, 158, 174
- despotism, 2, 46, 88, 119, 144
- devious, 158
- diabolical, 148
- discord, 204, 215
- discourtesy, 152
- disdain, 164, 174
- dishonest gain, 44, 222
- dishonesty, 86
- disloyalty to magistrates, 96, 105, 106
- disobedience to lawful authority, 40, 41, 45, 46,
50, 51, 55, 72, 86, 91, 103, 141
- disparagement, 149
- disrespect, 147
- divorce, 44, 49, 50, 51, 55, 66, 78
- drunkenness, 27, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44,
51, 107, 111, 124, 168
- duplicity, 102, 104, 158, 170, 220
- enrichment, 88, 110, 168, 189, 220
- envy, 45, 88, 94
- erotic 'love', 81
- evil, 62, 89, 105, 113, 125, 129, 162, 170, 180,
191
- expediency, 45, 184
- exposure of body parts, 58
- extortion, 145
- extravagance, 76, 83, 158
- failure to protect another, 40
- false promises, 104, 118, 129, 141, 144
- falsehood
evasive action, contrasted, 75
falsehood, 75, 170, 187
untruth, 73, 75, 86
- favouritism, 43, 71, 72, 122, 187, 221
- fawning, 164
- financial swindle, 160
- flattery, 46, 93, 126, 140, 142, 173
- fornication, 78
- genocide
annihilation, 16, 97, 100, 103, 104, 110, 112,
135, 146, 160, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173,
178, 180, 188, 192, 204
extermination, 5, 108, 110, 111
extinction, 114
genocide, 4, 72, 92, 97, 98, 103, 109, 110, 111,
113, 148, 171, 173, 176, 177, 191, 193, 194,
197, 206
massacre, 36, 110, 111
slaughter, 71, 103, 106, 109, 110, 199
slaughter of infants in Bethlehem, 43, 109, 184
- gloating, 143, 160
- graft, 112, 222
- greed, 61, 111, 148, 149
- grudge holding, 50, 90, 96, 224
- gullible, 93, 138
- hate crimes, 52
- hatred of
Christ, 97, 98, 202
Christianity, 187
God, 52, 179, 197, 226
God's covenant, 198
men, 20, 50, 92, 98, 99, 122, 149, 156, 160,
166, 180, 186, 189, 194, 196, 197, 206, 215
religion, 29
- haughtiness, 142, 159, 160, 166, 173, 174
- homosexuality, 26, 78, 91, 95, 97, 105, 113, 120,
162, 182, 183, 191, 196, 202
- idleness, 77
- ignorance, 26, 100, 102, 107, 116, 149, 159, 172,
173, 212
- illegal actions, 91, 133, 135, 182
- immature behaviour, 83
- immoderation, 145
- immoral behaviour, 52, 74, 222
- impatience, 125, 143
- impetuous, 40, 177
- inconsiderate, 40, 149
- indolence, 222
- inebriety, 27
- infanticide, 97

- inhumane harem system, 78
- innate, 187
- insults, 52, 96, 173, 178
- intemperance, 27, 149
- intimidation, 46, 137, 189, 195, 200
- intolerance, 105, 162, 187, 228
- intoxication, 33
- intrigues, 143
- irrationality, 39, 61
- lawlessness, 24
- laziness, 144
- lechery, 39, 40
- lesbian, 107
- licentiousness, 33
- lust, 40, 61, 62, 65, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 149, 158, 162, 224
- lying, 69, 75, 86, 95, 101, 102, 144, 149, 175
- lying, probably not, 73, 75, 150
- Machiavellian subtlety, 50
- make a spectacle, 27, 147
- make excuses, 46, 107, 119, 120, 142, 158, 172, 198
- malicious, 112, 181
- murderer, 9, 40, 52, 75, 90, 95, 98, 99, 105, 110, 113, 146, 147, 148, 149, 165, 170, 172, 189, 191, 197, 200
- negligence, 181
- nepotism, 178
- obstinance, 40
- offense, giving or taking, 76, 94, 95, 97, 98, 103, 107, 119, 126, 133, 189, 204, 205, 214, 219
- oppression of
 - others, 112, 116, 182, 219, 220
 - women, 78
- orgy, 37
- overt sins, 52, 61, 89, 98, 105, 196, 197, 198, 199, 201, 202, 223
- pampering, 80, 81, 112, 120, 133, 140, 169
- pandering, 48
- partiality, 222
- passions rule, 40, 48, 61, 62, 66, 81, 162, 174, 224
- perjury, 105
- perks, 86, 113
- persecution, 94, 105, 109, 120, 123, 125, 135, 169, 170, 171, 179, 182, 191, 194, 196, 197, 212, 224, 225, 226
- perverseness, 50, 56, 78, 120, 121, 174, 224, 225, 229
- pessimism, 2, 20, 159
- pettiness, 42, 57, 58, 96, 103, 159, 225
- petulance, 19, 39, 133, 205, 226
- pillage, 197
- pleasure-seeking, 19, 48, 62, 76, 78, 79, 81, 85, 119, 132, 147, 149, 150, 169, 172, 205, 224
- plotting, 1, 5, 13, 18, 20, 21, 36, 51, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 111, 118, 120, 126, 129, 130, 131, 140, 141, 142, 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 155, 165, 166, 171, 172, 175, 179, 189, 209, 224
- plunder, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 179, 189, 190, 191, 200, 201, 220
- pogrom, 99, 107, 111, 166, 195
- pompous, 40, 160
- popularity, 86, 158, 223
- pornography, 154
- power
 - abuse, 24, 36, 78, 101, 104, 108, 112, 147, 187, 195, 224
 - arbitrary, 36, 51, 139, 172
 - autocratic, 19, 56, 61, 79, 106, 119, 137, 139, 145, 165, 168, 180, 219
 - concentration, 94
 - consolidation, 24, 185, 188
 - corruption, 10, 24, 36, 61, 85, 97, 104, 183, 222, 224
 - displays of, 35, 36, 84, 104, 138, 144, 179
 - seeking, 48, 79, 93, 135, 145, 223
 - seizing, 11, 27, 35, 56, 60, 179
- pragmatism, 43, 50, 56, 134, 184
- prejudice, 152
- pre-marital sex, 130
- prestige, 48, 145, 214
- pride, 2, 20, 24, 36, 37, 39, 40, 50, 51, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 102, 103, 105, 114, 136, 142, 143, 145, 148, 149, 150, 158, 160, 174, 175, 180, 184, 201, 215, 221, 224, 226
- privileged, 42
- prodigality, 130, 136
- profligacy, 85
- prostitute, 37, 66, 78
- provocation, 26, 146
- quick tempered, 39, 41, 44, 86, 92, 124, 172
- rashness, 41, 136, 146
- rebellion
 - against husbands, 45
 - against king, 37
 - coup, 42, 88
 - in Babylon, 12, 25, 59
- rebellion against
 - God, 8, 25, 45, 74, 123, 124, 149, 176
 - government, 28, 42, 102, 103, 223
 - husband, 45, 49
 - parents, 74, 120
- receiving human adoration, 36, 42, 119, 151, 160, 175
- redefining sin, 95
- retaliation, 60
- revenge, 10, 17, 49, 61, 88, 97, 101, 153, 159, 175, 197, 199
- revolt, 11, 64, 150
- rioting, 111
- robing God, 148
- rumor, 115, 120, 183, 191

