

Last Sunday we considered how God's providence arranged for a Jewish woman to become the queen of Persia. Only God could cause such an unlikely result.

The Introduction to Esther from the ESV:

“The book of Esther never mentions God’s name, yet God clearly orchestrated all of its events. Esther, a Jew living among the exiles in Persia, became queen of the empire in about 480 B. C. Haman, a Persian official, sought to eradicate the Jewish minority, but God had prepared Esther, “for such a time as this” {4:14}, to save his covenant people. The book was written some decades later to document the origins of the Jewish observance of Purim, which celebrates Israel’s survival and God’s faithfulness. The author is unknown, but some believe it could have been Esther’s cousin, Mordecai, who is a key person in the book. Throughout the book we see God’s sovereign hand preserving his people, showing that everything is under his control.”

At the end of a 180-day session to plan for war against Greece, Ahasuerus, the king, wanted to show off Queen Vashti before a crowd of drunken men and hundreds of concubines. But Queen Vashti refused to obey the king's command and it so outraged Ahasuerus that on the advice of his most trusted wise men, he banished Vashti forever from his presence.

The wise men further suggested that beautiful women be brought in from all over the empire. They were put in the harem and given the best beauty treatments. When Esther appeared she was chosen.

Esther had been adopted by her cousin Mordecai when her parents died.

Mordecai had told Esther not to reveal to anyone that she was a Jew.

Mordecai was a minor government official who “sat at the king’s gate.”

This would make Mordecai a judge.

Haman was promoted to the office of Prime Minister and persuaded Ahasuerus to pass a law that required everyone to bow down before him when he passed by.

Mordecai refused to pay homage to Haman because, he said, he was a Jew. It was not that a Jew would not bow to anyone, but in the case of Haman it was an act of reverence or idolatry.

When Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew his racial prejudice took over and he manipulated Ahasuerus so that a law was passed to have all of the Jews in the empire executed on a certain day, 12 months in the future.

Haman is a pitiful figure obsessed with an unrealistic need for approval from everyone and given to bouts of deep depression.

While Esther and Mordecai have some good traits; Esther should not have been compromised to enter the king's harem, to become a concubine, and to contend for the role of queen. But this is one more case where God uses poor judgment to bring about His purpose.

However, Esther and Mordecai were aliens in an unfamiliar culture that was not at all friendly to the Jews. But in spite of any failing on their part this is how God was going to deliver the Jews from annihilation.

Later Esther is willing to die for her people, "If I perish, I perish!"

Without boasting; have you ever seriously considered what you would die for?

Intellectually, I believe that I would rather die than to deny my Lord Jesus; but then I am not being tortured nor is anyone in my family being threatened; at least not now.

As I said before the Book of Esther does not need a lot of commentary because it mostly explains itself.

Esther 4:1-3

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. ²He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. ³And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Mordecai learned of the plot to kill all of the Jews he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went into the streets of the citadel and loudly lamented and showed his grief.

But Mordecai was not allowed to come to the king's gate in sackcloth because it was against the law to do anything that might cause the king to become disturbed. Other Jews joined Mordecai throughout the empire to mourn the plot to kill all of the Jews. In the eastern culture mourning was loud; not quiet as people in western culture have learned to do.

There is no mention of God in the Book of Esther and there is no mention of prayer. Surely, believing Jews did pray, but there is no indication of that in the book.

There is a possibility that Mordecai and Esther were agnostic Jews. This would not be the first time that God used unbelievers to accomplish His purpose.

Esther 4-17

⁴ When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. ⁵ Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. ⁶ Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, ⁷ and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. ⁹ And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

¹² And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³ Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" ¹⁵ Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶ "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, **and if I perish, I perish.**" ¹⁷ Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Esther did not know of Haman's plot to kill the Jews. The women in the harem were largely protected from the outside world. Esther was able to communicate with Mordecai through one of the eunuchs assigned to her.

When Esther hears about Mordecai's condition she grieves for him. She sends Hathach {"the good one"} out to talk to Mordecai. She is given a copy of the edict being published throughout the empire. Mordecai tells Hathach to plead {urge} Esther to personally go before the king. The word used is a command. Mordecai commands Esther to go before the king.

Esther reminds Mordecai that the law designed to protect the king from intruders and assassins would mean that she would be put to death unless the king approved. And, she said, I have not been called to the king in thirty days!

Esther was not too sure of her status.

Mordecai's answer was rather harsh and to the point. Esther herself would not escape if she refused. Mordecai believed that help would come from another source, but she and her family would die.

