

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

RUTH & ESTHER

BOB WINTON



**GOSPEL
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INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

A. The Author and Date of Writing.

1. Neither the author of this book nor the time of its composition can be established with any certainty. The setting of the story, however, is some time during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1).
2. The author may be the same writer who penned the book of Judges, which makes Samuel a likely candidate. Ruth 4:7 indicates that a period of time had elapsed from the time the events occurred to the time they were recorded: "Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbour: and this *was a testimony* in Israel" (Ruth 4:7).
3. The genealogy of David at the end of the book brings the reader to the time of that great king and psalmist, which would permit Samuel to be considered the author.
4. The events of Ruth may have taken place during the time when Moab held sway over Palestine.
 - a. Some place the date for the story during the time when Ehud or Shamgar served as judge.
 - b. Josephus thought it was during the days of Eli.
 - c. Other Jewish writers said it was during the time of Ibzan, which they allege to be another name for Boaz; both Ibzan and Boaz lived in Bethlehem.
 - d. Usher places the events during the time of the Midianite oppression, which Gideon removed.
 - e. But all we can definitely know is that the story occurred during the three centuries of the Judges.

B. The Book of Ruth.

1. The book naturally spans the gap between Judges and 1 Samuel. The book of Joshua records the history of Israel's entrance into the land of Canaan; Judges depicts some of the great events during the time when Israel was guided by judges. Ruth details the story of Ruth and Naomi, and their struggles, providing us with an understanding of the daily features of the Jewish way of life under the judges. The book of 1 Samuel shows how Israel changed from the government under the judges to the ascension of their first king.
2. The Jews placed the book of Ruth in a section known as the *Magilloth*, which also included Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. Chronologically, it is more appropriately fitted between Judges and 1 Samuel.
3. The story of Ruth is one of the most beautiful stories in all the Bible. It is a love story with a happy ending. The book is unusual in that it bears the name of a woman, as in the book of Esther. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew and became a link in the royal lineage of Christ from a far country; Esther was a Jew in a far country who married into a Gentile family.
4. The Old Testament does not reveal a more beautiful, lovable person than Ruth; no lovelier story is found anywhere. Although we do not know how she looked, her character was truly beautiful and pure. Her love and devotion are fitting examples for us all.

C. Moab.

1. The Moabites descended from Moab, the son of Lot and one of his daughters (Gen. 19). Their land lay to the east of the Dead Sea: "On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law..." (Dt. 1:5). Although they were related to the Israelites, they refused Israel permission to travel through their land as they journeyed toward the land of promise.
 2. Moab connived with the Midianites in seducing Israel (Num. 22-24).
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3. The Moabites befriended David by allowing his parents to stay there while he was fleeing from Saul (1 Sam. 22:3-5). David's kinship with Moab through Ruth may have had an influence.

D. Bethlehem.

1. The principal part of the story takes place at Bethlehem. The city was formerly called Ephrath, thus Elimelech and his family were called Ephrathites by the author (Ruth 1:2).
 - a. Genesis 35:16,19: "And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour....And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which *is* Bethlehem."
 - b. Genesis 48:7: "And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same *is* Bethlehem."
 - c. Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting."
 - d. Matthew 2:1: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem."
 - e. Both David and Jesus were born there.
2. It is one of the oldest cities in Palestine (Gen. 35:19); it is located a few miles south of Jerusalem.

E. Ruth the Moabitess was an Ancestor of Jesus.

1. Judah begat Perez of Tamar who was a Canaanite (Gen. 38). Salmon, a descendant of Perez (also known as Phares); Salmon married Rahab, to whom was born Boaz (Booz); Boaz married Ruth, to whom Obed was born; Obed begat Jesse, who was the father of David.
 - a. Ruth 4:18-22: "Now these *are* the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."
 - b. Matthew 1:1-6: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias."
2. Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth: these three Gentile women are all mentioned by name in the genealogical list of Matthew 1, where women are not usually named. These three were in the Lord's lineage.
3. Ruth 4:18-22 identifies one of the important functions served by the book: it gives the ancestry of David, who was anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul as king in Israel (1 Sam. 16). The book also gives a clear picture of life during the that time period; it also sketches the life of one of the noblest women of the entire Old Testament period.

F. Lessons of the Book. [Adapted from Coffman, pp.329f].

1. It shows God's care, concern and blessing of people of every nation who love him.
 2. The book emphasizes God's providential help for all his people.
 3. God's providence and sovereignty are not limited by racial or national boundaries.
 4. The power of God is demonstrated in that he was able to use common people as the progenitors of great people. The lowly Moabitess became the great-grandmother of King David.
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WEIGHTS AND MEASURES IN THE BIBLE

Dry Capacity

Measure	System Equivalent	Approx. Metric Equivalents	Approx. U.S. Equivalents
log	1/4 Kab	0.33 l	20 ½ cu. in.
kab	4 logs	1.2 l	73 cu. in.
omer	7 logs, 1 4/5 kabs	2.4 l	146 ½ cu. in.
seah	3 1/3 omers, 6 kabs	7.3 l	1/4 cu. ft.
ephah	10 omers, 3 seahs	22 l	3/4 cu. ft.
lethech	15 seahs, 5 ephahs	110 l	3 3/4 cu. ft.
homer	10 ephahs, 2 lethech	220 l	7 3/4 cu. ft.

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WEIGHTS AND MEASURES IN THE BIBLE

Liquid Capacity

Measure	System Equivalent	Approx. Metric Equivalents	Approx. U.S. Equivalents
log	1/12 hin	0.33 l	1/12 gal.
kab	4 logs, 1/3 hin	1.3 l	1/3 gal.
hin	12 logs, 3 kabs	3.67 l	1 gal.
seah	6 kabs, 2 hins	7.33 l	2 gal.
bath	3 seahs, 6 hins	22 l	6 gal.
homer	10 bath, 60 hins	220 l	60 gal.

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WEIGHTS AND MEASURES IN THE BIBLE

Weight

Measure	System Equivalent	Approx. Metric Equivalents	Approx. U.S. Equivalents
gerah	½ shekel	0.5 g	1/50 oz.
beka	10 gerahs, ½ shekel	5 g	3/16 oz.
pim	1 ½ bekas, 3/4 shekel	7 g	1/4 oz.
shekel	2 bekas, 1 ½ pims	10 g	½ oz.
mina	75 pims, 50 shekels	500 g	1 lb.
talent	60 minas, 3000 shekels	30 kg	66 lbs.

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**WEIGHTS AND MEASURES
IN THE BIBLE**

Length Measure	System Equivalent	Approx. Metric Equivalents	Approx. U.S. Equivalents
finger (digit)	1/12 span	2 cm	3/4 in.
palm (handbreadth)	4 fingers, 1/3 span	7.5 cm	3 in.
span	12 fingers, 3 palms	22.25 cm	9 in.
gomedh	3 3/4 palms, 1 1/4 spans	30 cm	12 in.
cubit	6-7 palms, 2 spans	44.5 cm	17 1/2 in.
fathom	4 cubits, 8 spans	2 m	2 yds.

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RUTH 1

A. Ruth 1:1-5: Background to the Story.

1. Verse 1: "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons."
 - a. It was during the time when the judges operated in Israel that this story unfolded. This time period was one of apostasy and punishment; sorrow and loss characterized the people for much of this time. "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).
 - b. A harsh famine struck the land, adding to the misery of the Israelites. The severity of the dearth is suggested by the fact that ten years passed before conditions had improved sufficiently for the family to be able to return home.
 - c. Evidently, the famine was not so severe in Moab; perhaps, invaders had stripped Israel of their crops, leaving Moab alone. The situation may be that described in Judges 6:1-6, when the Midianites brought a very harsh oppression upon Israel, which lasted seven years. The kind of oppression would result in the kind of famine described in our text.
 - d. The current famine was so brutal that the family in the story was obligated to leave their home in the city of Bethlehem in Judah and to sojourn in the heathen nation of Moab.
 2. Verse 2: "And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there."
 - a. The man was named Elimelech, his wife was Naomi, and his sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They are called Ephrathites because Ephrath was the ancient name for Bethlehem. "And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which *is* Bethlehem" (Gen. 35:19).
 - b. Trying to avoid the destructive famine, they went into Moab. They were able to survive for a time, but one cannot always flee trouble. Often all we are able to do is to exchange one set of problems for another set; and the latter may be even worse than the former.
 - c. They left Bethlehem (*the house of bread*) and entered Moab (*wash pot*). Elimelech had no way of knowing the results of his decision: he and his sons would die there and his wife would be left to fend for herself. Was it essential that he leave Israel? Did other Israelites go to live in foreign lands? Were not most of the Israelites able to survive the famine without leaving home?
 3. Verse 3: "And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons."
 - a. They did not find Moab to be filled with happiness for them. After a time, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with greater problems than she had faced heretofore. She was now in an idolatrous land, bereft of her husband, and with two sons to tend. Instead of finding prosperity, he met his death in some way that is not specified. We are not told how long after entering Moab it was before he died.
 - b. However, times of trouble can have a silver lining. When one faces such heartache and trouble as that which Naomi now experienced, God becomes far more important than ever before.
 - 1) Hebrews 12:11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."
 - 2) James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that
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the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

4. Verse 4: "And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years."
 - a. Apparently, the family was accepted into Moabite society, for the two sons eventually married Moabite women.
 - b. Warnings were given against intermarriage with the pagan Canaanites:
 - 1) Exodus 34:16: "And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 7:1-8: "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."
 - c. Did this prohibition include the Moabites and Ammonites? If so, these two young men violated God's law. Keil thinks that the Israelites were allowed to marry Moabites and Ammonites, but that these outsiders were not to be taken into the congregation. "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee" (Deut. 23:3-4).
 - d. Mahlon and Chilion married Ruth and Orpah. The total time that Elimelech's family lived in Moab was ten years. We are not told how long Naomi's sons lived after they married. Ruth had married Mahlon (Ruth 4:10).
5. Verse 5: "And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband."
 - a. Naomi lost both her sons to death, and is left in a far country with two foreign daughters-in-law. Moab looked so promising when she and her husband left Bethlehem, but there is no hope lighting her way now. She has been stripped of all that she held dear.
 - b. Her condition reminds us of the destitute state into which sin had plunged the Prodigal Son. "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many

hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (Luke 15:13-17).