- ruthlessness, 94, 220
 - sanctimonious, 130
 - self-centred, 77, 164
 - self-importance, 86, 142
 - self-interest, 166, 168
 - selfishness, 40, 43, 59, 61, 62, 80, 81, 102, 112, 121, 133, 144, 166, 169, 209, 226
 - selflessness, 86, 93, 179, 182, 229
 - self-serving, 51
 - self-willed, 133
 - sensuality, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 107, 120, 137
 - servile, 45, 174
 - sex
 - appeal, 74
 - objects, 78
 - pre-marital, 130
 - sells, 61
 - sexual
 - ambiguity, 183
 - deviants, 175
 - escapades, 44
 - improprieties, 26, 35, 67, 78, 122, 153, 160
 - perverts, 162
 - preferences, 183
 - titillation, 131
 - silence and inaction, 97, 116, 122, 126, 135
 - silencing another person, 143
 - sin, 21, 23, 36, 39, 40, 47, 51, 62, 66, 67, 86, 89, 92, 94, 95, 97, 98, 101, 107, 109, 113, 114, 116, 122, 125, 130, 143, 144, 145, 148, 149, 153, 154, 165, 166, 169, 170, 172, 173, 176, 183, 185, 187, 190, 191, 193, 196, 198, 224, 225, 229
 - slander, 101, 171, 216
 - slaughter of innocent, 200
 - slave, 29, 30, 37, 39, 55, 61, 71, 77, 81, 106, 121, 138, 140, 151, 153, 167, 168, 177
 - slavery, 62, 106, 122, 123, 167
 - smear campaign, 93
 - smuggling, 223
 - snitch, 89
 - spite, 8, 26, 45, 58, 62, 71, 82, 94, 97, 141, 144, 197, 213
 - stubbornness, 94, 225
 - subversive, 97, 102
 - suicide bombers, 89
 - suppress truth, 36, 176
 - swindling, 160
 - sycophantism, 39, 46, 62, 151, 164, 172, 185
 - tantrum, 86
 - tattletales, 227
 - temperamental, 61, 137, 163
 - terrorism, 89, 94, 102, 152, 162, 198, 212
 - theft, 52, 54, 57, 74, 90, 105, 112, 148, 166, 172, 222, 223
 - threatening, 17, 93, 95, 114, 151, 158, 168, 170, 172, 178, 182, 201, 202, 203
 - timidity, 19, 119
 - titillation, 74, 79, 130
 - toasting evil, 111
 - torture, 224
 - trampling rights of others, 36
 - treason, 43, 45, 51, 102, 118, 124, 142, 147, 165, 170, 172, 200
 - tyranny, 10, 24, 40, 43, 46, 48, 51, 57, 62, 79, 88, 103, 113, 133, 175, 187, 215
 - unconverted, 144, 172
 - undisciplined, 197
 - unfairness, 187, 218
 - unfairness, claim, 221
 - unfaithfulness, 26, 66, 114, 170
 - unfaithfulness, claim, 71
 - ungrateful, 152
 - unmerciful, 98
 - unprincipled, 146, 147, 184
 - unrepentant, 225
 - unscrupulous, 94
 - unthankful, 148
 - vacillation, 50, 93
 - vanity, 19, 37, 40, 45, 52, 56, 61, 62, 66, 136, 145, 148, 159, 160
 - viciousness, 22, 149
 - vigilantism, 176, 197, 202, 225
 - vindictiveness, 50, 53, 91, 92, 122, 200, 201
 - violence, 24, 40, 41, 44, 52, 131, 188, 190, 192, 197, 200, 201, 226
 - wantonness, 35, 76, 98
 - wickedness, 25, 78, 79, 93, 107, 109, 112, 144, 171, 176, 183, 196, 198, 209, 213, 224
 - without excuse, 107, 130
 - wrath, 45, 53, 175
- Manmade law**
- absolute, claim, 67
 - affirmative action, 52
 - amoral, claim, 57
 - annulling, 49, 133, 189
 - breach, 39, 53, 90, 91, 96, 152
 - challenging overreach, 191, 203
 - common-sense for filing complaints, 91
 - commonwealth, 87, 221
 - conflicts between decrees, 189
 - constitutional law, 43, 47, 112, 188
 - create with care, 184
 - culturally accepted norms, 74
 - decrees, 217, 222
 - environmental regulations, 182, 222
 - evil, 26
 - fairness, 52, 226
 - flouting, 91
 - foolish, 57, 182, 184, 191, 227, 228
 - irrevocable, claim, 106, 107, 119, 133, 184, 205

- king's decrees, 67, 89, 93, 160, 178, 181, 188
- legislate immorality, 57
- misapplied, 43
- municipal bylaw, 90, 91, 202
- must be
 - enforceable, 52, 57, 90, 91, 191, 227
 - enforced, 53, 227
- not applied
 - retroactively, 41, 53
 - subjectively, 53
 - with harsh austerity, 214
- not the power of God's laws, 49
- offense, 40, 51
- overt behaviour only, 52, 53, 202
- overturned, 52, 133, 201
- regulation, 33, 76, 191
- rescinding evil, 166, 181
- retroactive, 41
- statute, 47, 226
- to be consistent with God's law, 187, 218
- 'unalterable' decrees, 6, 127
- unchangeable, claim, 180, 184, 190
- unenforceable, 53, 58, 227
- unreasonable, 57
- Manuscript
 - Hebrew, 128, 129, 199
 - secular, 23
- Mao
 - Tse-Tung, 36
 - Zedong, 110
- Marathon, 10, 17, 36
- marble, 18, 30, 31
- Mardocheus (Mordecai), 13
- marijuana, 195
- Marine Corps, 5
- Market
 - days, 188
 - mortgage, 182
 - slave, 66, 168
- Marriage
 - attitudes toward, 45
 - biblical definition, 48, 54, 58, 66, 78
 - breaking bonds, 66
 - bride, 82
 - destruction of, 78
 - dysfunctional, 48
 - false definition, 116
 - for political advantage, 12, 35, 40, 41, 48, 77
 - incestuous, 60
 - intermarriage, 67
 - levirate, 66
 - marriage, 10, 11, 66, 82, 120, 124
 - marriageable age, 66
 - mutual obligation, 86
 - only sexual relations within, 26
 - polygamous, 54, 66, 78, 225
 - privacy, 137, 181
 - prospect of, 66
 - redefinition of, 26
 - sexual relations, 78
 - support of, 86, 203, 222
 - to pagan, 67
 - to prostitute, 66, 67
 - to unbeliever, 26, 55, 67, 68, 128
 - trophy wife, 37, 145
 - twice-married, 12
 - wedding, 47, 70, 82, 91, 97, 110, 120, 164, 202, 204
 - wedding invitation, Chinese, 82
 - within caste, 59
- Marseilles, 18
- martyrs, 194, 211
- Mary, mother of Jesus, 141, 153, 194, 198
- masculinity, 27
- Masoretes, 92
- Materialistic
 - naturalism, 5, 6, 100
 - pleasure seeking, 114
- mathematician, 18
- mathematics, 6
- measles, 163
- meat, 55, 71, 72
- Medes, 10, 15, 27, 31, 33, 40, 48, 49, 50, 51, 180, 181, 183, 184, 186, 221
- Media
 - contemporary, 26, 47, 215
 - Facebook, 25, 188
 - liberal, 78
 - newspapers, 100
 - popular, 221
 - TV shows, 5, 26, 58, 151
 - Twitter, 25, 47
 - video
 - recording, 91
 - streaming, 188
 - website, 80, 101, 188
 - YouTube, 188
- Median Empire, 15, 42, 49, 221
- Medical
 - issue, 116
 - professional, 48
 - services, 223
- medicine, 124
- Mediterranean Sea, 219
- Medo-Persian Empire, 10, 11
- Memucan, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 55, 56, 57, 60
- meritorious action, 93
- Merlin, 19
- Merodach, 63
- Meshach, 52
- Mesopotamia, 24, 25, 28, 36, 198