Mordecai has a proper view of why Esther is queen:

And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Until this time Esther has been the submissive adopted daughter of Mordecai. Now Esther takes the role of queen and orders Mordecai to gather all of the Jews in Susa for a three-day fast. Esther would do the same with her maids. Again, no mention is made of prayer. However, throughout the Scripture fasting and prayer are found together; we can only guess.

After the three days of fasting Esther says she will ignore the law and go before the king uninvited: "... and if I perish, I perish."

The roles have been reversed; Mordecai had commanded Esther (8); now Esther commands Mordecai (17), and he obeys.

Esther 5:1-8

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. ²And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. ³And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." ⁴And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king." ⁵Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. ⁶And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ⁷Then Esther answered, "My wish and my request is: ⁸If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

King Ahasuerus was unpredictable. He was given to fits of anger and passion at which time no one in his presence was safe. Esther was not at all sure that Ahasuerus would accept her if she broke the law by coming uninvited into the king's court.

Esther was wise and carefully prepared to improve her chances of being accepted. She dressed in her royal apparel so the king would know that it was a matter of state business that brought her to the court.

When Ahasuerus saw her he was pleased and held out his scepter. The scepter was a thin rod about the height of the king and it has a knob on one end. The king held it in his right hand and it was a symbol of his authority.

Ahasuerus knew that she wanted something and he spoke before she could make her request. Ahasuerus used a cliché which no one took literally. "...up to half of my kingdom..." means I will grant you almost anything you ask for.

Esther respectfully followed protocol and invited the king and Haman to come to her quarters for a feast. Ahasuerus was delighted and called for Haman and they went to Esther's apartment.

Why didn't Esther ask for what she wanted; she had the king in a good mood.

We don't know except that it sure does build suspense.

Esther 5:9-14

⁹ And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹ And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. ¹² Then Haman said, "Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. ¹³ Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." ¹⁴ Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast." This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

Well, Haman was elated! Persian kings were extremely protective of their wives and it was a rare honor to be invited to a feast with the queen. But Haman's high spirits were crushed when he saw Mordecai at the gate in sackcloth. Mordecai would not even stand up much less bow before Haman.

Haman was consumed with rage. Depression and anger go hand in hand. He was denied his joy of being highly honored because of his hatred for Mordecai and the Jews.

When Haman got home he called for his wife and friends to relieve his anger.

Zeresh means “disheveled hair.”

Haman boasted of his wealth and of his personal greatness but he could not be happy as long as Mordecai refused to honor him.

Zeresh and his friends suggested that a 75 foot tall gallows {impaling pole} be erected on which to hang Mordecai.

In God’s marvelous providence we make choices freely.

We always do what we want to do.

Yet, a careful study of the Bible reveals that absolutely happens that is not under God’s sovereign control.

Here is where we are: A Jewish woman has been made queen of the Persian Empire! No one except Mordecai knows that she is a Jew.

Mordecai is Esther’s cousin and her adopted father. Mordecai reported a plot to kill Ahasuerus and the deed is recorded but Mordecai is not rewarded.

Haman, an Agagite man, is appointed prime minister and has a law passed that required everyone to bow before him when he passed by. Mordecai, the Jew, refused to bow in reverence to Haman and the racial hatred of Haman explodes!

Then Haman manipulates Ahasuerus and has a law passed that ordered the annihilation of all the Jews. Mordecai passes the edict to Queen Esther, who at great personal risk goes to the king uninvited.

Esther offers two feasts and Haman is invited but he can’t enjoy this honor because Mordecai the Jew will not reverence him.

In the Book of Esther Mordecai is called “Mordecai the Jew” five times [6:10; 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3].

Haman is called “the enemy of the Jews” five times [3:10; 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24]

The overall theme of Esther is Haman’s hatred of the Jews and God’s providential care of the Jews.

Esther 6:1-14

On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. ² And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." ⁴ And the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." ⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" ⁷ And Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. ⁹ And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'" ¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned." ¹¹ So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor."

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning^z and with his head covered. ¹³ And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him."

¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

Haman had ordered a ridiculously tall gallows {impaling pole} be erected on which he intends to hang Mordecai.

Somehow? "Somehow," the king is unable to sleep so he called for a boring government document to be read to him. The reader "just happened" to read the part which told of how Mordecai had exposed a plot to kill Ahasuerus five years ago! Nothing had been done to reward Mordecai's deed and it "just happened" that it was brought to the king's attention this very night.

It is almost sunrise and the king asks: "Who is in the court?"

