

God Makes a Young Girl a Queen to Save His People from Being Destroyed
A 5-Day Family Devotional through Esther
-- Grant Van Leuven

Day 1

Introduction – A Very Rich King of a Very Big Kingdom

If you are a young girl, you probably like stories about princesses and queens wearing beautiful clothes and living in palaces. Do you?

This is a true story about how God used a beautiful Jewish girl named Hadassah to save her people from being completely destroyed.

For a while, Hadassah had a sad life. Her parents had died. She lived with her older cousin, Mordecai, who watched over her. And she, Mordecai, and her people, the Jews, were in exile in Persia. Do you know what exile means? It means that they were taken out of their homeland and forced to live in a country not their own. In fact, it was God's punishment on the Jews for not worshipping and serving Him as the only true God. But it was a punishment that was to lead them to repent and turn back to God, as He had chosen them to be His special people.

However Satan wanted to destroy God's chosen people. He has been trying to do so ever since the fall of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3:15, right after the fall, God promised that the seed of the woman, that is, Jesus and all those who would believe in Him, would crush the head of the serpent, that is, Satan and all the wicked who serve him. But God also said that, while the woman's seed will win the struggle, the serpent would bruise the heel of Jesus and His people. This means that Satan is always trying to hurt the church. We see this spiritual battle happening throughout the history of God's people. And in Hadassah's day, we see an evil man named Haman hating the Jews and trying to get them all killed! Haman had much influence with the king of Persia.

At first, it seemed like Satan was winning. For instance, Hadassah was taken away from her cousin, Mordecai, and forced to live in the king's palace. But God planned to use this young girl in an influential position to stop the bad things that Satan was going to try and do to the Jews through the evil man Haman. We will see how God put Hadassah where she was so that He would use her to stop terrible things from happening to His people. She would need to be very brave, and trust the God of her fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Esther in Persia (Esther 1-2)

The Persian kingdom was a vast empire that had taken over the whole known world. King Ahasuerus ruled over 127 provinces – over many other kings and peoples he had conquered. Let me read to you about how rich and powerful he had become.

[Read about the splendor of the court, 1:4-7.]

Can you imagine such a party with his leaders? It lasted for 180 days. That's six months! And then he had another party for all the people, great and small, another seven days! That's a lot of food!

Did you notice there were all kinds of beautiful decorations? Let's read verse six again, and see if you can keep track of all the different hangings and their colors. [Read verse 1:6.]

What do you think that such a party would make you think about this king? You would be reminded about how powerful and rich he was to be able to spend that much time and money celebrating, right? You would remember that everyone in the known world looked to him for leadership, permission to do things, and safety. And you would never want to make him cross with you. Even God's people the Jews were under his control as exiles in his land. Well, this very important and powerful king who ruled over all the lands was looking for a new wife. And he could choose any young lady he wanted, who would then be his queen. And whom do you think he chose? We'll find out tomorrow.

Day 2

The Rise of Esther

The men who spent time with King Ahasueras in his palace court encouraged him to look for a new queen from amongst all his empire. Remember, this empire covered 127 provinces including many different nations and many different kinds of people. Take a look at this map to see how much territory it covered:



Do you see the word “Egypt” on the map? This was a great kingdom once. But now look how small that kingdom looks as part of the whole very large Persian Kingdom, marked by the white line on the map! Do you remember Egypt mentioned in the Bible? Who was ruler? Pharaoh. And who did God use to save the Hebrew slaves from Pharaoh through the Red Sea? Moses. And where did God lead His people? The Promised Land. Do you see the small light green area marked out above Egypt to the right of the Mediterranean Sea as named on this map? It says Judah, and that’s the Promised Land. That’s Israel. That’s where God made Israel a great nation once. What king did God use to do this? David. And who was his son that next was king when Israel was most grand and all the world wanted to know him? Solomon. But now in our story, this kingdom is no more and the people are taken out of Israel into Persia because they disobeyed God and broke His covenant. They turned away their hearts from Him and His Law unto false gods. So God punished them after warning them to turn through His prophets. And King Ahasueras rules over Egypt, Israel, and all those lands you see in the white line.