- Messianic Jews, 210
- metal, precious, 38, 82
- Middleton, Kate, 47
- midwives, Hebrew, 97
- migration, 14, 24, 153
- Military
 - commander, 27, 28, 29, 51, 121, 202
 - conflict, 201
 - general, 31, 34, 37
 - military, 34, 219
 - necessity, 201
 - qualification standards (lowered), 46
 - servicemen, 195
 - strategist, 140
 - task force, 202
 - uniform, 137
- milkmaid, 153
- miracle, 7, 100, 121, 123, 161, 162, 210
- missionary, 121, 153
- Mithradates, 109
- Mizraim, 24
- Moab, 186
- Modesty
 - false, 166
 - Greek virtue, 136
 - mock, 136
 - true, 71, 79, 81, 143, 227
- Mongolian Empire, 14
- Month
 - Adar, 20, 99, 164, 190, 199, 203, 204, 205, 207, 209, 210, 213
 - Nisan, 99
 - Sivan, 185
 - Tebeth, 83
 - Tir, 99, 185
- monuments in Susa, 151
- Morality
 - chaos, 74, 88, 105, 218, 228
 - difficult choices, 67
 - indifference, 74, 115
 - morality, 6, 39, 56, 57, 58, 59, 69, 78, 107, 131, 160, 184, 197, 218, 222
 - pollution, 120
- Mormonism, 100
- Mosaic
 - Law, 199, 206
 - system, 206
 - tessellated, 32
 - tiling, 15, 31, 32
- Moses, 23, 43, 48, 69, 71, 116, 169, 170, 178, 203, 206, 207, 208
- mother-of-pearl, 32
- Mourning
 - cause, 112, 114
 - false, 115, 160, 192
 - mourners, 126
 - mourning, 113, 115, 117, 118, 119, 132, 160, 180, 192
 - outward signs, 113
 - replaced, 203, 205
- Movie
 - Christian, viewed with disdain, 130
 - Divergent, 19, 130
 - gimmicks, 131
 - horror, 145
 - IMDB ratings, 130, 131
 - moviemakers, 131
 - spiritual moment, 130
 - Star Wars, 19
 - Tarzan, 110
- mummification, 75
- mumps, 163
- music, 26, 74
- musicians, 86
- mutilation, 37, 54
- mutton, 72
- myrtle, Hadassah, 19, 64
- Myths
 - demigod, 46, 150, 180, 181, 184
 - fairy tale, 80, 177, 187
 - gods
 - Ahuramazda, 12, 15, 105, 115, 119, 127, 180, 182
 - Apollo, 18
 - Gadhimai, 162
 - god, 5, 10, 28, 32, 38, 42, 45, 62, 63, 67, 72, 87, 96, 98, 99, 100, 105, 119, 127, 151, 182, 185, 193, 197, 200, 222
 - goddess, 62, 63, 162
 - Hermes - Mercury, 185
 - Ishtar, 62, 63
 - Marduk, 62, 63
 - Marduka, 62
 - Mithra, 38, 46, 67, 185
 - pantheon, 28, 193
 - Tishtrya, 99
 - uncreated, 105
 - Zeus, 18
 - myth, 54, 63, 151, 187, 228
 - myths, 62, 151, 162, 196
- N—
- Naaman, 121
- Naboth, 148
- naiveté, 126, 181, 183
- nakedness, 58, 78
- narcissist, 19, 126, 145
- nationalism, 102, 206
- nations, 12, 14, 19, 23, 36, 58, 67, 83, 85, 103, 105, 114, 117, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 162, 165, 173, 182, 187, 190, 192, 193, 196, 198, 205, 206, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 225, 226, 229
- nautical matters, 4

- Navy
 - US, 5, 176
 - Xerxes', 10, 17
- Navy Seal, 176
- Nazi, 25, 110, 115, 187, 191, 193, 195, 199
- NCIS, TV show, 5
- Nebuchadnezzar, 25, 32, 36, 52, 56, 64, 67, 146
- needy people, 123, 169
- negotiations with terrorists, 162, 198
- Neighbour
 - love, 55, 81, 117, 180, 202
 - not loving, 24, 90, 91, 111, 112, 175
- Nepal, 162
- Nephilim, 24
- Nero, 19, 36, 113, 191
- neutral colours, 80
- Nicaea, Council of, 211
- Nicanor, 206
- Nile, 14, 25
- Nimrod, 24, 25
- Nimrods, 24
- Nineveh, 35
- Ninus, king of Assyria, 35
- Nixon, Richard, 86, 112
- Noah, 14, 24, 82, 116, 150, 153
- nobility, 4, 9, 19, 27, 41, 45, 59, 60, 67, 68, 71, 72, 77, 80, 82, 84, 88, 93, 110, 120, 142, 143, 147, 150, 152, 180, 191, 220
- non-violence, 201
- notoriety, 158, 192
- numerals used for names, 171
- Nuremberg Trials, 199
- nurse, 136, 193
- O—
- oath swearing, 22
- Obama, 8, 86, 90, 96, 112, 182, 192
- Obamacare, 182
- Obedience
 - to civil magistrates, 12, 38, 39, 48, 50, 56, 90, 95, 97, 105, 106, 108, 207, 208, 227
 - to God
 - disregarded, 26, 68, 123, 124, 225
 - not to save, 26
 - observed, 8, 67, 68, 80, 84, 96, 97, 116, 134, 135, 149, 220
 - rather than men, 78, 86
 - required, 124, 155
 - to husbands, 50
 - to parents, 44, 80, 85, 86, 93, 134
 - to 'positive' laws, 52
- obeisance, 93, 94
- obnoxious, 75, 86
- obsequious, 48
- Occupy Wall Street, 188
- Olympia, 18
- Olympics, 223
- On the Origin of Species, 183
- Ontario bar, 52
- ontology, 130
- optimism, false, 20
- orbis unum, 25
- Ordination
 - novice, 94
 - practicing homosexuals, 183
 - women, 162
- Origen, 129
- ornamentation, 15, 31, 32, 79
- orphan, 65, 67, 84, 122
- Orthodox churches, 9, 23
- Ottoman Turks, 14, 110, 187
- overconfidence, 142, 145, 146
- P—
- pacifism, 201, 202
- Palace
 - courtyard, 134, 155
 - fortified, 15, 29
- Palestine, 19, 25, 63, 91, 97, 224
- paparazzi, 145
- papyrus, 55, 108
- paradise, 30, 115
- parchment, 55, 109
- Parents
 - advisors, 19
 - guardian, 64
 - honour even after marriage, 86
 - infants imitate, 47
 - obligations, 212
 - submission to, 48, 72, 77, 85, 86
- Parthenon, 18
- Parthia, 14, 102
- passionate, 82
- pastor, 48, 135, 136, 162, 183, 214, 215
- patience, 77, 93, 101, 140, 142, 143, 144, 168, 182, 226, 227, 228
- patience, claim, 164
- patronage, 144, 145, 192
- Paul, 8, 47, 87, 89, 90, 94, 96, 107, 116, 121, 124, 125, 135, 136, 155, 162, 205, 208, 209, 211, 212, 224, 228
- pavilion, 30
- Peace
 - disturbing, 117, 166, 167
 - ephemeral sense of wellbeing, 216
 - from God, 205
 - lasting, 223
 - law-abiding, 112
 - maintaining (civil magistrate), 87, 221
 - of assembly, 188
 - peaceful means of resolution first, 201, 226
 - personal, 150, 169
 - seeking, 166, 171, 182, 212, 213, 214, 215, 219, 220, 221, 229