- c. This comparison is not to suggest that Elimelech and Naomi sinned in leaving Israel; perhaps there was no other choice for them.

B. Ruth 1:6-15: Naomi Counts the Cost.

1. Verses 6-7: "Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah."
 - a. Naomi learned that conditions had improved back home, that God had *visited* his people in giving them bread. Believing the report, she made preparations to return to her homeland. Her two daughters-in-law made preparations to go with Naomi.
 - b. "The Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). The *visiting* that James speaks of is more than a social call; it includes providing for the things needed by the fatherless and widows.
 - c. God allowed his people to suffer for a period of time, but at the appropriate time he saw to it that the necessities of life were provided in more abundance.
 - 1) Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - 2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - d. Naomi's tender heart was sorely tried by her losses. The happiness of home is in the people involved, not the surroundings. When the loved ones are present, happiness is there regardless of the location; if the loved ones are absent, happiness vanishes, for the fairest of surroundings will not fill the void their absence has made. Strangers cannot provide what the loved ones easily gave. Naomi resolved to go home. A lady who lost her husband was living in a large city at the time of his death. She had a nice, large house in a changing neighborhood, where crime was on the increase. She never felt safe; she seldom left home; she stayed in the central rooms of her house, and kept all the windows and doors locked, and the shades drawn. The loss of her husband spelled disaster to this fine lady.
2. Verses 8-9: "And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept."
 - a. This scene touches and stirs all but the hardest of hearts. Naomi spoke tenderly to her *daughters*, giving each of them her blessing to return to the homes of their mothers. She pronounced the Lord's good pleasure upon them, even as they had dealt kindly toward their husbands and toward her. Here was a family in which there were no strained relations between daughters-in-law and mother-in-law.
 - b. She sought the Lord's blessings upon them, that they might find rest with other husbands. She kissed them, and they lifted up their voices in weeping at the prospect of being separated from such a loving and caring lady. She had not tried to force them to go with her to Judah; neither does God coerce our obedience.
 - 1) Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 - 2) Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come."

And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

- c. Apparently, Ruth and Orpah had started on the journey with Naomi, as the ancient custom was. "And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed" (Acts 21:5).
3. Verses 10-13: "And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me."
 - a. Naomi faced reality: she could have no more sons due to her age; it was not possible for these ladies to expect other husbands from Naomi. It was a feature of the Mosaic Law for the next of kin to marry widowed ladies and raise seed to the dead husbands. "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel" (Deut. 25:5-6; cf. Gen. 38).
 - b. Naomi was grieved for their sakes that these tragedies had come upon them. Jesus told his disciples plainly that it would cost them dearly to follow him: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:16-39).
 - c. We must be willing to face the coldest of reality. The story is told of a man who bought a barometer,

but when it registered a very low reading, he smashed it, thinking it was malfunctioning; in reality a severe storm system was rapidly approaching.

- d. Ruth and Orpah stated their desire to go into Israel with Naomi; Naomi pleaded with them to return to their families. Even if she was still young enough to marry and bear more sons, they would not be able to wait until they were grown in order to have other husbands from her. She expressed her sorrow that, in her view, God had punished them as a consequence of punishing her.
 - e. "*Of course*, some things do happen by chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11); but it is also true that the omnipotent God is able to overrule every chance and happenstance in the achievement of his own sovereign will. Jehovah was not Naomi's enemy here, despite her mistaken thoughts that God was against her. Such are the inscrutable and unfathomable mysteries of all life upon this earth, that all believers should learn to trust where they cannot see and say with the patriarch Job, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust him'" (Coffman, p.339).
4. Verses 14-15: "And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law."
- a. The two young ladies continued to weep. Orpah kissed Naomi, in preparation to going back to her own family, but Ruth clung to her.
 - b. Naomi realized that when Orpah went back to her relatives, she would likely return to her false gods. She encouraged Ruth to go back home also, perhaps trusting that she would be faithful to God.

C. Ruth 1:16-18: Ruth Makes her Choice.

1. Ruth had the same facts Orpah had, experienced the same emotions, had the same odds against her, the same appeal of family and home in Moab. A momentous choice was made by these two ladies: Ruth made the right choice. Her choice marked her for salvation, and placed her eventually in the ancestral line of the Messiah. Orpah passed into complete obscurity.
 2. Verse 16: "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God."
 - a. Ruth plainly asked Naomi to make no further attempt to get her to stay in Moab. Naomi's way, home, people, and God would also be Ruth's. Her statement in this verse is a firm declaration of her resolute commitment to the course of action she had stated.
 - b. *Entreat me not to leave thee.* "These are the opening words of one of the most magnificent declaration of loving loyalty to be found anywhere in the literature of all mankind" (Coffman, p.340). They have been used in countless weddings.
 - c. *Thy people will be my people, and thy God my God.* She had seen the sincerity and kindness of Naomi, and in many ways had observed the superiority of Naomi's God and religion. She was committed to the living God and his way. Few are the people in our society who can appreciate what Ruth was able to perceive and to love.
 - d. "Ruth's mind was made up. Her heart would not be wrenched away from her mother-in-law. The length of the journey, its dangers, and the inevitable fatigue accompanying it, moved not, by so much as a jot, her resolution. Had not her mother-in-law the same distance to travel, the same fatigue to endure, the same perils to encounter? Might not the aged traveler, moreover, derive some assistance and cheer from the company of a young, ready-handed, and willing-hearted companion? She was resolved. Nothing on earth would separate them" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verse 17: "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also,
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if ought but death part thee and me."

- a. She was binding herself to Naomi and the God of Israel. She would live and die where Naomi lived and died. It was not Ruth's idea to go and see if she liked Bethlehem, but from the first it was a permanent choice.
 - b. There are those who think they can "try" Christianity to see if they can live it and whether they like it; their misguided efforts are doomed to failure. The great Christian and gospel preacher Gus Nichols wrote about his 50-year-old decision to follow Christ. He decided on the occasion of his baptism where he would be when the saints met; he never had to fight any battle on Sunday as to whether he would assemble with them; that commitment was made when he committed his life to Christ.
 - c. The statement of the second part of this verse is a form of oath, or a statement of purpose peculiar to the ancient days. It affirms the full intention of Ruth to abide by her decision, regardless of the consequences. It also appears in:
 - 1) 1 Samuel 14:44: "And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 20:13: "The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father."
 - 3) 1 Kings 19:2: "Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time."
 - 4) 1 Kings 20:10: "And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me."
 - d. "The book of Ruth is so written that one naturally anticipates that the narrative will subsequently reveal some special reward from Jehovah for this most remarkable confession of faith and devotion. In this, we are not disappointed" (Coffman, pp.340f).
 - e. "She appeals to the God of the Israelites, the one universal God. She puts herself on oath, and invokes his severest penal displeasure if she should suffer anything less uncontrollable than death to part her from her mother-in-law. 'So may Yahveh do to me.' It was thus that the Hebrews made their most awful appeals to Yahveh. They signified their willingness to suffer some dire calamity if they should either do the evil deed repudiated or fail to do the good deed promised. So stands in misty indefiniteness; not, as Fuller supposes, by way of 'leaving it to the discretion of God Almighty to choose that arrow out of his quiver which he shall think it most fit to shoot,' but as a kind of euphemism, or cloudy veil, two-thirds concealing, and one-third revealing, whatever horrid infliction could by dramatic sign be represented or hinted. And still more—a thoroughly Semitic idiom, and so may he add (to do) There was first of all a full imprecation, and then an additional 'bittock,' to lend intensity to the asseveration. 'But death only shall sever between me and thee!' Ruth's language is broken. Two formulas of imprecation are flung together. One, if complete, would have been to this effect: 'So may Yahveh do to me, and so may he add to do, if...ought but death sever between me and thee!' The other, if complete, would have run thus: "I swear by Yahveh 'that'...death, death only, shall part thee and me. In the original the word death has the article, death emphatically. It is as if she had said death, the great divider. The full idea is in substance death alone. This divider alone, says Ruth, 'shall sever between me and thee;' literally, 'between me and between thee,' a Hebrew idiom, repeating for emphasis' sake the two-sided relationship, but taking the repetition in reverse order, between me (and thee) and between thee (and me)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
4. Verse 18: "When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."

