

In a Strange Land - Esther

Esther to the Rescue

Foundation

Bible passage : Esther 5-10

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-09-11

These chapters tell how despite the previous setback Haman kept trying to destroy Mordecai and the Jews but failed. Esther risked her life by going to the King uninvited but, as Mordecai pointed out, if anyone found out that she was a Jew then she would die anyway.

Esther's plan: Her plan was first to get the ear of the King but also to draw in Haman. Therefore she planned a feast for the three of them and Haman went full of his importance at being invited to a meal with the King and Queen. An interesting point is that whereas the Bible stresses how Esther obeyed her uncle as a child and even as Queen yet now he did everything she ordered him to do (4.17)

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” (Prov 19.21)

God's plan: Whilst Esther was working away the King had a sleepless night during which he discovered that Mordecai had helped saved his life but never been rewarded. In the morning Haman's pride is turned to loathing as he has to lead Mordecai around the city honouring him. Haman's wife rightly recognised that there was a greater force than Haman at work (6.13).

Esther's plan: Esther confronted the King (7.1-6) but only when she had buttered him up enough. Her plan worked, aided by Haman's folly and the King was so angry that Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.



A traditional Purim celebration for children in 2016.

Vengeance: What happened next seems difficult because the Jews were not just rescued but took revenge on those who wanted to attack them. Behind it lay the fact that the King believed he could not revoke his former command. Therefore the Jews were allowed to fight, but they did far more than just defend themselves and instead killed those who hated them. The result was that for some time the threat to the Jews was removed. Despite this outcome Christians see things differently because of the example and teaching of Jesus. He told people to turn the other cheek and prayed for the forgiveness of those who put him to death. In the Bible and later history we can see how when the early Christians did not fight back against persecutors some of those persecutors, including Saul of Tarsus (Paul) came to faith.

Purim: The rescue happened around 508BC. It is still celebrated by Jews today as the feast of Purim. During this time people exchange gifts of food and drink, they give to the poor, eat a celebratory meal, read aloud the scroll of Esther in the synagogues and say special prayers. Today, much like Christmas, some of the festivities seem to have little to do with the reason behind it.



Through Esther's plan and courage the hatred against her people was thwarted, because God was at work.