- temporal, 93, 94, 102, 205, 215, 220, 222, 224
- threats to, 203
- true, 216
- without truth, 215
- words, 213, 214, 215, 222, 227
- Peace of God (treaty), 201
- peacekeeper, false, 114
- pearls, 38, 82, 137
- penitence, 114, 115, 138
- Pentecost, 224
- perceptive, 169
- Pergamon, 55
- Pericles, 18
- Persecution
 - anti-Christian, 36, 47, 78, 98, 212, 218, 226
 - fails, 2, 194
 - genocide, 4, 20, 105, 107, 110, 111, 122, 148, 161, 166, 185, 189, 190, 193, 194, 199, 200, 203
 - of God's people, 105, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 162, 224
 - outlawing prayer and God's law, 196
- Persepolis, 10, 13, 15, 34, 42, 104, 151
- Persian
 - extent of empire, 8, 12, 13
 - Gulf, 134
 - territories, 14, 28, 34, 35, 36, 203, 209, 224
- Pharaoh
 - colonies, 18
 - Pharaoh, 11, 36, 39, 41, 87, 92, 111, 135, 175
 - pr-'o, 'great house', 11
- Pharisees, 93, 170
- Pheidippides, Battle of Marathon, 17
- philanthropy, 166, 171, 226
- philosopher, 18, 136
- philosophy, 18
- Phoenicians, 18, 186
- photographer, 97, 107
- photographic service, 203
- physician, 18
- physicist, 6
- Piety
 - false, 176
 - true, 87, 204, 221
- Pillars
 - pillar, 10, 15, 29, 30, 31, 56, 89
 - pillars - στύλοις, 31
 - stone - λιθίνοις, 31
 - stone - παρίνοις, 31
- Pinochet, Augusto, 110
- piousness, 204
- pity, 167
- Plague
 - plague, 8
 - ten in Egypt, 7, 99, 135
- plant breeding techniques, 162
- plastic straw, 227
- Plato, 136
- Pleasing - ἀρέσκω, 129
- plebiscite, 223
- Pluralism
 - failure, 187, 228
 - no means of adjudicating conflicts, 187, 218
 - pluralism, 26, 46, 187, 218, 228
 - religious, 218
 - truth and error cannot co-exist, 187
- Plutarch, 9, 35, 157, 199
- poker, 153
- Poles killed by German Nazis, 110
- police, 58, 75, 91, 137, 153, 160, 195, 197, 202, 219, 223
- polio, 163
- politeness, 69, 105, 106, 163, 164, 166, 168, 171, 226
- Polo, Marco, 134
- Pope, 36, 201
- pork, 72, 143, 202
- porticos, 29
- postal system, 25, 204
- Pot, Pol, 110
- Potiphar, 61
- Prayer
 - accompanied fasting, 113, 115, 123, 132
 - answered by God, 133, 175
 - apocryphal, 133
 - Church negligent in, 123
 - communal, 132
 - difficult to focus on, 132
 - for
 - God's rule to be displayed, 113
 - guidance, 137, 144, 182
 - humility, 149
 - magistrate, duty, 56, 90, 97
 - others, 130, 135
 - peace, 182
 - protection, 116, 128, 193
 - revival, 123
 - strength, 144
 - wisdom, 185
 - heard by God, 140, 160, 166
 - important, 133
 - in public, 196, 218
 - intelligible, 216
 - intelligible petitions, 216
 - lawful petitions, 166
 - not directly mentioned in Esther, 113, 126, 182
 - not lengthy, 116
 - of thanks to God, 155
 - pagan, 185
 - power of, 182, 203
 - privilege, 135
 - requested from others, 135
 - steadfastness, 97
 - time, 132, 134

- to be constant, 212
- preacher, 67, 149
- preaching, 18, 123, 165, 203, 215
- predictions, false, 6, 45, 147, 199
- pre-evangelism, 127
- pregnancy, 35, 38, 41, 49, 165
- presbytery, 229
- presuppositions, 22, 23
- Priest
 - Anglican, 207
 - high, 68, 96
 - priesthood, 206
- prince, 9, 11, 12, 22, 27, 28, 29, 42, 51, 59, 108, 121
- princess, 1, 37, 49, 50, 130
- principled, 41, 78, 147
- prism, 98
- prison, 40, 122
- prisoner, 40, 174, 221
- promise to another person, 129, 141, 169, 181, 198
- proselytes, 193, 210
- Protestant, 110, 153, 163, 211
- prudence, 126, 142, 144
- Psalter, compositional types, 155
- psychological, 46, 48, 124, 144, 149, 154
- psychology, 42, 69, 142, 143, 144, 227
- Ptolemeus, 127
- Ptolemy, 8, 128
- Punishment
 - amputation, 54
 - by civil magistrates, 56
 - capital, 53, 176, 197, 198, 202, 219, 222
 - commensurate with crime, 50, 53, 57, 227
 - covenantal aspect, 122
 - deserved, 19, 174
 - despised, 176
 - doom pending, 25, 92, 107, 161, 225
 - encourage offenders to reform, 53
 - equitable, 53, 227
 - everlasting
 - death, 43, 54
 - eternal, 54, 166, 203, 225
 - slaughter, 113
 - terror, 173
 - evil recoils on perpetrator, 170, 175, 176, 225
- execution
 - enemies of Jews, 4, 106, 191, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 203, 204
 - execution, 4, 5, 9, 16, 46, 49, 88, 97, 118, 147, 150, 164, 173, 174, 175, 176, 183, 189, 190, 191, 197, 198, 199, 200, 220
 - executioner, 111
 - hanging, 5, 21, 147, 149, 156, 158, 175, 179, 183, 199, 200
 - Islam, 54
 - Jews' pending, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 118, 125, 147, 152, 177, 198
 - questionable grounds, 5, 41, 49, 88, 96, 110, 133, 138, 147, 161, 174, 175
 - witness, 188
- exposure, 179
- fairness, 50
- from God, 54, 90, 96, 122, 127, 129, 146, 175, 176, 225, 229
- impartial, 53
- leniency, 96, 173
- lex talionis, 53
- no ultimate escape, 40, 176
- not applied retroactively, 53
- of bombers, 89, 176
- principles, 53, 54, 122, 225, 228
- recompense, 129, 170
- restitution, 54
- retribution, 53, 89, 175, 176, 225
- severe, 50, 51
- temporal, 89, 225
- unjust, 4, 50, 51, 53, 66, 96, 117, 133, 141, 180, 227
- pur, 1, 98, 161, 209
- purisu, 98
- Puritan, 207, 208, 210, 211
- Pythagoras, 18
- Q—
- quantum mechanics, 6
- Qur'an, 54
- R—
- Race
 - claimed, 52
 - human, 148
 - Italic, 109
 - racism, 199
- Rahab, 161, 193
- ram, 99
- rape, 54, 78, 113, 171, 200
- Rebecca, 65
- rebuke, 93, 119, 149, 171
- recreation, 211
- Red Sea, 4, 7, 14
- Red Sea, crossing, 4, 7
- Reformation
 - Church, 116, 219
 - heart, 44
 - Protestant, 153, 211
 - society/state, 44, 135
- Reformed Christians, 6, 23
- refugees, 100
- regret, 59, 106, 122, 154, 162
- rejoicing, 125, 159, 164, 176, 192, 193, 203, 204, 205, 208, 211, 225, 226
- relaxation, 154
- Religion
 - ablution rite, claim, 70
 - anti-God, 29, 198, 224