And it “just happened” that Haman was coming in at that moment to get permission to execute Mordecai. But before Haman had a chance to speak, the king asked what should be done for the man that the king wished to honor.

Ahasuerus was thinking about Mordecai but “just happened” not to mention his name. Haman, in his egotistical pride, assumed that the king was referring to him and he devises a ceremony that would make him look equal to the king in glory and honor. Then Haman is ordered to perform this honor for Mordecai!

Esther 7:1-10

So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ² And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ³ Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. ⁴ For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king." ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?" ⁶ And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

⁷ And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. ⁸ And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." ¹⁰ And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.

At the second feast, with King Ahasuerus, Queen Esther, and Prime Minister Haman, the king asks Esther for the third time what she desired. Esther acknowledges the king's sovereignty and pleads for the life of her people. Ahasuerus is outraged and demands to know who is responsible for the threat against his queen. Esther points to Haman. Ahasuerus is so furious that he cannot speak and storms out to the palace garden.

While Ahasuerus is outside, Haman, realizing that his life is on the line, pleads for mercy from Esther. Just as the king is returning to the room, Haman, in his desperation, falls across queen's couch thus violating the king's harem.

It doesn't take Ahasuerus long to decide what to do with Haman. Haman is hanged on the “death tree” he had prepared for Mordecai.

Esther 8-10 {Read without commentary }

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. ² And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³ Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, ⁵ Esther rose and stood before the king. And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. ⁶ For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" ⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows,* because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. ⁸ But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

⁹ The king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day. And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. ¹⁰ And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, ¹¹ saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods, ¹² on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. ¹³ A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel.

¹⁵ Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

9 Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. ² The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples. ³ All the officials of the provinces and the satraps and the governors and the royal agents also helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them. ⁴ For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful. ⁵ The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them. ⁶ In Susa the citadel itself the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men, ⁷ and also killed Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha ⁸ and Poratha and Adalia and Aridatha ⁹ and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vaizatha, ¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they laid no hand on the plunder.

¹¹ That very day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was reported to the king. ¹² And the king said to Queen Esther, "In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men and also the ten sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled." ¹³ And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the Jews who are in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict. And let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows." ¹⁴ So the king commanded this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. ¹⁵ The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they killed 300 men in Susa, but they laid no hands on the plunder.

¹⁶ Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they laid no hands on the plunder. ¹⁷ This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁸ But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁹ Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the rural towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and as a day on which they send gifts of food to one another.

²⁰ And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, ²¹ obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, ²² as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³ So the Jews accepted what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. ²⁴ For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. ²⁵ But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.* ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, ²⁸ that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

²⁹ Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. ³⁰ Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, ³¹ that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. ³² The command of Queen Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

10 King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. ² And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? ³ For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

In Summary:

Immediately following Haman's execution King Ahasuerus did two things.

First, he granted to Esther all of Haman's wealth as compensation for the peril to which she had been exposed. By custom, the state confiscated the property of condemned criminals. The king could do with it as he wished. Haman had expected to plunder all of the wealth of the Jews [3:13], but instead his property was given to the Jewish queen.

Second, the signet ring, representing the authority of the king, was given to Mordecai. Mordecai became one of the “wise men” who counseled the king. Now Mordecai had the very power and authority that Haman had misused against the Jews. Esther appointed Mordecai over Haman’s estate.

Ahasuerus did three things to assure Esther that he was on her side:

He extended the scepter to indicate his approval.

He reminded her of what he had done; by turning Haman’s wealth over to her; by executing the enemy of the Jews, and promoting Mordecai to royal authority.

He gave his personal approval for a new royal edict in favor of the Jews.

Ahasuerus knew how to delegate authority.

He assigned the matter of saving the Jews to Esther and Mordecai.

Eight months before the order to kill the Jews was to go into effect a new edict was issued that allowed the Jews to defend themselves.

It is of note that when the day the Jews could defend themselves they did not go as far as the law allowed. Only men are reported as being killed and they did not confiscate the property of the men they killed.

Following the dreaded day of “ethnic cleansing” of the Jews, the Jews are delivered from their enemies.

Mordecai and Esther send letters to the Jews everywhere proclaiming an annual feast to be called “Purim” because of the Pur, the lot that was cast.

The Orthodox Jews still celebrate “Esther’s Day” with fasting. At sunset they gather in a synagogue for a reading of the Book of Esther. During the reading there is jeering and foot stomping at appropriate times.

On the next morning the story of the conflict with Haman’s tribe, Amalek, is read.

Cf. Exodus 17:8-16.

The rest of the day is spent feasting and exchanging gifts.