- a. Naomi saw that Ruth was deeply committed to her decision. She was satisfied that this young woman fully intended to live up to the commitment. A strong resolve was certainly necessary for this woman of Moab to live among a people who despised and distrusted all Gentiles.
- b. When one makes such a commitment to Christ, temptations are not nearly as enticing, and troubles do not seem to be so heavy to be borne.

D. Ruth 1:19-22: Return to Judah.

1. Verse 19: "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?*"
 - a. Naomi's friends and fellow-citizens in Bethlehem were astonished at her return. A lot had happened during the ten years she was gone. She had lost her husband and two sons; she had acquired a devoted daughter-in-law, one who was as loving and helpful as any real daughter could have been. Naomi had experienced some of the harshest blows that could come upon anyone, yet her faith in God was still strong.
 - b. The prodigal son came back home in rags and barefoot (Luke 15:11-32), but he was well-received by his loving father. Naomi must have been well-known and highly-respected for such a stir to be caused by her return. She was happily reunited with her relatives and friends from former days.
 2. Verses 20-21: "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"
 - a. Naomi faced reality in assessing her present condition. She had gone out full: she had with her a loving husband and two devoted sons. She returned empty: poverty-stricken and having lost her husband and both sons. She asks her friends to call her *Mara* ["bitter"] instead of *Naomi* ["pleasant"].
 - b. She sees the Lord's hand in her affairs. She believes that God has allowed the afflictions to come upon her family, perhaps due to their leaving Israel and living among idolaters; but God has now brought her back home again, albeit empty.
 - c. Even in difficulties, God is able to bless. She has lost her husband and sons, but she has gained a precious daughter. She was able to bring blessings and honor upon Ruth by bringing her to the God of Israel. As a result, Ruth entered the royal lineage of the Messiah.
 3. Verse 22: "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."
 - a. Naomi and Ruth arrived at Bethlehem at an opportune time. The barley harvest was just beginning. She had faced hardship in the far country just as Abraham had faced problems in Egypt, and Lot in Sodom. But now she was back where she belonged. Her heart must have experienced a great lift as the events of the next few weeks unfolded.
 - b. Barley harvest usually occurred about April, just before the wheat harvest. "The skill of the narrator appears in the introduction of this fact just here in the story, because the barley harvest was the occasion for all of the dramatic developments that came quickly afterwards" (Coffman, p.343).
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RUTH 2

A. Ruth 2:1-7: Introduction of Boaz and Ruth.

1. Verse 1: "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz."
 - a. Chapter one detailed some of Naomi's experiences in the far country of Moab; chapter two provides information about some events in her own land. Naomi and Ruth were widows. From the human point of view, these two ladies had little hope for the future, but God's providential hand began to be felt.
 - b. Boaz, a near kinsman to Elimelech, Naomi's dead husband, is introduced. He was a descendant of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho who married into Israel. If human wisdom and prejudice had selected the ancestral bloodline of the Messiah, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth would have been excluded.
 - c. Boaz is described as *a mighty man of wealth*. Being a near kinsman to Naomi, and to Ruth who now was a proselyte Hebrew, he had the right to marry Ruth.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 25:5: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her."
 - 2) Matthew 22:24: "Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother."
 2. Verse 2: "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter."
 - a. The Mosaic Law made certain provisions which were intended to help the poor. Landowners were not to gather their grain crops right up to the very edge of their fields, or in the corners; they were not to send their reapers over the same field a second time. Comparable edicts pertained also to orchards and vineyards. What was missed, belonged to the poor.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:9-10: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God."
 - 2) Leviticus 23:22: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 24:19: "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands."
 - b. This provision of the law is the background for the events now to unfold. "But liberty to glean *behind the reapers* was not a right that could be claimed; it was a privilege granted or refused according to the good-will or favour of the owner" (JFB, p.129). Ruth was the younger of the two widows, and volunteered to go into the fields and seek permission from the owner to glean.
 - c. "Such gleaning was a humiliation to those who had been accustomed to give rather than to get. But Ruth saw, in the pinched features of her mother-in-law, that there was now a serious difficulty in keeping the wolf outside the door. And hence, although there would be temptation in the step, as well as humiliation, she resolved to avail herself of the harvest season to gather as large a store as possible of those nutritious cereals which form the staff of life, and which they would grind for themselves in
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their little handmill or quern. She said, with beautiful courtesy. 'Let me go I, pray, thee;' or, 'I wish to go, if you will please to allow me.' Such is the force of the peculiar Hebrew idiom. 'There is no place,' says Lawson, 'where our tongues ought to be better governed than in our own houses.' To the cornfields. Very literally, 'to the field.' It is the language of townspeople, when referring to the land round about the town that was kept under tillage. It was not customary to separate cornfield from cornfield by means of walls and hedges. A simple furrow, with perhaps a stone here and there, or a small collection of stones, sufficed, as in Switzerland at the present day, to distinguish the patches or portions that belonged to different proprietors. Hence the singular word field, as comprehending the sum-total of the adjoining unenclosed ground that had been laid down in grain. 'Though the gardens and vineyards,' says Horatio B. Hackett, 'are usually surrounded by a stone wall or hedge of prickly pear, the grain-fields, on the contrary, though they belong to different proprietors, are not separated by any enclosure from each other. The boundary between them is indicated by heaps of small stones, or sometimes by single upright stones, placed at intervals of a rod or more from each other. This is the ancient landmark of which we read in the Old Testament' (*Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 110). The word field in Hebrew...denotes radically, not so much plain, as ploughed land (see Raabe's *Glosser*). In English there is a slightly varied though corresponding idiom lying at the base of the Teutonic term in use. A field (German Fold) is a clearance, a place where the trees of the original forest have been felled. The expression, that I may glean 'among' the ears, proceeds on the assumption that Ruth did not expect that she would 'make a clean sweep' of all the straggled ears. There might likely be other gleaners besides herself, and even though there should not, she could not expect to gather all. After whosoever shall show me favor. A peculiarly antique kind of structure in the original: 'after whom I shall find favor in his eyes.' Ruth speaks as if she thought only of one reaper, and he the proprietor. She, as it were, instinctively conceives of the laborers as "hands." And she said to her, Go, my daughter. Naomi yielded; no doubt at first reluctantly, yet no doubt also in a spirit of grateful admiration of her daughter-in-law, who, when she could not lift up her circumstances to her mind, brought down her mind to her circumstances" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by BibleSoft].

3. Verse 3: "And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech."
 - a. The field Ruth selected belonged to Boaz. From her viewpoint, it was by chance that she happened to pick the field of Elimelech's kinsman. The hand of God's providence is observable in the selection.
 - b. "Fields in Palestine being unenclosed, the phrase signifies that portion of the open ground which lay within the landmarks of Boaz" (JFB, p.129). The author does not report any investigation on Ruth's part to learn the identity of a wealthy kinsman or the location of his field. She would have been unable to learn by the landmarks which portion of the field belonged to Boaz.
4. Verse 4: "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee."
 - a. Boaz had a good and friendly relationship with his workers. "The rich and poor meet together: the LORD *is* the maker of them all" (Prov. 22:2). Coming forth from Bethlehem to oversee the progress of the harvest, he exchanged pleasant greetings of a religious nature with his workers.
 - b. Contrast their closeness with the depiction of the wicked rich men of James 5:1-4: "Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."
 - c. What better greeting could be given than a pronouncement of the Lord's blessings upon each other?

The association of Christians ought to be on the kindest and friendliest of levels. We are members of each other (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

5. Verse 5: "Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this?"
 - a. How many other owners would have taken notice of some poor person to the extent of making the present inquiry? And how many supervisors would have been sufficiently interested to learn the case of the poor individual?
 - b. Boaz took notice of Ruth and inquired as to her situation.
6. Verses 6-7: "And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house."
 - a. The supervisor of the reapers knew the details, and quickly supplied them to his employer. He reported that this was the Moabite lady that had come back with Naomi. Perhaps everyone at Bethlehem had knowledge of Naomi's sad return.
 - b. The overseer stated that Ruth had come to him, requesting permission to glean among the sheaves after the reapers. There would be more grain to be found there than at the sides and corners of the field. With permission granted, she entered into the work early in the morning, and had labored steadily since.
 - c. He stated that Ruth had "tarried a little in the house." This house was "the field tent, erected for the occasional rest and refreshment of the labourers" (JFB, p.130). She had not spent much time in this house, a point very much in her favor. "The word house troubled these and many other interpreters, as if the reference were to Naomi's dwelling-house in the town. The reference, however, is evidently to a temporary but, shed, tent, or booth erected in the harvest-field for the siesta of the workers, and the accommodation of the master, when he was visiting by day, or exercising supervision by night. We would translate the clause thus—'Her resting at the hut (has been) little.' Her siesta in the shade of the but was trot brief. She felt as if she could not afford a long repose" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - d. Ruth had several other things in her favor. She had a good moral character, a healthy reputation, and evidently was well-favored in appearance, in addition to being a diligent and willing worker.