- ceremonies
 - endorsed by civil authority, 207
 - 'holy' days, 206
 - permitted, claim, 210, 218
- cult, 27, 88
- denial of true, 6, 54, 100
- dominant, 18
- dualism, 115, 182
- eternal universe, claim, 100
- false, 5, 40, 47, 62, 78, 105, 130, 187, 218, 225, 226, 227, 228
- fertility rites, 78
- imitators of true, 218
- impious, Mordecai, claim, 123
- infidelity, 56, 97
- infidelity, claim, 202
- monotheism, 100
- mystery, 24
- neutrality, claim, 187, 228
- pagan worship, 94
- paganism, 6, 7, 17, 19, 21, 46, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 78, 87, 90, 96, 99, 121, 127, 128, 134, 143, 149, 161, 162, 182, 184, 193, 197, 198, 204, 205, 208, 212, 220, 221, 224, 225, 226, 228, 229
- pantheism, 6, 99, 100
- Persian, 16
- polytheism, 24, 100
- priestess, 18
- state control, 16, 56, 97, 103, 187, 218
- state endorsement, 218, 228
- syncretistic, 114
- true, 54, 94, 100, 187, 198, 218, 229
- Remembrance (Armistice) Day, 205
- remnant of covenant people, 123
- repentance, 53, 67, 113, 145, 153, 165, 166, 173, 225
- Reputation
 - above reproach, 44
 - easily destroyed, 183
 - evil, 27, 44, 174, 175
- rescue of a person, 80, 116, 121, 123, 153, 193
- residential areas in Susa, 9, 10, 15, 17, 29, 138, 155, 218
- residents of Susa, 158, 163, 203
- respectable, 44, 45, 72, 87, 96, 110, 158, 175, 221, 223
- respectful, 48, 90, 171
- Responsibility
 - abdication of, 120, 131
 - for actions denied, 101
 - man not absolved of, 7, 124
 - murder, 88, 101
 - personal, 67, 90, 136, 179, 223
 - position in Church or state, 44, 84, 93
 - to take action, 7, 101, 120, 124, 179
- restaurants, 57
- restoration, English monarchy, 43
- restraint, personal, 33, 66, 143, 147, 191, 200, 201
- retirement, 135
- retirement pension fund, 86, 135, 214
- revealing strategy (Esther's), 142, 143, 150, 169
- Reward
 - false, 111, 143, 144
 - falsely applied, 155
 - for good behaviour, 228
 - forfeited, 124
 - from God, 91, 127, 152, 162, 175
 - personal
 - attitude toward, 179, 229
 - from superior, 5, 49, 89, 118, 129, 141, 151, 155, 156, 159, 160, 165, 166, 170, 176, 177, 179
 - not given, 5, 93, 152
 - not to be sought, 54, 91, 177, 229
 - punishment, 129
 - temporal, 179, 229
- Ridicule
 - of debauchery, 33
 - of king's weakness, 46
 - of paganism, 161, 204
- Righteous
 - action
 - motive, 91
 - tainted, 114
 - person, 16, 46, 94, 123, 128, 155, 162, 176, 178, 179, 226
 - 'righteous king', 9
 - righteousness, 8, 36, 138, 179, 195
- Rights
 - Bill of (US), 188
 - claiming, 46, 58, 62, 77, 218
 - equal, 52
 - fathers', 46
 - freedom of speech, 52
 - human, 47, 191, 202, 226
 - infringed, 36
 - of unborn, 135
 - protecting of weak, 135
 - usurping, 147
 - women's, limited, 78
- road, Persian, 25, 109
- rock n' roll, 146
- romance, 19
- Romania, 174
- Romanticism, 153
- Rome, empire / city, 10, 14, 25, 27, 76, 103, 109, 113, 153, 187, 191, 211, 216
- royalty, 37, 82, 95, 137, 138, 139, 140, 178, 191
- Ruins
 - palace citadel in Susa, 31
 - Persian, 151
 - Susa, 10, 15, 98, 126, 134

- Russia, 110, 187
Rutherford, Samuel, 43
—S—
Sabbath
 commemorates resurrection of Christ, 164, 204
 eternal, 211
 joyous day, 211
 melioration, 211
 ordained by God, 211
 relief from painful toil, 153
 resting from lawful pursuits, 204, 211
 sabbath, 204, 211
 Sabbath, 28, 29, 85, 164, 204, 205, 207, 208, 210, 211, 227
 Sunday activities, 52
 works and duties of necessity, 211
sackcloth, 22, 113, 114, 115, 117, 129, 138, 158, 160
sacraments, 54, 219
Sacrifice
 animal, 55, 70, 71, 72, 97, 162, 206, 211
 personal, 130, 134, 140, 182, 201, 205
Safety
 abundance of counselors, 46
 food regulations, 112
 physical
 concern for others', 72, 93, 95, 141, 182
 concern for own, 200
 from danger, 107
 God's provision, 19, 26, 165
 not depend on world, 212
 prayer for, 132
 place of (infant Jesus), 224
 sense of, 192
sailing, 17, 134
sailor, 193
Salamis, 10, 12, 17, 31, 36, 59
Salt
 pork, 143
 warning, 57, 58
Salvation
 conversion, 8, 26, 44, 62, 91, 118, 121, 125, 130, 148, 169, 185, 188, 193, 194, 211
 not based on accomplishments, 148
 self-preservation, 173, 177, 201
 soteriology, 69
 temporal, 4, 21, 39, 41, 79, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127, 144, 149, 151, 153, 155, 160, 168, 169, 175, 176, 177, 179, 188, 193
same-sex 'marriage', 26, 97, 107, 116, 120, 191, 222
Sanskrit, 13
Sarah, 106, 121
Sardians, 15
Sardis, 15, 25, 109
Sargon I, 24, 25, 28, 32
Sargon II, 25, 32
Satan
 craftiness, 184
 perverseness, 212
 Satan, 4, 26, 93, 94, 102, 111, 113, 125, 135, 144, 145, 148, 150, 165, 169, 173, 182, 184, 191, 193, 194, 200, 204, 212, 229
 war against Christ, 111, 184
satellite images, 29
satrapy, 10, 14, 19, 29, 34, 39, 42, 51, 108, 150, 186
Sattagydia, 34
Saudi Arabia, 187
Saul
 king, 64, 92, 95, 96, 97, 200
 Paul, 162
sceptre, 133, 135, 139, 180
Schrödinger equation, 6
science, 6, 26, 69, 100, 130
scientism, 26
scientists, 195
Scotland
 Covenanters, 212
 Killing time, 202
scribe, 87, 93, 107, 108, 151, 185, 187, 188, 204, 205, 228
Scripture
 biblical ethic, 75, 190, 202
 canon
 canonical books, 4, 129
 Esther's inclusion, 6, 9, 23, 24, 127, 128, 129, 207
 OT Hebrew, 9, 23, 129
 confidence in, 69
 date of Esther's composition, 14
 discreet in Esther, 130
 for correction, 8
 God the ultimate storyteller, 20, 58, 143
 Gospels, 128, 209
 Greek
 NT text, 224
 OT translation (Septuagint), 3, 9, 11, 31, 32, 37, 64, 82, 127, 129
 Hexapla, 129
 hidden signs in text, claim, 199
 historical without compromise, 64
 historical witness, 22
 inaccuracies, claim, 21, 22
 inerrant, 24
 inspiration, 209, 210
 interpretation
 alternate, 55, 64, 109, 189
 invalid, 39, 60, 70, 139, 140, 155, 171, 189, 199
 not preference, 189
 possible, 33, 77, 99, 105
 speculative, 60, 82, 203, 207
 valid, 54, 189, 202, 206
 meditation, 154

