

Esther: The Plan to Save the Jews (Ch. 8)

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Verses 1-2

Esther was given the house of Haman (property, goods, servants, livestock, etc.), who in turn appointed Mordecai over it, as he was also given the king's signet ring, giving him great authority, just as Haman was given (3:10). All that belonged to Haman was now under the control of the one he tried to destroy.

Verses 3-8

Though Haman had been killed, the decree to annihilate the Jews remained, and needed to be revoked or overridden somehow. Esther again approaches the king, less fearfully this time, and makes a case to undo Haman's decree. A revocation would have been ideal since it would have resulted in no bloodshed, but the Persian rule that every law is unalterable caused a potential problem here (cf. 1:19; Dan. 6:8). Something needed to be done to counteract the prior law without revoking it.

Verses 9-14

In the month of Sivan (May – June), still 9 months away from Adar, the decree to counteract Haman's decree goes out. Here the efficiency of the Persian postal system is described (cf. 2:19-22).

This appears to be God working yet again, in that not only Haman is killed, but all enemies of the Jews (who dared fight against them) would fall as the result of the Jews protecting themselves. One has to wonder why a decree was needed for someone to defend their own life. Perhaps the idea had a twofold purpose in providing encouragement to the Jews because it was a royal decree telling them to protect themselves, and secondly to warn those who were planning to obey the first decree that the Jews were now supported by the king, and perhaps going against them was no longer the wise choice (cf. 8:17).

This reveals a problem with the Persian custom that laws were “forever” since a person would be disobeying the law if they chose not to attack the Jews, yet they would most likely be defeated if they chose to obey it, as well as lose the favor of the king by going up against the people he now seemed to favor.

Verses 15-17

Mordecai makes an appearance in Shushan as the new “right-hand man” of the king. The city was once perplexed about what was happening (3:15), but now rejoiced to see Mordecai instead of Haman. It appears that it wasn't only Jews who were happy to see Mordecai in this position, and is likely related both to the corrupt character of Haman and the conduct of Mordecai exemplified while he sat in the king's gate for five years.

The Jews had “light,” probably a reference to their new found hope that with a Jew in a position of power, all was not lost. They even celebrated in anticipation of their victory, showing the efficacy of the decree in encouraging the people that God had heard them, and to have faith that He was working things out. So much was this revived faith and hope that “many of the people” proselytized to Judaism. No doubt some of these conversions were not whole-hearted, that is, people converted for the sole purpose of escaping death, but based on all that had happened, certainly some saw providence at work, and honestly turned to the religion that worshiped the true and living God (cf. Jer. 10:10).