B. Ruth 2:8-13: The Interest of Boaz in Ruth.

1. Verse 8: "Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn."
 - a. Boaz was a descendant of Rahab. This probably gave him a kinder heart toward Gentiles who accepted the Mosaic Law.
 - b. He spoke directly with Ruth. Because of his kindness and generosity, Boaz instructed her to glean only in his fields, he commanded the young men among the workers to leave her alone, and he gave her the right to drink from the water supply provided for the hired laborers. His warning to the young men against taking advantage of Ruth was an important act in that ruthless and lawless time.
 - c. He added his permission to that of the overseer for her to glean behind the reapers. When they were finished with the present field, she was to follow them to the next field to be harvested.
 - d. These two people, Ruth and Boaz, represent the very best of their respective people. They lived during the time of the judges, which was characterized generally by rebellion against God and
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unconcern toward others. This episode may have occurred during one of the times when Israel walked with God, but Boaz would have been an outstanding specimen of godliness in any generation. Ruth was doubtless the best of the Moabites. We would be sorely disappointed if they did not eventually marry.

2. Verse 10: "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?"
 - a. Ruth was greatly impressed by the kindness of Boaz. She had no reason to expect him to treat her in this fashion. Gratitude flooded her heart, which she expressed to Boaz.
 - b. Bowing before him, Ruth spoke to Boaz of her amazement and thankfulness for his having taken such an interest in her. How was it possible, she asked, that she had found grace in his sight, being a stranger among the Israelites?
3. Verses 11-12: "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."
 - a. Boaz had learned about Ruth's case, how she had aided Naomi since the death of Mahlon. Naomi was probably unable to work in the fields, so Ruth willingly labored there for their food.
 - b. Boaz further complimented Ruth for her willingness to leave her father and mother in Moab in order to enter Israel with Naomi, to live among a people that she did not know. She who had been a blessing was now being blessed.
 - c. This kind gentleman desired God's good pleasure to be upon Ruth, that she might have a full reward for the good she had done in Naomi's behalf. "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:10-12).
 - d. He spoke of her conversion to the God of Israel, describing it as living in trust under his wings.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 32:11: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings."
 - 2) Psalms 91:4: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler."
4. Verse 13: "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens."
 - a. Ruth appears to be overcome by the kindness and generosity of Boaz. Her desire was that she might have the good pleasure of Boaz; to please him was a matter of great interest to her.
 - b. She had not expected to be treated with such kindness in this country where she was a foreigner. But her acceptance of the God of Israel had broken down any prejudicial barriers in the minds of those who understood the truth of God's law.
 - c. In Christ, our former condition is a matter of no concern to faithful Christians. The guilt and practices of the past are put away, and with fullness of heart, we serve the will of Christ.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of

themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
- 3) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

C. Ruth 2:14-16: Boaz Invites and Instructs.

1. Verse 14: "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left."
 - a. The benevolence of Boaz still had something to give. He invited Ruth to come to the house (the tent erected at the field where the needs of the hired workers were supplied) to partake of the food prepared. This food was not intended for the poor who gleaned the leftovers of the field.
 - b. Bread was provided, which was dipped in a mixture of vinegar and olive oil. "*Chomez*, a sour beverage composed of vinegar (wine vinegar or sour wine) mixed with oil; a very refreshing drink..." (Keil, p.479).
 - c. Boaz handed her a sizeable portion of parched grain, enough for her meal with more left over for Naomi. Grain was parched on the spot, and used as part of the meal.
 - d. Keil quotes Robinson who gives a description of a harvest scene in Palestine: "In one field nearly two hundred reapers and gleaners were at work, the latter being nearly as numerous as the former. A few were taking their refreshment, and offered us some of their 'parched corn.' In the season of harvest, the grains of wheat not yet fully dry and hard, are roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, and constitute a very palatable article of food; this is eaten along with bread, or instead of it" (p.479).
 - e. The ISBE give this information about threshingfloors:
 - 1) "These floors have come into prominence because of the Biblical events which occurred on or near them. Joseph with his kinsmen and Egyptian followers halted for seven days at the threshing-floor of Atad to lament the death of Jacob (Gen 50:10). Probably there was a group of floors furnishing a convenient spot for a caravan to stop. Travelers today welcome the sight of a threshing-floor at their halting-place. The hard, level spot is a much preferable to the surrounding stony fields for their tents.
 - 2) "David built an altar on Ornan's (Araunah's) threshing-floor (2 Sam 24:18-24; 1 Chron 21:18-27), which later became the site of the Temple (2 Chron 3:1). David probably chose this place for his altar because it was on an elevation, and the ground was already level and prepared by rolling. Uzzah died near the threshing-floor of Nacon for touching the ark (2 Sam 6:6). Ruth reveals herself to Boaz on his threshing-floor (Ruth 3:6-9).
 - 3) "Threshing-floors are in danger of being robbed (1 Sam 23:1). For this reason, someone always sleeps on the floor until the grain is removed (Ruth 3:7). In Syria, at the threshing season, it is customary for the family to move out to the vicinity of the threshing-floor. A booth is constructed for shade; the mother prepares the meals and takes her turn with the father and children at riding on the sledge.
 - 4) "The instruments of the threshing-floor referred to in 2 Sam 24:22 were probably: (1) the wooden drag or sledge, charuts or moragh, Arabic lauch eddiras; (2) the fan (fork), mizreh, Arabic midra, for separating straw from wheat; (3) shovel, meggraphah, Arabic mirfashat, for tossing the wheat into the air in winnowing; (4) broom, maT'aTe', for sweeping the floor between threshing and for

collecting the wheat after winnowing; (5) goad, malmedh, Arabic messas; (6) the yoke, `ol, Arabic tauk; (7) sieve, kebharah, Arabic gharbal; (8) dung catcher, Arabic milkat" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright ©)1996 by Biblesoft].

2. Verse 15: "And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not."
 - a. Following the meal, when she had returned to glean, Boaz instructed the young men to allow her to glean among the sheaves, and offer no reproach to her for doing so.
 - b. The sheaves were bundles of barley stalks which had been cut or pulled from the ground, and tied into bundles. These sheaves were later placed on a threshing floor, trodden under foot of man or beast; fans were then used to blow away the chaff, leaving behind the grain.
 - c. More grain could be gleaned near the sheaves than could be found along the sides and in the corners of the fields.
3. Verse 16: "And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not."
 - a. The young men were told to allow more of the grain to fall to the ground while they were binding the sheaves than was normal. These "handfuls of purpose" were an additional, purposeful gift from Boaz to this young woman, whose devotion to God and Naomi were well-known.
 - b. They were not to rebuke her for gleaning those handfuls of purpose among the sheaves. Obviously, this was a benefit reserved for her and was not ordinarily given to others who gleaned after the reapers.

D. Ruth 2:17-18: Ruth's Industrious Efforts.

1. Verse 17: "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley."
 - a. Ruth worked throughout the day, gleaning in the field of Boaz. She beat out the grain from the heads she had gleaned, which resulted in about an ephah of barley. "When the quantity of grain was small, it was beat out by means of a stick" (JFB, p.131).
 - b. "Scholars give various answers regarding the exact size of an ephah, but the measurements range between four gallons and seven gallons. This is due to the fact that the ephah itself was a hand made vessel of variable sizes" (Coffman, p.352). Keil places the amount Ruth gleaned at 22-25 pounds of barley.
 - c. "The diligent gleaner on Boaz's field found, after threshing, that she had nearly an ephah of barley. It would be a considerable load for a female to carry—about a bushel....Moreover, just as the ephah was the tenth part of a homer, so the omer was the tenth part of an ephah (Ex 16:36); and thus, if an omer of barley would be somewhat equivalent for nutritive purposes to an omer of manna, it would be a sufficient daily allowance for a man (see Ex 16:16). Hence Ruth would take home with her what would suffice for several days' sustenance to Naomi and herself" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 18: "And she took *it* up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed."
 - a. Taking her grain, she went home and showed Naomi what she had gleaned. She had saved back part of the parched grain Boaz gave her earlier. This portion was intended for Naomi.
 - b. How had Ruth and Naomi been able to get by until now? Perhaps they had brought funds or supplies with them from Moab. Maybe they were being supported by the generosity of family and friends in Bethlehem.