- Messianic passages, 129
- misinterpreted, 75
- never falsified, 69
- non-canonical, 128
- OT economy, 66
- Pentateuch, 129
- Persian loan word, 30
- poetry, 18
- prophecies, 36, 69, 123, 126, 198, 199, 207, 208
- prophecy of Balaam, 92
- prophetic office ended, 208
- prophets, 1, 7, 17, 23, 27, 34, 68, 122, 134, 206, 207, 208, 210, 214, 216, 219, 224
- proverbs, 46
- Psalter
 - compositional types, 155
 - psalmist, 94, 154, 175
- redemptive-historical, 7
- Scripture, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 23, 71, 93, 99, 129, 143, 175, 206, 207, 208, 210, 229
- self-attesting, 22
- Syriac translation, 129, 224
- teaching, reproof, correction, 8
- temporal markers in Esther, 20
- truths, 44, 101, 102, 223
- Vulgate translation, 128
- Word, 23, 202, 219
- scroll, 151, 214
- Sculpture
 - sculptures, 157
 - trees, 30
- Scythia, 12, 25, 28
- Scythians, 34, 35, 36
- seal, 49, 106, 107, 109, 119, 122, 170, 178, 181, 183, 184, 185, 186, 212
- Seba, 14
- Secret
 - Esther's nationality, 72, 73, 85, 86, 164, 193
 - sins, 57, 158, 170, 196
- Secular
 - humanism, 25, 42, 43, 187, 218, 228
 - non-religious, 218, 228
- Seleucids, 14, 16, 134
- self-control, 44, 143, 227
- self-restraint, 41
- self-sacrifice, 62, 135
- Semiramis, 35
- Sennacherib, 36, 134
- sepulchre of Daniel, 134
- sermon, 7, 18, 80
- Sermon on Mount, 105, 202
- serpent, 142, 166, 171, 227
- Servant
 - faithful, 71, 118
 - girl, 37, 121
 - male, 60
 - obedient, 94, 95, 152, 163, 165, 174
 - Satan's, 173
 - trusted, 117, 165
- Seth, 148, 150, 165
- Shaashgaz, 84
- Shadrach, 52
- Shakespeare, 19, 150
- Shalmaneser, 98
- shalom, 203
- shame, 72, 75, 85, 97, 114, 115, 116, 122, 146, 149, 161, 171, 175
- shamelessness, 136
- Shapur II, 36
- sheep, 55, 106, 215
- Shem, 24, 28, 134, 150
- Shemite, 98, 199
- shepherds, 215
- Shimei, 64
- Shinar, 153
- shrewdness, 79, 130
- Shushan, 134
- siege, 12, 134
- Signet
 - cylinder, 105, 178
 - seal/ring, 4, 20, 49, 105, 106, 107, 109, 119, 145, 170, 177, 178, 181, 183, 185, 186
- signs and wonders, 7
- silk suit, 81
- Silver
 - coin, 104
 - money, 103, 104, 167, 220
 - plating, 31
 - rods, 30
 - source, 15
- sincerity, 90, 95, 140, 155, 161, 166, 170, 214
- sindhu, 13
- Sira, Yeshua ben, 128
- Sirach, 128
- Sirus, 99
- Skills
 - craftsman, 104
 - creative, 184
 - critical thinking, 154
 - elder, 44
 - skilled, 93, 122, 136, 182
 - using suspense, 140, 141, 142
- skin colour, 47, 76, 226
- sleep, 4, 20, 141, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 164, 176
- sleeplessness, 5, 21, 89, 124, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154
- smile, 82, 141
- snake, 99
- sniper, 124
- sobriety, 33, 37
- Socrates, 18
- Sogdiana, 14, 15, 102
- soldier, 104, 146, 152

- Solomon, 33, 63, 65, 66
- Solon, 18
- Somalia, 14
- songs, popularity, 47
- sophistry, 184
- Sophocles, 18
- sorrow, 16, 205
- soul, 37, 132, 143, 185
- Soviet Russia, 29, 187
- SOX, 182
- space, 6, 130
- space, time, energy, matter, 6
- Spain, Medieval, 134, 187
- Sparta, 17, 18
- Spartans, 17
- spatial-temporal realm, 125, 149, 179, 191
- Spiritual
 - application, 44, 165, 206
 - battle, 182
 - children/descendants, 94, 148
 - confusion, 124
 - convictions, 123, 129
 - declension, 16
 - depravity, 182
 - enemies, 182
 - father, Satan, 94, 200
 - Jerusalem, 182
 - leader, 68
 - life of king, 171
 - master, Satan, 229
 - maturity, 83
 - moment, in movies, 130
 - problems, 143
 - realities, 154
 - realms, 152
 - regeneration, 121
 - relationship, 48
 - revival, 44, 123, 135, 226
 - test for public office, 44
 - war, 152, 182
- splendour, worldly, 31, 38, 145, 191
- spouse, 55, 110
- St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, 110
- Stalin, 25, 29, 36, 110, 177
- Stateira, 9
- statue, 10, 56
- stele, 24
- Stewart kings, 202
- storm, 17, 94
- suasion, 58
- Submission
 - to civil magistrate, 90
 - to God's will, 124, 134
 - to men
 - evil, 6, 32
 - valid, 82, 90, 93, 138, 180, 229
- Sudan, 14, 102
- Suffering
 - believers', 125, 171
 - none in heaven, 125
 - temporal, 61, 125
- suicide, 67, 89, 199
- Sumerian, 24, 28
- summer-house, 66
- Sunday School, 153
- Sun-tzu, 140
- Superstition
 - amulets, 98, 100
 - astrology, 41, 94, 98, 99, 100, 161, 210
 - casting lots, 16, 21, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 107, 108, 125, 161, 194, 209
 - ceremonially unclean, 115
 - chili pepper, 100
 - credulity, 162
 - divination, 4, 190
 - fatalism, 6, 7, 99, 100, 101, 124, 134, 161, 210, 225
 - fate, 5, 6, 99, 100, 101, 108, 147, 163, 166, 205
 - fertility rites, 78
 - fortune, 101, 115
 - fortune-teller, 161, 210
 - horoscopes, 101
 - in our 'enlightened' society, 100
 - indulgences, 211
 - Kabbalah, 99
 - karma, 5, 100, 101, 161
 - libation, 72
 - luck, 5, 98, 100, 101, 153, 161, 183
 - magic, 100, 151
 - mysticism, 99
 - numerology, 171
 - odds, 127
 - omen, 49, 59, 61, 66, 78, 98, 99, 100, 161
 - portent of death, 99
 - premonition, 167
 - presentiment, 161
 - prophecies, 100
 - psychic, 101
 - rabbit's foot, 100
 - reincarnation, 101
 - rituals, 60, 71, 72, 100, 190, 206, 218
 - sacred libation, 72, 127
 - shrine, 109
 - sign of cross, 100
 - signs from fates, 99, 108
 - stargazers, Mesopotamian, 28
 - superstitions, 100, 101, 108, 130, 162
 - superstitious, 38, 42, 92, 99, 100, 108, 115, 161, 162, 163, 182, 185, 205, 225
 - Tarot cards, 99
 - tempt fate, 147
- supplicate, 90, 138, 226