As the young virgins who were collected from all these provinces of the enormous Persian kingdom, King Ahasueras had many beautiful ladies to choose from to be his wife. It might have seemed to Hadassah that her chances were not very good that she would be preferred over the other girls, and that she would likely turn out to be anything more than a concubine. Do you

think you would be scared if you were her? Being taken away from your older cousin and living with strangers in the king's palace. Watching all these beautiful young ladies being brought in from all over the Persian Empire. Doubtful that you would be chosen. Maybe you would be confused why this was happening to you, and sad.

But here we see God's hand over the circumstances by giving Hadassah favor in the eyes of the king! Let's read about it.

[Read 2:8-9]

Notice that Hadassah, who changed her name to Esther to keep her Jewish name hidden, found special favor with Hegai, the keeper of the women. She pleased him. I imagine it was because she was wise, respectful, helpful, and patient. She showed what it was like to trust God even in unfamiliar and scary situations where she didn't know anyone. God gave her favor in the eyes of the man who ruled over her and the other ladies and was responsible to get them ready to present to the king to choose one of them to be his queen. Do you know what favor means? It means choice, preference, liking. And we will see that Esther finds favor with the king too!

Let's read about this.

[Read 2:12-18]

First, notice that the ladies went through a twelve month beauty treatment before they even met the king! The first six months, with the oil of myrrh to make their skin very smooth and bright. Kind of like using special crèmes like you do to keep your hands from being dry and scratchy looking. And the next six months they were treated with sweet odors, among other lovely things, to make them smell very pretty. Kind of like when your crèmes also have special smells in them, or when mommy uses perfumes. What kinds of smells do you like in your crèmes that you use on your skin? What do you like about using these hand crèmes? Can you imagine treating your skin like this every day for a year? That's how important the king was. The ladies needed to be prepared to be as lovely as possible before even meeting him, looking and smelling beautiful from a year of treatment. And all the ladies would have been impressive. But we see in verse fifteen that Esther finds favor in the sight of all those who looked upon her. The Lord made her extra special.

But most importantly, Esther found favor with King Ahasuerus, who chose her to be his queen! This means she would be the most important woman in the whole Persian Empire and have more influence with him than most men.

What else did the text say about how the king looked at Esther? Not only did he have favor her, or prefer her over the other women, but it says that he loved her. This would prove to be very important, because Esther would have to approach the king in a way that would put her life at risk.

Day 3

A Threat to the Jews (Esther 3-5)

[Read 3:7-13]

Here we see the seed of the serpent trying to destroy the seed of the woman, and the need for someone like Esther to be placed by God in the middle to stop it. Haman wanted to kill all Jews because he hated Esther's older cousin, Mordecai. And he tricked King Ahasueras into making a decree that the people throughout the land had permission to kill all the Jews until no one was left! Here is where the story of Esther gets really scary. Satan is again trying to destroy God's covenant people through whom our Lord Jesus Christ would come, and he is trying to prove God a liar about the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob about a great nation of many people. At this point, Esther didn't even know about Haman's wicked plan.

Mordecai and all Israel Mourn and Fast

[Read 4:1-3]

Mordecai and the Jews' response of fasting and mourning was the appropriate response to their situation. It was similar to how Nehemiah responded when enemies tried to stop him from building the wall back in Jerusalem at another time. They turned to God for deliverance, and did not try to deliver themselves. Do you know what fasting is? It is when you don't eat food and maybe don't do other things so that you can focus in your prayers and cries before God for deliverance and mercy. It is being humble before God and recognizing our dependence on Him alone. It is asking God to hear us in a special way, especially when we do so with other Christians at the same time dealing with a sin we're all involved in as a people. It is a time to hear God in a special way. And they put ashes on their head, and humble clothes, and expressed great sadness. When God's people do this in Scripture, and are true in their hearts, He hears them.

Next, Mordecai sends word to Esther about the situation, because she can talk to the king to try and stop this terrible situation.

Esther Asks for Information

[Read 4:5-9]

Esther and Mordecai plan how to try and appeal to the king. *[4:10-17]*

In verse 11, what is Esther's concern? She could die if the king does not extend mercy for coming unannounced. For she was not to approach him without his calling for her, and if she did and he did not extend his scepter, she would be killed!

In verse 14, Mordecai's words to Esther are very important for us all to consider in our own lives: "... and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Clearly, this book shows us that Esther was put in this place by God for such a time as this. When we find ourselves in scary times, we need to think about how God must be doing something we can't understand but is important. Think of Joseph. What happened to him? He was sold into slavery. He went to prison for doing good. But at the end of Genesis, he tells his

brothers that God planned it all to put him in a place of leadership – the prince of Egypt, to save God’s people from seven years of famine. It is a similar situation here, but this time with a lady, Esther, now queen of Persia.