E. Ruth 2:19-23: Naomi's Inquiry and Advice.

1. Verse 19: "And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day *is* Boaz."
 - a. Naomi was naturally interested in learning where Ruth had gleaned. Until now, she did not know the source of the bountiful harvest Ruth brought home. She was well aware that Ruth had indeed found a generous person, for an ephah of barley was obviously far more than could be expected under usual conditions.
 - b. Naomi's questions were natural, not nosy. Some people are mere busybodies, and their inquiries are intended to discover some interesting tidbit of information which they will peddle with their equally-nosy friends. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15). We ought to be open with our brethren, but realize that there are some things that are better kept private.
 - c. Ruth reported to her mother-in-law that it was in the field of Boaz that she had worked. Ruth did not know that Boaz was related to Naomi's husband. Tradition asserts that Boaz was a nephew to Elimelech.
 2. Verse 20: "And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man *is* near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen."
 - a. Naomi was filled with happy gratitude, attributing the generosity and kindness of Boaz to God. The truth of God's word had softened and shaped the heart of that good man, hence God's part in the matter was real. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42).
 - b. Naomi realized that God had not ceased his kindness, but remained a benefactor to the living and the dead. God had blessed Elimelech and his two sons, all of whom were now dead, in that he had blessed Ruth and Naomi. Elimelech's line would end unless Ruth married an Israelite and sons were produced.
 - c. In two ways, therefore, the dead (Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion) were being blessed: their widows were being cared for, and the possibility of a posterity existed if a kinsman took Ruth to wife. Naomi evidently had this last point in mind when she stated that Boaz was a near kinsman. He had the right to redeem the forfeited inheritances in the land. Three things such a near kinsman could do:
 - 1) Buy back the inheritance or purchase the liberty of one who had to sell himself for a servant.
 - 2) Avenge those in the family who had been slain.
 - 3) If the dead kinsman died childless, he could take the widow as his wife and raise up seed to prevent the family from dying out. If the nearest kinsman refused these obligations, he was treated with indignity, lost his right to the inheritance, and the next nearest kinsman could come forward. "If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore *it* to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession" (Lev. 25:25-28).
 3. Verses 21-22: "And Ruth the Moabite said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, *It is* good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field."
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- a. Ruth reported some additional things Boaz had told her. She was to stay near the young men who worked for him until they had ended the entire harvest. This included the present barley harvest and the wheat harvest which followed.
 - b. Naomi saw the wisdom in the arrangement. If Ruth stayed with the workers of Boaz, she would fall under their protective hand. There was a very real danger otherwise, for she might be assaulted by others who were not controlled by such a righteous farmer.
4. Verse 23: "So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law."
- a. This verse summarizes the events of the next several weeks. She worked closely behind the other girls through the rest of the barley harvest and throughout the wheat harvest.
 - b. In the meantime, she lived with her mother-in-law, possibly in the house that pertained to Naomi's husband, Elimelech.
 - c. "Ruth's gleaning labors extended to the close of the wheat-harvest, during which time, no doubt, there would be frequent opportunities for a growing intimacy between the beautiful gleaner and the worthy proprietor. Often too, we may rest assured, would Boaz be a visitor in the humble home of Naomi. 'The harvest upon the mountains,' says Dr. Robinson, 'ripens of course later than in the plains of the Jordan and the sea-coast. The barley-harvest precedes the wheat-harvest by a week or fortnight. On the 4th and 5th of June the people of Hebron were just beginning to gather their wheat; on the 11th and 12th the threshing-floors on the Mount of Olives were in full operation. We had already seen the harvest in the same stage of progress on the plains of Gaza on the 19th of May; while at Jericho, on the 12th of May, the threshing-floors had nearly completed their work (*Biblical Researches*, vol. 2. p. 99). 'The Syrian harvest,' says Dr. W. M. Thomson, 'extends through several months. On the plain of Philistia it commences in April and ends in June; and this not only gives ample time, but it has this great advantage, that the villagers from the mountains can assist the farmers on the plain, since their own crops are not yet ripe. I was struck with this fact while at Mesmia. Several Christians from Bethlehem, who had thus come to reap, spent the evening at my tent, and one of them explained to me the advantages from thus laboring on the plain. He not only, received wages for his own and his wife's labor, but his children were permitted to follow after them and glean on their own account, as Boaz allowed Ruth to do in their native village' (*The Land and the Book*, p. 544). When it is said, in the last clause of the verse, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law, the reference is not to be restricted to the time that succeeded the period of harvesting....But there is no evidence whatever that Ruth slept anywhere else than under her mother-in-law's roof. The clause was written, apparently, for the very purpose of bringing out clearly before the mind of the reader her stainless innocence, and sweet simplicity, and never-tiring devotion to her noble mother-in-law" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - d. "After this Ruth kept with the maidens of Boaz during the whole of the barley and wheat harvests gleaning ears of corn, and lived with her mother-in-law, when she returned in the evening from the field. In this last remark there is a tacit allusion to the fact that a change took place for Ruth when the harvest was over" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
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RUTH 3

A. Ruth 3:1-4: Concern of Naomi.

1. Verse 1: "Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?"
 - a. The background to this chapter is Deuteronomy 25:5-10: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if* he stand *to it*, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."
 - b. Naomi showed her concern for Ruth in the plan she announces. Ruth's future depended on the outcome of the proposed plan. Her aim was to produce *rest* for Ruth, a proper place in Jewish society where she could have a husband and children.
 2. Verse 2: "And now *is* not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor."
 - a. Boaz was a near kinsman, and authorized to redeem the land Naomi had to sell (4:3), to marry Ruth and raise up seed to Mahlon.
 - b. Ruth knew that Boaz would be winnowing barley that night. This was usually done at night when the evening breezes blew from the sea. "The winnowing process is performed by throwing up the grain, after being trodden down, against the wind with a shovel. The threshingfloor, which was commonly on the harvest-field, was carefully levelled with a large cylindrical roller, and consolidated with chalk, that weeds might not spring up....The farmer usually remained all night in harvest-time on the threshing-floor, not only for the protection of his valuable grain, but for the winnowing" (JFB, p.131).
 - c. The threshing-floor was usually out in the open, without a roof. The grain mixed with chaff was thrown into the air; the chaff would be blown away by the breeze, and the grain would drop back to the floor.
 3. Verses 3-4: "Wash thy self therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do."
 - a. Naomi's plan seems strange to us, and would be judged unseemly by our customs, but it was a proper custom in that ancient day. Ruth was to bathe, dress up, and to lie down at Boaz's feet when he had retired for the night at the threshingfloor. She was not to allow Boaz to see her before he went to bed; the plan called for his being impressed with Ruth, but not to put him into temptation. Being tired from the day's activities and relaxed by the food, he would sleep soundly, giving Ruth opportunity to approach his bed in secrecy.
 - b. The plan was to put Ruth before Boaz, impress him with her natural beauty, and thus call his attention
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to the fact that he was a near kinsman and was authorized to redeem Naomi's land and to marry Ruth. Boaz took no offense when the plan was carried out, and conducted himself as any godly man would.

- c. "In ordinary circumstances these would have seemed indecorous to the world; but in the case of Ruth, it was a method doubtless conformable to prevailing usage, of reminding Boaz of the duty which devolved on him as the kinsman of her deceased husband. Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed. Resting, as the Orientals do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her" (JFB, p.131).

B. Ruth 3:5-9: Ruth Consents to the Plan.

1. Verse 5: "And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do."
 - a. Ruth agreed to carry out her part in the plan. This showed her desire to please Naomi, the respect she had for Naomi's wisdom, and her wish to become part of Israelite society.
 - b. Clearly, Ruth had been favorably impressed by the generosity and kindness of Boaz, and was willing to become his wife, if he chose to exercise his right to marry her in accordance with the law.
 2. Verses 6-7: " And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down."
 - a. Again, no wrong-doing was involved in the plan. She went simply to claim the rights given her by the Law of Moses. Her actions merely were to present her willingness for Boaz to marry her.
 - b. The heart of Boaz is said to have been "merry." This does not declare that he was in a drunken state. It simply pictures him as being in the cheerful, satisfied state of mind of one who has had a productive day, when the harvest is being profitably accomplished, and has satisfied his hunger and thirst.
 3. Verses 8-9: "And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman."
 - a. At midnight, he awoke with a start, suddenly realizing that a woman was lying at his feet. By "turning himself," the author means that he leaned forward toward Ruth to see who was at his feet. Naturally, he demanded to know her identity.
 - b. Ruth identified herself by name, and plainly stated the reason for her being there: "Spread thy wing over me [marry me]." This is a figure of speech taken from the bird kingdom where the mother bird often spreads her wing over her young for their protection.
 - c. The Hebrew term translated *skirt* means *wing*. The same word is used by Boaz in Ruth 2:12, where he declared his desire that Ruth be blessed by "the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou are come to trust."
 - d. "She had already drawn part of the mantle over her; and she asked him now to do it, that the act might become his own. To spread a skirt over one is, in the East, a symbolical action denoting protection. To this day in many parts of the East to say of any one that he put his skirt over a woman is synonymous with saying that he married her; and at all the marriages of the modern Jews and Hindoos one part of the ceremony is for the bridegroom to put a silken or cotten cloak around his bride" (JFB, p.132).
 - e. "The wing is the emblem of protection, and is a metaphor taken from the young of fowls, which run under the wings of their mothers, that they may be saved from birds of prey; The meaning here is,
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Take me to thee for wife; and so the Targum has translated it, Let thy name be called on thy handmaid to take me for wife, because thou art the redeemer; i.e., thou art the go'eel (OT:1350), the kinsman, to whom the right of redemption belongs. See the note at Ruth 2:20. Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Biblesoft].