- suspicion, 17, 88, 94, 104, 120, 170
- sympathy, 112, 167, 173, 197
- synagogue, 68, 92, 93, 129, 134, 185, 188
- Syria, 14, 36, 94, 98, 110, 121, 202, 206, 222, 224
- T—
- Tacitus, 89
- Tajikistan, 14
- Talent
 - 10,000, 103, 106, 167, 168, 220
 - 15,000, 104
 - 34kgs, 103
 - sixty, 14
- Talmud, 199
- Tamerlane, 25, 36
- Targum, 65, 87
- Tarsus, 224
- Taxation
 - amnesty, 219
 - black-market avoidance, 223
 - cap-and-trade, 222
 - carbon taxes, 222
 - competence in application, 222
 - exemptions, 222
 - export duties, 223
 - fair and equitable, 222, 228
 - fund government, 104, 220
 - fund religion-based schools, 218
 - hinders free trade, 223
 - import duties, 222, 223
 - misused funds, 223
 - not applied retroactively, 54
 - not to be oppressive, 223, 228
 - oppressive, 223
 - principles, 222, 223
 - re-instituting Persian, 219, 222, 228
 - remission, 82
 - restructured Persian, 219
 - retroactive, 54
 - rob population of wealth, 223
 - tariff, 219
 - taxation, 9, 12, 22, 49, 54, 82, 83, 84, 93, 102, 104, 110, 182, 217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 228
 - tax-experts, 223
 - tax-reduction, 222
 - tribute, 9, 12, 14
- teacher, 48, 89, 146
- teakwood, 15
- teasing ploy, 150
- technology, 6, 142, 183
- telecoms, 112
- Temperance
 - considered weakness, 33
 - temperance, 33, 44, 136
- Temple
 - Jerusalem, 17, 32, 87, 116, 126, 206, 215
 - no architect's blueprint, 215
 - pagan, 18, 109, 197
 - rebuilding, 17
 - re-dedication, 206
 - re-establishing sacrificial system, 17, 126
- Temptation
 - of humble person, 160
 - rebel against husband, 45
 - sensual, 107
- Teresh, 13, 87, 88, 89
- terror, 113, 154, 172, 173, 225
- Tertullian, 194
- tetanus, 183
- Tevet, 83
- Thankfulness
 - to a person, 124, 152, 155
 - to God, 36, 37, 48, 63, 77, 125, 145, 155, 179, 193, 208, 211, 225, 226, 229
- Tharra, 13
- Thatagus, 34
- Thatcher, Margaret, 87, 221
- theocracy, 97
- Theory
 - conspiracy, 163
 - humanistic, 42
 - pluralism, 187
- thermodynamics, 6
- Thermopylae, 17
- Thessaly, 12, 59
- Thrace, 14, 102
- Threat
 - against women, 49
 - Christianity, claim, 187
 - to life, 18, 75, 192, 197, 203
- Thucydides, 12, 21, 22
- Tiglath-Pileser, 25
- Tigris River, 134
- timing of events, human, 11, 93, 143, 158
- Timur, 36
- tithe, 223
- Title
 - formal, 35
 - informal, 35, 194
 - official, 212
 - royal
 - formal, 34, 49, 138, 139, 199, 206, 213
 - generic, 11, 21, 92
 - omitted, 42, 49
- toastmaster, 33
- toasts, 32
- Tolerance
 - Edict of Toleration, 214
 - religious, 26, 78
- Tolkien, J. R., 130
- tomb, Daniel's, 126
- Tower of Babel, 24, 153

- town crier, 109, 157
- Traditions
 - biblical, 23, 212
 - human, 33, 72, 76, 82, 113, 212, 214
 - Jewish, 16, 68, 72, 126
 - speculation, 9
- tragedy, 21
- train derailment, 203
- transgenderism, 46, 58
- Transylvania, 174
- treaty, 215
- trellises, 30
- Tribe
 - Israelite, 63, 170, 215
 - Middle Eastern, 94
 - native, 153
- Triumph
 - of evil, 120
 - over evil, Jesus, 204
 - temporal, 20, 21
 - ultimate, 179, 226
- Trump, Donald, 192
- trumpet, 193
- Trust
 - false, 79, 100
 - in God, 7, 84, 101, 125, 134, 136, 153, 166, 200, 209, 212, 226
 - in man
 - misplaced, 77, 102, 144, 170, 172
 - valid, 118, 166
 - in official, 37, 61, 87, 88, 118, 178
- trustworthy, 44, 221
- truthfulness, 38, 42, 46, 47, 136, 227
- turban, 178, 191
- Turco-Mongol, 36
- Turkey, 14, 25, 82, 110
- Turkmenistan, 14, 102
- Turks, 187
- turquoise, 15
- tweens, 47
- U—
- Ulai Canal, 134
- ultimate questions, 154
- Unbeliever
 - marriage to, 67, 75, 90, 123
 - unbelief, 203
 - unbeliever, 75, 90, 120, 123, 134
 - unreached, 153
- unborn, 95, 107, 110, 115, 116, 135
- uncouth, 37
- uniform, power of, 137
- unintended consequences, 40
- Union
 - bosses, 86
 - teachers', 43
 - union, 77
- universe, 6, 28, 100, 101, 120, 162, 171, 215
- unprejudiced, claim, 193
- unselfishness, 80, 81, 182
- Ur, 24
- Urban II, 201
- urban setting, 81, 102, 111, 203, 205, 209, 213
- US Supreme Court, 107
- Ussher, James, 9, 11, 13
- USSR, 25, 110
- usurpation, 11, 35, 42, 48, 60, 157
- Uzbekistan, 14
- V—
- Vaizatha, 13
- valor, 145
- vapours, 180
- veil, 38, 82, 107
- vellum, 55
- vendetta, 102, 107
- vengeance, 176
- vengeance, personal, 19, 53, 92, 98, 153, 176, 201, 221
- venison, 72
- vessels, 12, 31, 32
- vice, 136, 175
- victim of circumstances, 19, 139
- victimhood, 196
- victims, 112, 116, 162, 179, 194, 210, 226
- victors, 179, 194, 210, 226
- victory, 16, 17, 59, 82, 138, 151, 163, 196, 203, 204, 206, 213, 229
- video game, 26
- vigilance, 184, 212, 225
- villain, 19, 127, 129
- vineyard, 148
- violet, 30, 31, 178
- virgin, 4, 10, 12, 22, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 87, 121
- virtues, 136, 143, 175
- virtuousness, 57, 79, 81
- vocation, 203
- voting, 44, 223
- vow, 170, 206
- W—
- wage, 52, 104, 168
- wagon, 31, 104
- wailing, 113
- Walmart, 52
- War
 - armaments, 34, 104, 195
 - armour, 119
 - army, 10, 17, 27, 28, 75, 76, 104, 121, 134, 154, 175, 184, 189, 202
 - battlefield, 17
 - Bothwell Bridge, 202
 - campaign, 17, 34
 - Chinese strategist, Sun-tzu, 140