This also makes us think of what Paul writes in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *his* purpose.” Still, this takes courage. Just like God told Joshua to be courageous when he led the Jewish people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Just like Jesus tells us not to be afraid, because He will be with us to the end of the world.

We see Esther is very courageous in her situation in verse 16: “... if I perish, I perish.” Esther is not afraid to approach the king. She is not afraid to die. Why? Because she trusts in God’s providence that whatever happens, God is in control and will use this for the good of His people and His own glory. And perhaps He will deliver her. Just like when God delivered Daniel from the lion’s den.

What do you think will happen? Will Esther die? Will all the Jews die?

Let’s find out.

[Read 5:1-8]

In verse 2, After properly preparing, Esther once again finds favor with the king. How did he show her favor? By extending his scepter to her. God once again guides all of this in a special way. Esther also shows wisdom by asking to give the king a dinner with Haman alone to expose his terrible plan.

How do you think the king will respond? Will he be mad at Haman for causing him to make a decree against the Jews when he finds out Esther is a Jew too? Or, will he be mad at Esther for challenging his plan? We’ll find out tomorrow.

Day 4

Reversals of Fortune (Esther 6:1-9:19)

Who will win the battle? God's people, or Satan? Will Haman get his way and kill the Jews? Or will Esther be able to persuade the king to save them?

[Read 7:1-10]

And we see here how God uses even the wicked for the day of their own judgment, with Haman being hung on the gallows he himself had made for Mordecai.

Further Reversals

Haman's Decree Reversed (8:1-17)

Do you know what it means that the king gave the ring that Haman wore to Mordecai, Esther's cousin? It meant he gave the power to advise and make decisions for the king to Mordecai. Now he was in a position of authority to help his people, just like his younger cousin, Queen Esther.

Notice that Esther was brave once again. She had taken out Haman, but she still needed to try and do something about the decree that on a certain day everyone would be allowed to kill the Jews. So she comes before the throne of Haman again unannounced. She was brave once again. Do you think the king received her again? And how would he show her favor again to approach the throne? Extending his scepter to her.

Notice that the law of the Medes and Persians did not allow even the king to change his own decree. He could not stop it. However, he had Esther and Mordecai send a decree for the Jews to be able to defend themselves. They did not have to just sit there and be killed. They could fight back when attacked. The Jews still needed to use means of defending themselves as they were given freedom to do so.

How did the Jews respond throughout the provinces when they got the news that they were allowed to defend themselves? With great joy! They had cried out in sadness and fasting to God, and He heard their cries and they were happy. They even had a feast.

You should make sure not to miss something very important that is noted in verse 17. Many people in the land BECAME Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

What does fear mean? It means to respect, to honor, and in this sense to be friends. Many of the people feared the Jews, because they saw that God once again was delivering them from the threat of a mighty kingdom. Just like God had delivered His people out of Egypt and many other nations and fought for them, here again God has destroyed the wicked Haman, given Mordecai his place of influence with the king, and given the ear of the king to his wife, Queen Esther. So it was so obvious that God was with the Jews, that many feared them and became Jews themselves.

God used these events not only to protect His people, but to draw others in to His people. And how does one become a Jew? One can be born a Jew, but not actually be a Jew.

Paul writes in Romans 9:6-8, "For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

It is true that God brings much of those who have faith in Him through covenant children born into the church. But He never turns away from anyone born elsewhere who comes to Him seeking mercy and wants to be part of His people. Just like Rahab asked to be spared God's wrath and joined the people of Israel. Just like Ruth the Moabites came to Israel with Naomi to serve the one true God and take refuge under His wings. So any of the people in the Persian kingdom who wanted to trust in God because they feared Him, because they respected Him as the one true God when observing His mighty acts on behalf of His people, could come to Him.

Anyone who feared the Jews feared God and any who became a Jew became one by faith. They trusted in God. Just like Esther and Mordecai and the true Jews did. They did not trust in themselves, they had faith in God. And anyone who has faith in God, spiritually, becomes a true Jew. They become a child of Abraham, who was to become the father of many nations because He trusted God. Not because he was born a Jew. He was the beginning of God's people, and it began by His having faith in God.