C. Ruth 3:10-13: Cooperation of Boaz.

1. Verse 10: "And he said, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD, my daughter: *for* thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich."
 - a. Boaz was properly impressed by Ruth's conduct. He pronounced a blessing upon her because of it. She could have sought marriage with one of the young men of the city, some of whom were rich. She had not done so, wanting instead to preserve the family of Elimelech. If she did not marry a kinsmen of her former father-in-law, that man's inheritance in Israel would have ended.
 - b. Ruth had shown her love for Naomi and Mahlon; she was now showing love for Boaz. She was young and no doubt lovely, and could have sought to win the affection of some rich, young man, but it was to Boaz she turned. The implication of the statement of Boaz here indicates that he was an older man.
 - c. "This verse is full of satisfactory evidence that Naomi was perfectly right in conjecturing that Boas, deep in love, was restrained only by diffidence from formally declaring himself. It shows us too that the chief ground of his diffidence was his age. He had been an acquaintance, and the equal in years, of Ruth's father-in-law, Elimelech, and the impression had got hold on him that the handsome young widow might feel repugnance to his suit. Hence, instead of being in the least degree offended by the steps she had taken, he was relieved, and felt full of gratification on the one hand, and of gratitude on the other" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 11: "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman."
 - a. Boaz remarked that it was common knowledge in Bethlehem that Ruth was a virtuous woman. This no doubt was singular, since she was of an idolatrous nation, where virtue was not highly prized.
 - b. Proverbs 31:10-31 gives a picture of the qualities of a virtuous woman during the Old Testament time frame: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. *20* She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it*; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

- c. He stated plainly that he would fulfill his rights and obligations the law prescribed. He did not try to evade his duty by finding some handy excuse.
 - d. "All who had taken notice of Ruth perceived that she was mentally and morally, as well as physically, a substantial and capable woman. She was possessed of force, both of mind and character. She was, in the New England sense, of the expression, a woman of 'faculty.' She was full of resources, and thus adequate to the position which, as Boaz's wife, she would be required to fill. There was no levity about her, 'no nonsense.' She was earnest, industrious, virtuous, strenuous, brave. There was much of the heroine in her character, and thus the expression connects itself with the masculine application of the distinctive and many-sided word, 'a mighty man of valor.' The expression...occurs in Prov 12:4, where, in King James's version, it is, as here and in Prov 31:10, translated 'a virtuous woman'—'a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband'....In Prov 31:10 there is the same reference to general capacity, as is evidenced by the graphic representation that follows—a representation that by no means exhausts itself in the idea of moral virtue....When Boaz says, 'All that thou sayest I will do to thee,' he means, 'All that thou hast so winsomely and yet so modestly referred to in what thou didst say, I am prepared to do to thee'" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
3. Verses 12-13: "And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning."
- a. However, he states the simple fact that, although he was a near kinsman, there was another man who was closer kin than he. In the morning, when the other kinsman was appraised of that fact, and he chose to exercise his right and responsibility in this matter, he should be the one to whom she should be married.
 - b. On the other hand, if he declines that right and duty, then Boaz would do the part of a kinsman to Ruth. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 speaks of a brother marrying his dead brother's widow; here it is not a brother, but a kinsman. Evidently, the word *brother* is used in a more general sense to include other close relatives.
 - c. With this settled, he instructs her to lie down until the morning when the issue could be settled. No improper conduct was entered by Boaz and Ruth, else the other kinsman could not have married Ruth; instead, if improper conduct had been done by the two, and if the demands of the law were respected, both Boaz and Ruth should have been executed.

D. Ruth 3:14-18: Care of Boaz for Ruth.

1. Verse 14: "And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor."
 - a. Boaz told Ruth to stay where she was, at the foot of his bed, until the morning. If she had stolen away during the night, someone might see her, and cause a major problem. He did not want anyone to get the mistaken idea that Ruth's chastity had been compromised.
 - b. She was to remain there until very early in the morning, before it got light enough to see and recognize anyone.
 2. Verse 15: "Also he said, Bring the veil that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and she went into the city."
 - a. He gave her six measures of grain to take home. This would not only provide her and Naomi with more food, it would also give Ruth a plausible reason for being out of the city. No one but Naomi knew that she had spent the night in the field, but perhaps some would see her return home.
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- b. Boaz filled Ruth's veil (or cloak) with grain. The cloak worn by the ancients were so full when one part was thrown over the shoulder and pulled under the arm it could be held in such a way as to form a pocket for carrying grain.
 3. Verse 16: "And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who *art* thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her."
 - a. It may have still been dark when Ruth got back home; this seems to be the case, for Naomi asked her to identify herself. However, the meaning of the question might be Naomi's way of asking how the adventure turned out.
 - b. In response to the question, Ruth gave a full report of the events of the night. The plan had worked to perfection. Naomi had accurately judged the character of Boaz.
 4. Verse 17: "And she said, These six *measures* of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law."
 - a. The six measures of barley was ample proof that her report was true. How could the presence of such a supply of grain be explained otherwise?
 - b. The return to Bethlehem from Moab is already seen as highly successful for both Naomi and Ruth, and for Boaz.
 5. Verse 18: "Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."
 - a. Naomi, perceiving the goodness of Boaz, advised Ruth to wait quietly to see the outcome of the plan. She knew that Boaz would not sit idly by without bringing the plan to its fruition. Before the day had run its course, the outcome would be known.
 - b. In Naomi's counsel is to be seen an example of wisdom. There was no reason for Ruth to worry and fret over the possible outcome of the plan. Even if the other kinsman chose to exercise his option, she would have a husband, and Naomi could have her needs met. It was not likely that neither Boaz nor the other man would fail to fulfill their obligations in the matter. Regardless of the outcome, anxiety on Ruth's part could have no effect on the day's activities.
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RUTH 4

A. Ruth 4:1-2: Meeting at the Gate.

1. Verse 1: "Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down."
 - a. At the gate of a city important activities of the citizens took place, including business transactions and legal matters. This location corresponds to the city hall or courthouse of today.
 - b. The near kinsman approached the gate where Boaz had stationed himself. Boaz spoke to him, using the expression, "Ho, such a one!" as a greeting. He invited the man to stop and sit down.
 - c. "He 'went up,' for the city stood, as it still stands, on a ridge (see on Ruth 1:1; 3:6). 'And sat there,' on one of the stones, or stone benches, that were set for the accommodation of the townsfolk. The gateway in the East often corresponded, as a place of meeting, to the forum, or the market-place, in the West. Boaz had reason to believe that his kinsman would be either passing out to his fields, or passing in from his threshing-floor, through the one gate of the city. And lo, the kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken was passing; and he said, Ho, such a one I turn hither and sit here. And he turned and sat down. Boaz called his kinsman by his name; but the writer does not name him, either because he could not, or because he would not. The phrase 'such a one,' or 'so and so,' is a purely idiomatic English equivalent for the purely idiomatic Hebrew phrase....A literal translation is impossible" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 2: "And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down."
 - a. Having a legal matter to discuss, Boaz invited ten of the city's elders to sit down and serve as witnesses for the business transaction that he wanted to address.
 - b. Ordinarily, only two or three witnesses were required by the Mosaic Law. "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15). Boaz may have wanted to have a larger number of witnesses in order to avoid any possibility of complaint over the matter.

B. Ruth 4:3-5: Making Known the Problem.

1. Verses 3-4: "And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it*: but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know: for *there is* none to redeem *it* beside thee; and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*."
 - a. In the presence of the witnesses, Boaz stated to the kinsman that Naomi had sold (or was about to sell) a parcel of land which belonged to her husband (Elimelech). He spoke of Elimelech as "our brother" in the sense that they were relatives, although they were not literal brothers.
 - b. The law included the provision of redeeming land that had been sold due to poverty. "If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold" (Lev. 25:25). Later verses in the chapter revealed that during the next year of jubilee, the land reverted back to its original owner. What Naomi could sell, therefore, if the law was followed, was the use of the land until the next jubilee.
 - c. Boaz mentioned the land that needed to be redeemed for Naomi to give the kinsman notice of his right to pay the redemption price. If he could not redeem it, Boaz stated his intention to do so. The man
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agreed to redeem the land. But there was another feature to the present case which Boaz had not yet reported; this feature would change the man's mind about redeeming the land.