- civil, 189, 198
- collateral damage, 110, 201
- combat mission, 46
- conquest, 31, 32, 220
- conquest/conquering, 12, 17, 32, 36
- council, 28
- Drumclog, battle of, 202
- Greek-Persian, 17
- just
 - casualties, 191, 201
 - criteria, 189, 190, 201, 202, 226
 - discriminatory, 201, 226
 - non-combatants, 201, 226
 - proportional, 191, 201, 226
- major, 152
- male mortality, 66
- military campaign, 17, 28, 34, 35, 36, 83
- mortality, 66
- occupation of territory, 25, 195
- offensive action, 190, 204
- para-military training, 195
- prisoner, 221
- surrender of Nazis, 193
- truce, 18
- Truce of God, 201
- war, 8, 16, 24, 53, 135, 147, 190, 199, 215, 217, 220
- warlord, 28, 36
- weapons
 - charcoal, sulfur, pitch, 18
 - spear, 111
 - sword, 56
 - weapons, 18, 188
- world, 110, 120, 124, 193, 195, 205
- water tunnel, 30
- Watergate, 112
- wealth, 28, 32, 34, 36, 64, 83, 84, 104, 110, 139, 141, 145, 149, 176, 177, 179, 200, 202, 219, 220, 223
- Week
 - attempts to overrule, 28
 - creation ordinance, 28, 204
 - fits no natural cycle, 28
 - five-day, 29
 - Mesopotamian artifact, claim, 28
 - not based on astronomical objects, 28
 - seven-day, 28
 - six-day, 29
 - ten-day, 29
- weeping, 115, 116, 142, 179, 180, 192, 193
- Welfare
 - care for a group, 50, 87, 90, 171, 186, 220, 221, 222, 223, 227
 - care for a person, 90, 95, 103, 117, 165, 166, 167, 222
 - God's provision, 84
 - government program, 6, 26, 79, 162, 223
- Westminster
 - Assembly, 43
 - Confession of Faith, 6, 56, 87, 97, 101, 218, 219, 221
 - Larger Catechism, 190
 - Shorter Catechism, 6, 36, 149
- whistleblower, 89
- whooping cough, 163
- whore, 35
- widow, 77, 121, 166, 200
- wife, 4, 12, 35, 37, 38, 41, 45, 48, 51, 54, 55, 56, 60, 61, 65, 66, 69, 76, 77, 78, 139, 213
- wilderness, 4, 165
- Wisdom
 - Biblical, 41, 44, 61, 144, 188, 212, 221
 - human
 - applied, 19, 33, 41, 43, 44, 46, 72, 121, 142, 163, 171, 172, 173, 183, 185, 205, 222, 223, 227
 - civil magistrate, 143, 185, 219, 221, 222
 - failure, 36, 39, 40, 47, 85, 161, 163, 166, 225
 - pagan, 161
 - virtue, 136
- witchcraft, 100
- Witness
 - false, 55
 - in court, 54, 137
 - to Christ, 193, 194
 - to crime, 89
 - to execution, 188
 - to God's truth, 24, 194, 225
- Wittenberg, 211
- Women
 - anti-woman, 46
 - chattel, treated as, 46, 69, 78, 106
 - died in childbirth, 66
 - disposable, 61, 76
 - empowerment movements, 62
 - enslaved, 62
 - treated as sub-human, 78
- wood, 31, 100, 147
- worker, skilled, wage, 104, 110
- worldview, 23, 40, 99, 129, 130, 225, 229
- Worms, Diet of, 98
- worry, 150, 154, 186
- Worship
 - adoration of God, 216
 - and discipline, marks of true church, 212, 219
 - corruptions, 219
 - delight in, 211
 - Directory for the Public Worship of God, 208, 210, 211
 - elements, 211
 - false, 149, 197, 224
 - family, 132
 - free exercise, 228

- liturgy, 210
 meditation, 211
 mid-week, 135
 not mere human compositions as praise, 155
 of self, 149
 praise to God, 2, 6, 8, 101, 148, 155, 191, 193, 206, 211, 216
 private, 116
 regulative principle, 207, 208, 211, 212
 tribute to God, 209
 true, 52, 103, 149, 206, 208, 210, 211, 216
 Wycliffites, 36
—X—
 Xenophon, 32, 33
 Xerxes
 Xerxes, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 21, 23, 31, 32, 35, 36, 39, 49, 59, 62, 64, 83, 88, 129, 139
 xshayârshâ, 10
 xshâyathiya, 10
—Y—
 Yemen, 14
—Z—
 Zaphenath-paneah, 87
 Zargos Mountains, 15
 zeal, 95
 Zeresh, 21, 136, 137, 144, 147, 148, 175
 Zerubbabel, 16, 63, 65, 126
 Zion, 171
 Zodiac
 fish, 99
 zodiac, 99
 Zoning
 buffer zones, 52
 bylaws, 202
 Zoroaster, 16
 Zoroastrianism, 36, 38, 46, 67, 71, 72, 105, 115, 185, 190
—א—
 אֲדוֹן - lord/master, 45
 אֶחָדָּשָׁר פָּגִי - satraps, 19
—ב—
 בִּית - daughter, 64
 בֶּן - descendent, 64
 בָּעַל - lord/master, 45
 בַּת - daughter, 64
—ג—
 גִּין - judgement, 42
 גֶּד - edict, 19, 33, 76
 גֶּת - edict, 42
—ה—
 הִינדוּ - hindu, 13, 19
 הֶמְהָה - noise, 171
 הֶמְוֹן - noise, 171
 הַנְּחָה - rest, 82
 הַפָּרְתִּימִים - nobles, 19
—ו—
 וָיִל - army, 27
 וְהָרִים - nobles, 19
 וְהָרָם - devoted to destruction to, 200
—ז—
 זֹב - good day, greeting, 192, 203, 207
 זֹבְתָה - good appearance, 65
 זִעָם - decree, 19
—כ—
 כֶּרְפָּס - cotton, Persian loan word, 19, 30
 כִּשְׁוֹר - advisable, 181
 כֶּתֶר - headdress, 82
—מ—
 מְדִינָה - district, 14
 מַלְכוּת - royal, 137
 מְרֻאָה - lovely, 65
 מִשְׁפָּט - edict, 19
—נ—
 נְדִיבִי - nobles, 19
 נִיחָה - rest, 204
 נִחָה - rest, 82
 נִשְׁאַה - win favour, 139
—ס—
 סוּס - horse, 186
—ע—
 עָבַר - cross over, 134
 עָם - people, 29
—פ—
 פֶּתֶגֶם - decree, 19
—צ—
 צָר - enemy, 168
—ר—
 רֶכֶשׁ - horse, 186
—ש—
 שָׁבַת - rest, 204
 שׁוּשָׁן - Susa, 15
 שָׂרִי - prince, 27
 שָׂרִי - prince, 108
 שָׂרִי - prince, 27
—ת—
 תְּכַתֵּב - writing, 213