Paul writes in Galatians 3:6-9, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Now God did use means to accomplish His purposes. He put Esther and Mordecai in their positions of power and influence with the king. And He enabled them to have courage and power in faith and use their positions to persuade the king to protect the Jews. But He also used their faith and trusting in His guiding hand to bring them to those positions of power, even when they didn't know how He would use them, but did wonder if they were put there for such a time as this.

So, Esther had Haman killed for his wickedness. But his sons are still alive, and they surely would be angry and want to seek revenge. And the day that had been decreed for anyone in the Persian kingdom to be allowed to try and kill the Jews was still coming near. And many did want to kill the Jews, because they hated God and served the kingdom of Satan. Now, the Jews have permission to defend themselves. What do you think will happen? Will the Jews lose? Will God's people be destroyed? Or, will God deliver them? We'll find out tomorrow.

Day 5

The Jews Avenged (9:1-16)

So will the Jews be able to survive the attacks? Or, will Haman's sons prevail? Will God deliver the Jews? Let's read about it.

[Read 9:1-17]

So the Jews defeated their enemies! God delivered them! He heard their cry, and gave them what they needed to protect themselves. God's people prevail over their persecutors. The seed of the woman again wins over the seed of the serpent.

Notice in verse 13 and 14 that Esther asks the king to hang Haman's ten sons. And he does. Haman's sons had already been killed in the battle. Why do you think she asked to have the sons hung up on the gallows? Who had them made? Their father. And for what purpose? To hang Mordecai in advance of killing all the Jews. So this was a visible sign that God's enemies will not succeed in trying to kill His people.

Here is a great blow against the seed of the serpent, that is, Satan, who wants to kill the seed of the woman, that is, Jesus and His people. We see how God uses Esther to protect His people. And when we look to Jesus on the cross, we must remember that He conquers death there for us, he nails it to the cross. He defeats our spiritual enemy, Satan himself, and the power of sin. And in His resurrection, we will be resurrected from death, and the power of sin and death will not be able to destroy us. We will be in the heavenly kingdom of King Jesus! And we will reign with Him, just like Esther and Mordecai reigned with King Ahasueras. Remember this when you find yourself in scary situations like Esther. Remember that God will use you in these situations for the advancement of His kingdom on earth. And even if we should die for our faith, Jesus has defeated death and we will rise and rule with Him. The most terrible enemy of God's people, death and Satan, have been conquered for us by Jesus! He has delivered us!

So, what do you think the Jews did after they won the battle and survived? Do you think they were happy? Do you think they wanted to celebrate and honor God for the victory?

Indeed they did! Let's read about it.

[Read 9:17-22]

Now, notice that Mordecai wanted this celebration to continue in the future. Why? So that their children would remember what happened? Why is that important? So that the children remember their God who was behind these events. To remember to cry out to Him for deliverance and know that He does deliver His people. And to thank and praise Him when He does.

And notice Esther uses her position of influence again by writing to the nations to confirm what Mordecai had sent out.

[Read 9:25-32]

There is a history of festivals and memorials in the covenant community for the sake of the seed of the woman to remember who they are – NOT the seed of the serpent. The Jews worshipped the one true God, and He delivered them once again by His mighty hand.

And God proved Himself with Esther yet again to be a God that saves His people from Satan's advances. Earlier, He saved them from Egyptian slavery. Every time they cried out in faith in the Promised Land, He saved them from foreign invaders. And now, using Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai, He saved them from the threat of annihilation during exile and captivity, all because they cried out to Him.

Just like the Jews celebrated the festival to remember God, they also worshipped Him to remember and serve Him and trust in Him to deliver them into heaven one day. We do the same thing today. We celebrate about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We remember all the benefits of being His children in faith. We are the seed of Abraham and we receive the promise God gave to Him. To be a spiritual nation of believers in God. And God has given us His psalms to worship Him and celebrate all He has done for our fathers before us, and for us now, and for our children and all who have fear of Him and want to become Christians. And these psalms sing about God's delivering us from our enemies through Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. Psalm 2 sings about this. It sings about how all nations and kings should trust in Jesus and obey Him. And it sings about how all who kiss Jesus, the Son of God, and trust in Him, are blessed.

Do you trust in Jesus for your salvation? To deliver you from sin and death? Let's sing about it!

[Sing Psalm 2]