- d. Clarke gave the following as a more precise rendering of verse four: "And I said I will reveal this to thy ear, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it but thou, and I who am next to thee. And he said, I will redeem it" (p.201).
 - e. The man quickly agreed to redeem the land, before he knew the full details. His reasoning was along this line: He could redeem the land; at the next jubilee, the land would revert to the legal heirs; but Elimelech left no other heirs than his wife, who was middle-aged or beyond; therefore, the land would become part of his estate at the jubilee. In the meantime, for the amount of the selling price, he would get whatever the land produced.
 - f. "Boaz, it is evident, had talked over with Ruth the entire details of Naomi's plans, and could thus speak authoritatively. Naomi, we must suppose, had previously taken Ruth into full confidence, so that Boaz could learn at second-hand what in other circumstances he would have learned from Naomi herself. The verb which we have rendered 'has resolved to sell,' is literally 'has sold,' and has been so rendered by many expositors....The subsequent context, however, makes it evident that the property had not been sold to any one, and consequently not to Boaz. The perfect verb is to be accounted for on the principle explained by Driver when he says, 'The perfect is employed to indicate actions, the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependent upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially a Divine one, is very frequently announced in the perfect tense. A striking instance is afforded by Ruth (Ruth 4:3) when Boaz, speaking of Naomi's determination to sell her land....The English idiom would be 'is selling' (*Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, pp. 13, 14). In King James's English version the verb is thus freely rendered 'selleth'....The kind family feeling of Boaz, shining out of the expression, 'our brother Elimelech,' is noteworthy. 'Brother' was to him a homely and gracious term for 'near kinsman'" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 5: "Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."
- a. Clarke gives this more precise rendition of this verse: "And Boaz said, In the day that thou redeemest the land from the hand of Naomi, thou wilt also acquire Ruth, the wife of the dead, that thou mayest raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (p.201).
 - b. This information put the case under a different light. If this unnamed kinsman redeemed the land, he was also obligated to marry Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, who was also dead. Elimelech's children were dead; Mahlon left no children. According to the law, the redeemer must marry Ruth and raise up seed to inherit the redeemed land. The man's redemption money would be for the benefit of the inheritance pertaining to another family (Elimelech through Mahlon by Ruth).
 - c. "Boaz distinctly informed his relative that if the land was acquired at all by a kinsman, it must be acquired with its living appurtenance, Ruth the Moabitess, so that, by the blessing of God, the Fountain of families, there might be the opportunity of retaining the possession of the property in the line of her deceased husband, that line coalescing in the line of her second husband. It was the pleasure of Naomi and Ruth, in offering their property for sale, to burden its acquisition, on the part of a kinsman, with the condition specified. If there should be fruit after the marriage, the child would be heir of the property, just as if he had been Machlon's son, even though the father should have other and older sons by another wife" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].
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C. Ruth 4:6-12: The Matter Settled.

1. Verse 6: "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it."
 - a. The kinsman now reversed his decision, declining the offer to redeem the land. He would lose the money he would pay for redeeming the land, for it would become the property of the sons of Ruth. Also, there would be the extra financial burden of another family.
 - b. Further, there would be the stigma of being married to a woman from an idolatrous nation. The man did not know the virtuous nature of Ruth, presumably. It is easy, but foolish, to judge an individual by his race or nationality. The Moabites were a nation of idolaters, but Ruth was the exception.
 - c. The man declined to exercise his right to redeem the land, and asked Boaz to redeem it. Before these witnesses, he had renounced his right in the matter, thus giving Boaz the freedom to take his place
 - d. "And the kinsman said, I am not able to perform, for myself, the kinsman's part, lest I should destroy my inheritance. Perform thou, for thyself, the kinsman's part devolving on me, for I am not able to perform it. The moment that Ruth was referred to, as the inseparable appurtenance of Elimelech's estate, a total change came over the feelings of the anonymous relative and the spirit of his dream. He 'could not,' so he strongly put it, perform the kinsman's part. The probability is that he already had a family, but was a widower. This being the state of the case, it followed that if he should acquire Ruth along with her father-in-law's property, there might be an addition, perhaps a numerous addition, to his family; and if so, then there would be more to provide for during his lifetime, and at his death an increased subdivision of his patrimony. This, as he strongly put it, would be to 'destroy' his patrimony, inasmuch as it might be frittered into insignificant fractions....The anonymous relative does not conceal the idea that it would be only on the ground of doing what would be for his own interest that he could entertain for consideration the proposal of Naomi. He likewise assumed that if Boaz should be willing to act the kinsman's part, it would be simply because it could be turned to account for his own interest. He did not know that there was in Boaz's heart a love that truly 'seeketh not her own,' but in honor prefers the things of another" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 2. Verses 7-8: "Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbour: and this *was* a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. So he drew off his shoe."
 - a. At the time the book of Ruth was written, the events the book describes were many years in the past. It is very likely that Samuel was the author, and that it was during the time of David [before he became king] when he penned the report (cf. 4:18-22). Samuel died a while before Saul's death enabled David to mount the throne in Israel.
 - b. The custom indicated in the passage was the practice of confirming a matter by taking off one's shoe and handing it to the one to whom the commitment was being made. It was later that such affairs were confirmed by written records. The kinsman drew off his shoe and handed it to Boaz.
 - c. "He who sold land, or surrendered his right to act as a kinsman in buying land, intimated by the symbolical act of taking off his shoe, and handing it to his friend, that he freely gave up his right to walk upon the soil, in favor of the person who had acquired the possession. Corresponding symbolical acts, in connection with the transfer of lands, have been common, and probably still are, in many countries. No doubt the shoe, after being received, would be immediately returned" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verses 9-10: "And Boaz said unto the elders, and *unto* all the people, Ye *are* witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelech's, and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name
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of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: *ye are* witnesses this day."

- a. Boaz stated that the elders and those other citizens present were witnesses of the fact that he had bought the property that pertained to Elimelech and Chilion and Mahlon; and that he had likewise purchased the right to marry Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, and to raise up seed to Mahlon.
 - b. The lineage of Elimelech and Mahlon would not end, but would be continued through the children that Boaz and Ruth would have.
 - c. "This, to Boaz, would be by far the most delightful part of the day's proceedings. His heart would swell with manly pride and devout gratitude when he realized, amid all the cumbrous technicalities of old Hebrew law, that Ruth was his. And he would rejoice all the more, as, in virtue of her connection with Machlon and Elimelech, both of their names would still be encircled with honor, and might, by the blessing of Yahveh, be linked on distinguishingly and lovingly to future generations. Note the expression, 'that the name of the deceased may not be cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place.' The people who assembled at the gate might on some future day be able to say, 'This boy is the heir of Machlon and Elimelech, who once migrated to Moab'" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].
4. Verses 11-12: "And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders, said, *We are* witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman."
- a. The people and the elders asked the blessings of the Lord to be upon the union of Boaz and Ruth, that he might make the house of Boaz to be as plenteous as that of Jacob through Rachel and Leah. Their best wishes also included a reference to Tamar who bore Pharez to Judah. Boaz was a descendant of Judah through Tamar and Pharez.
 - b. They expressed their wish that the family of Boaz do worthily in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem. Ephratah was an older name for Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the ancestral home of the Lord's family; it was to that little city that Joseph and Mary went to take part in the general order by the Roman government for the people to be named for taxation purposes (Luke 2:1ff).
 - c. The statements made in this passage were more likely the words of the elders, with the other people in the audience giving their agreement to the sentiments expressed.

D. Ruth 4:13-17: Marriage of Boaz and Ruth.

1. Verse 13: "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son."
 - a. Boaz and Ruth were married, and in time the Lord blessed them with a son. Credit for her conception is given to the Lord. To become a father or mother of a child is a tremendous blessing and an awesome responsibility.
 - b. Psalms 127:3-5: "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."
 - c. They could not know that through this son Obed would come David, a great king in Israel, and even more important, that a descendant of David would be the Messiah.
2. Verses 14-15: "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed *be* the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than

seven sons, hath borne him."

- a. The women of Bethlehem spoke these encouraging words to Naomi. They called attention to the fact that she had been blessed by the Lord, who had insured that she obtained a kinsman. This relative is the baby born to Ruth and Boaz. Her family would continue. Now Naomi could see that her anxiety, depression, and discouragement were without cause: "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" (Ruth 1:20-21).
 - b. They expressed their desire and expectation that the child would become famous in Israel, and that he would restore her life and would nourish her in her old age.
 - c. Included in their words of praise were some warm remarks about Ruth. They spoke of the love which Ruth had for Naomi, and stated the fact that she was better to Naomi than seven sons could have been. Ruth's virtue was known and appreciated by these Israelite women.
 - d. The book of Ruth tells the story of three primary characters: Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Special emphasis is placed upon Naomi.
3. Verses 16-17: "And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David."
- a. Naomi became the nurse for the child. As nurse, she occupied a place of honor in the house of Boaz. Her faith in God was blessed.
 - b. The baby was named Obed, which means *servant* or *worshipper* (Coffman, p.377). The author then notes that Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. Clearly, the inspired writer lived at a time when David had become known in Israel, which took place during the reign of Saul.

E. Ruth 4:18-22: The Genealogy of David.

1. Verses 18-22: "Now these *are* the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."
2. The lineage of David is traced from Pharez, through Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, and Jesse, to David.
 - a. Five of these ten generations belonged to the sojourn in Egypt; the other five belong to the time from the Exodus to David. The fact that the lineage is traced only to David is strong evidence that the book was not written in post-exilic times as destructive critics allege, but during the time-frame to which Samuel belonged.
 - b. Salmon was the man who married Rahab of Jericho (Josh. 2-6; Matt. 1:5). Rahab was the mother of Boaz; she was the great-grandmother of David. Boaz was born a few years after Israel's entry into the land of Canaan. The story of Ruth, therefore takes place early in the period of the judges.
 - c. The focal point of the book of Ruth is placed on this genealogy: it explains the background of David, and reveals his ancestral lineage.
3. The significance of the ten generations is seen in Deuteronomy 23:2-3: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever."
 - a. The sin David alluded to in Psalm 51:5 relates to the sin of Tamar with Judah.
 - 1) Genesis 38:11-23: "Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's

house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house. And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place. And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.”

