

# Let's Worship God

20th-25th August 2018

Esther



Esther

# Esther

## **Monday - Esther 6:14 - 7:6 - It All Comes Down to This!**

We've had plots and plans, strategies and schemes. We've sat on the edge of our seats, watching to see if the Jews can escape certain destruction. Survival rests on a knife edge: it all comes down to this!

Like all the best stories, ours has a hero. Esther is much more than a pretty face; she's also smart and courageous. She has shown skill in reeling Ahasuerus in and shrewdness in playing her cards close to her chest. Her plan seems to be working and the king has taken the bait. So far so good... yet none of that matters if Esther falls at the final hurdle.

Now that she's reeled Ahasuerus in, it's time to put her cards on the table. What a nail-biting prospect! This might just be the very last thing she ever does. What's going to happen when this savvy queen reveals her secret to the savage king? Esther is perceptive enough to realise that everything depends one thing and one thing only. Has she or hasn't she found favour in the king's sight? (v3) It's really that simple. If the answer is yes, the Jews can be saved. If the answer is no, Esther's funeral will be the first of many.

Ahasuerus' reaction shows that Esther had indeed found favour in his sight. Of course we've known that ever since she won the beauty contest in chapter 2. She was beautiful, she was smart, she was courageous. In other words, she was perfectly equipped by God to be the saviour his people needed "for such a time as this" (4:14).

Esther is a saviour worth celebrating. Yet, we mustn't forget that her heroic actions could only earn a temporary deliverance. The infinitely greater problems of sin and divine judgement remained the gravest threat of all. Yet that should make us celebrate her even more, because she points us to Jesus, the ultimate saviour. He is upright, wise, and committed to our deliverance. He is perfectly equipped to be the saviour we need.

### **Questions**

1. In what ways was Esther like Jesus, the ultimate saviour?
2. In what ways was Esther different?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Give thanks for how God perfectly equipped Jesus to deliver his people from the gravest threat of all.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 55 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# Esther

## **Tuesday - Esther 7:7 - A Taste of What's to Come**

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

Let's be honest: there are some parts of Scripture that can seem rather far-fetched. The very notion of every knee bowing before Jesus Christ is surely one of them. Our world is hostile to Christ. TV shows use him as the butt of their jokes. Lobbyists condemn his word as an oppressive relic of the past. Political leaders wield the levers of power in the fight to cast off his authority.

I live in a country that has put key ethical issues to a public vote; not once, but twice in recent years. The result was conclusive on both occasions: my nation refuses to submit to the clear commands of Jesus Christ. It has been sickening to watch preening politicians joining cheering crowds as they have celebrated such wicked defiance. Imagine seriously suggesting that these lobbyists and politicians who rebel against Christ will one day bow the knee before him. It beggars belief! Yet, there it is in black and white.

Today we see a verse that helps us believe. Haman despised the one true God. He was an unimaginably wicked man who set his face against the Almighty and set his fury against the Almighty's people. He was a powerful man, perhaps more powerful than anyone alive today. Imagine being in Susa back in chapter 3. Imagine predicting that one day Haman would bow before one of the Jews and desperately plead for his life. No-one would believe you! And yet, here he is.

This is a taste of what's to come. Presidents and prime ministers, journalists and lobbyists; all will bow the knee before the Lord Jesus Christ. If you haven't yet bowed, you need to do so before it's too late. If you have bowed before Christ, you need to rejoice that you're on the winning side.

### **Questions**

1. Who is the one person you cannot imagine bowing before Jesus Christ?
2. Some people will bow joyfully, others will bow because they have no choice. What about you?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Thank God for this taster of what is to come. Pray that he would help you to believe that Jesus Christ will defeat his enemies.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 56 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# Esther

## **Wednesday - Esther 7:8-10 - Rough Justice**

Building bombs is not an advisable endeavour. Just in case you need convincing, consider the Wisconsin man who recently plotted a terrorist attack. He had everything an aspiring bomb maker could possibly need: chemicals, timers, and instructions on how to prepare deadly explosives. Sadly for him, but thankfully for the general public, he never completed his murderous project; a premature explosion left him buried under what was left of his homemade lab. The bomb that he had so carefully assembled literally blew up in his face.

Today's passage is an explosive one, but not in the way Haman intended. This wicked man had spent a long time putting his holocaust together. The King was on board, the date was set-all he had to do was light the fuse and watch the carnage unfold. Except, what this master strategist didn't anticipate was that the Queen had a bombshell of her own.

Just a few hours earlier, Haman had been putting the finishing touches on his plot. In a furious overreaction, he had a 75 foot gallows built on which to display his defeated enemy's corpse. Little did he know that his vindictiveness would blow up in his own face. As Esther revealed her true identity, God worked in Ahasuerus' heart. The most powerful man on the planet was led to feel pity for the Jews... and frenzied hatred for the architect of their despair. There was to be no escape from justice. The only question that remained: how was Haman to be dispatched? You've got to love the irony. At the very moment it was needed most, there was a gallows ready for use. Psalm 7:16 sums it up perfectly: "His mischief returns on his own head, and on his own skull the violence descends."

What's the lesson in all this? It's simple. God will thwart his enemies. It doesn't matter how clever, well resourced, influential, or determined they are. He can use their very weapons to seal their doom. Esther's God always wins.

### **Questions**

1. Satan conspired to have Jesus crucified. How did God use his own weapon against him?
2. What does Haman's fate teach us about God's justice?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Give thanks for how God always wins. Pray that he would remind you of that as you see powerful enemies rebelling against him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 57 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# Esther

## Thursday - Esther 8:1-8 - Getting the Job Done

It worked! The plot has been exposed, the baddie is dead, Esther has saved the day! But don't celebrate too soon: the sword is still hanging over God's people. Haman's body may be broken but his legacy is very much intact. His holocaust remains the law of the land. Esther's job is only half done. Somehow she and Mordecai must deal with Haman's decree. That's easier said than done. Haman may have been the architect, but the massacre was ordered in Ahasuerus' name. In the Persian Empire, the King's word is everything. So absolute is his rule that nothing can ever annul his pronouncements. Esther can't do it. Mordecai can't do it. Even the King himself can't do it! (v8; also see Daniel 6:8) Sure, Haman's got his comeuppance, but that'll be scant consolation when armed mobs kick down Jewish doors. But what's the solution? The problem seems insurmountable.

Yet, if there's one thing we learn from the Book of Esther it's that God doesn't start a job and then leave it unfinished. Whatever happens, God will see it through. But how? The answer is a surprising one.

Ahasuerus doesn't come out of this chapter well. Sure, he's very fond of Esther and owes his life to Mordecai, but as for the rest of the Jews...let's just say he's not terribly concerned whether they live or die. That may seem like bad news, but in God's providence, that is exactly what the situation demanded. The King was so indifferent to the Jewish plight that he let Esther and Mordecai completely take control. He could banish the problem from his mind; they could have the blank cheque they needed. Everyone wins!

The Jewish saviours could write anything they wanted and it would be legally binding. You would think Ahasuerus would have learned from the last time, but God ensured he didn't. The true King of Kings used this folly to secure his people's deliverance. The true King gets the job done. Let Esther convince you of that.

### Questions

1. Ahasuerus did not learn from his foolish mistake (3:10). Why was this good news?
2. God doesn't leave a job half finished. What does this mean for us? (Romans 8:29-30)

### Prayer Points

1. Praise God because he does not leave a job half finished. Rejoice in what that means for you, your church, and the world.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### Memory Verse

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 58 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# Esther

## Friday - Esther 8:9-17 - Spot the Difference

As you read through today's passage perhaps you thought, "I've heard this before." You're not wrong. Chapter 8 sounds suspiciously like chapter 3. Many of the sentences are reproduced almost word for word (compare 3:12-15 with 8:9-14). This isn't a case of lazy writing though: the similarities make a serious point.

By repeating himself, the writer is demonstrating that Esther's decree was to go forth with just as much force as Haman's. Haman's decree had seemed like the last word on the matter: the Jews would be destroyed and that was that. Yet, by describing this decree in the same way, the writer is telling us that Mordecai, not Haman, would have the final say.

The similarities aren't the only key thing about this passage. The differences are just as important. By using such similar language, the writer is practically begging us to play a game of spot the difference. Let's do that now.

Take Mordecai for example. When Haman's edict was unveiled, he looked a wretched sight. He wore sackcloth and ashes in order to reflect his agonising turmoil (4:1). Passers-by would have known: this is a man who has hit rock bottom. Yet, in 8:15, Mordecai is a changed man, with a wardrobe to match. The sackcloth is gone; the resplendent royal robes are in. It couldn't be more obvious: this is a man transformed. It wasn't just Mordecai. Every Jewish home had once reverberated to a soundtrack of weeping, wailing, and despair (4:3). But not any more! Now they were known for their gladness and joy (8:16-17).

This isn't just a neat literary trick. The writer wants us to compare the bleakness of chapters 3 & 4 with the incredible joy of chapter 8. There can only be one explanation: the incredible saving work of God himself.

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,  
that my glory may sing your praise." (Psalm 30:11-12)

## Questions

1. Think about your own story of salvation. Is it similar to Mordecai's?
2. What is God's ultimate purpose in sending trials and deliverance? (Psalm 30:12)

## Prayer Points

1. Praise God for the transformation he has brought about in you and pray that you would praise him more for this.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## Memory Verse

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 59 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# Esther

## **Saturday - Esther 9:1-10 - The Tables Have Turned**

I'll admit it: this isn't an easy passage to stomach. It seems nasty, vindictive, and bloody. We'll think more about the violence next time, but for now, try not to let it bother you. If you fixate on the bloodshed, you'll miss an absolute gem.

Notice the second half of v1: "On the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred." I like the vividness of the NIV's wording here: "the tables were turned".

Doesn't that sum up the Book of Esther in a nutshell? The victims became the victors (v1). The hunters became the hunted (v2). The frightened were suddenly feared (v3). For most of the book, the man who controls the levers of power is a spiteful, genocidal madman. By the close of the book, it's the champion of God's people who's pulling the strings. How could this be? We know the answer by now! Not once, not even in the darkest hour, did God cease to be in control. He was never taken by surprise and his plan was never under threat. This radical reversal was accomplished by his sovereign will.

Many centuries may have passed and God is still on the throne. His people still face the catastrophes of furious opposition, malicious propaganda, and terminal weakness. Yet God is still the one who turns tables.

One woman who knew this was Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:51-52). What prompted her to say what she did? The coming of the Messiah of course! She knew Jesus would be the one to reverse the course of human history: he would bring Satan to his knees, and he would restore his people to what they were made to be.

Christ's work has been decisive, but he is not finished yet. His enemies have not yet met their ultimate fate, his people have not yet been fully exalted. That will happen though: Christ is coming back and he's going to turn the tables once and for all.

### **Questions**

1. How should we feel about the day when Jesus comes back to turn the tables?
2. What will happen to YOU when Christ returns?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Pray that God would help you to always remember that Jesus Christ is coming back.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

### **Memory Verse**

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!  
Psalm 124:6-7

**Praise: Psalm 60 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that  
Ezra read from  
the book of the Law  
day after day  
and that  
the people of God  
were filled with joy!**

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If you have any queries please contact - [admin@rpglobalalliance.org](mailto:admin@rpglobalalliance.org)