- 2) Psalms 51:1-19: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”
 - b. David represented the tenth generation from Judah, and was permitted to enter the congregation of the Lord as prescribed in Deuteronomy 23:2-3
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4. The genealogy given by Matthew 1:3-6 corresponds precisely with that given in the present passage:

RUTH 4:18-22	MATTHEW 1:3-6
Pharez	Phares
Hezron	Esrom
Ram	Aram
Amminadab	Aminadab
Nahshon	Naasson
Salmon	Salmon
Boaz	Booz
Obed	Obed
Jesse	Jesse
David	David

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Introduction to Esther

A. Author and Time.

1. The identity of the author of Esther is unknown. The writer was well aware of the close details of the narrative, likely through personal knowledge and certainly by inspiration. Some scholars attribute the authorship to Mordecai, others to Ezra the scribe.
2. The time of the writing is likewise unknown.
3. The times of the events depicted in the book are discernible.
 - a. The events took place about 40 years after the temple was rebuilt, about 30 years before Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and about 58 years after the Jews began returning to Palestine in 536 B.C.
 - b. Esther records some events prior to the time of Nehemiah, and may have made the work of Nehemiah possible by her activities in the palace.
 - c. Esther became queen about 478 B.C., and saved the Jews about 473 B.C.

B. Significance of the Book.

1. The book details a very important event in Biblical history: the deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation. God had promised through Jeremiah that the Jews would surely continue as a distinct people: "For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11). God's plans to send his Son into the world as the seed of Abraham would have been destroyed if the Jewish nation had been eliminated from existence: no Jews—no Messiah; no Messiah—no salvation for anyone.
2. Esther shows how the Jews were delivered from death. This reveals the importance of the book.
3. The Jewish feast of Purim (*lots*) began in commemoration of this deliverance.

C. The Place and People involved in the events of Esther.

1. Persia was the place: "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces), that in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him" (Esther 1:1-3). Note the vast dimensions of the great Persian Empire. The Medes and Persians had united to conquer Babylon in 539 B.C. The capital city Shushan (Susa) was located about 200 miles east of Babylon, about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf.
 2. Ahasuerus, called Xerxes by the Greeks, was king. His name in the ancient Persian letters is a line of consonants which is unpronounceable by the English tongue. He is described in history as an extremely cruel tyrant, and inclined toward sensual pleasure. He invaded Greece with the largest army that had ever marched to battle. Pythius, a rich Lydian, had given him a great amount of money to help pay for the war against Greece; but when he requested that his oldest son (all of his five sons were in the Persian army) be released to stay with the father, Xerxes had the son cut in half and marched his soldiers between the two parts. He was so angry when a storm destroyed a bridge he had the builders beheaded. (See Keil and Delitzsch, page 306, for more such evil cases by other tyrants).
 3. "Xerxes was king of Persia in 485-465 BC. The first part of his reign was marked by the famous
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campaign into Greece, beginning in 483. After the defeat at Salamis in 480 Xerxes himself withdrew from the expedition and it was finally discontinued in the next year. During the remainder of his reign, Xerxes seems to have spent a listless existence, absorbed in intrigues of the harem, and leaving the government to be carried on by his ministers and favorites (often slaves). He was finally murdered by his vizier and left an unenviable reputation for caprice and cruelty” [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright ©)1996 by Biblesoft].

4. “Xerxes I, pronounced ZURK seez (519?-465 B.C.), ruled the Persian Empire from 486 B.C. until his death. He succeeded his father, Darius I, and spent several years trying to achieve his father's goal of conquering Greece. However, Xerxes failed to do so, and his struggles against the Greeks greatly weakened the influence and power of the Persian Empire. During the early years of his reign, Xerxes put down revolts in the Persian provinces of Babylonia and Egypt. Then he began to assemble a huge land and sea force to invade Greece. This force included more than 180,000 men drawn from all over the empire, which then stretched as far west as Libya and as far east as the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. In 480 B.C., Xerxes led his army against a Greek force in a mountain pass at Thermopylae, northwest of Athens. The Greeks, led by troops from Sparta, held back the Persians until a traitor told Xerxes of another way through the mountains. The Persians attacked the Greeks from the rear and defeated them. The people of Athens then abandoned their great city. Xerxes burned many temples and other buildings in Athens. Soon afterward, the Greeks and Persians fought in the Bay of Salamis. The Greeks had fewer ships but were better trained than the Persians for maneuvering in the small bay. Xerxes watched from a hillside on shore as the Greeks crushed his fleet. Then he fled to his western capital in Asia Minor (now Turkey). In 479 B.C., Persian forces attacked the Greeks at Plataea, west of Athens, and were again defeated. In 467 or 466 B.C., Greek soldiers and seamen defeated Persian forces again at the mouth of the Eurymedon River, on the southern coast of Asia Minor. As a result a group of Persian nobles murdered Xerxes” (*World Book*, PC Version).
5. The above cases illustrate the ease with which such a massacre as planned in the book could be produced.

D. Background to the Book.

1. The Jews had been conquered by the Babylonians, which resulted in the slaughter or deportation of the majority of their population. There were three separate invasions by the Babylonians: 606, 597, and 586 B.C. Beginning in 536 B.C., after Babylon had been conquered by the Medes and Persians, the Jews were permitted to return to their homeland. Ezra and Nehemiah provide details of this restoration. At the time of Esther, there were many Jews still in the land of captivity; these and those who had returned to Palestine were all intended for destruction by the evil scheme, which is related in the book.
2. "Darius reigned 522-486 B.C. He was succeeded by Xerxes (486-463 B.C.), who invaded Greece, was stopped at Thermopylae, defeated at the naval battle at Salamis, and nearly annihilated at Plataea (479 B.C., Cf. POTH, 386). The Ahasuerus of the book of Esther is identified with this Xerxes (FLAP, 200). The book of Esther opens in the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), 483 B.C., at which time he gave a great feast. King Ahasuerus commanded that Vashti, the queen, be brought before the people at the feast, and Vashti refused. The king then had Vashti deposed as queen, at the advice of his counsellors (Esther 1:10-22)...During the next four years Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was engaged in his battles against the Greeks, finally suffering a disastrous humiliation in the battle at Plataea in 479 B.C. He returned to his capital at Shushan. It seems likely that the remaining events in the book of Esther (Esther 2-10) come in this period of the life of Ahasuerus, after 479 B.C. (POTH, 388). During this time Esther became the queen of Persia, and was able to save her people, the Jews, from the machinations of Haman, who earlier had persuaded

Ahasuerus to have the Jews killed (Esther 3:8,9,13)" (Free, p.244).

3. The name of God is not mentioned in the book. However, we are able to see his providential presence in the book as we study it. Although he is unnamed, he is involved in the events, working in his own way to preserve the seed of Abraham.
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Esther 1

A. Esther 1:1-9: The Royal Banquet.

1. Verses 1-4: "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days."
 - a. The vast empire over which Ahasuerus ruled extended from India to Africa, encompassing 127 provinces. Compare: "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel *was* first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage" (Dan. 6:1-2). There were others who wore the name Ahasuerus, but the one who is meant here is identified by the description of his empire. Ezra 4:6 and Daniel 6:1-2 name two other men who wore this name.
 - b. The feast occurred during the third year of his reign, and was given for the princes and nobles who ruled in the provinces of the empire. The festivities lasted for six months, at the end of which was a seven-day feast held in the palace garden (verse 5). Herodotus reported that after Xerxes had reconquered Egypt, he gathered his chief rulers at his palace to plan the invasion of Greece; he further reports that the plans took four years to be completed. The gathering at Susa reported by the text may be the same as that described by Herodotus.
 - c. "King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in the third year of his reign, which was B.C. 484-483, entertained at a great feast in the royal palace of Susa all his princes and his servants, 'the power of Persia and Media,' together with all the nobles and princes of the provinces (vers. 2, 3). The hospitality was extended over a space of 180 days (ver. 4). At the end of this time there was a further entertainment for seven days, on even a more profuse scale, all the male inhabitants of Susa being feasted in the palace gardens (vers. 5-8), while the queen received the women and made them a feast in her own private apartments. The special occasion of the entertainment seems to have been the summons to Susa of all the chief men of the kingdom, and particularly of the satraps, or 'princes of provinces,' to advise upon the projected expedition against Greece, which Herodotus mentions in his seventh book (ch. 8.). Banquets on an enormous scale were not uncommon in Persia; and the profuseness and vainglory of Xerxes would naturally lead him to go to an extreme in this, as in other matters" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - d. "In B.C. 483, probably in the early spring, when the court, having spent the winter at Babylon (Xenophon), returned to Susa to enjoy the most charming season of the year. He made a feast unto all his princes and his servants. Persian kings, according to Ctesias and Duris, ordinarily entertained at their table 15,000 persons! This is of course an exaggeration; but there can be no doubt that their hospitality was on a scale unexampled in modern times. The vast pillared halls of the Persepelitan and Susan palaces could accommodate many hundreds, if not thousands" (*ibid.*).
2. Verses 5-9: "And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen

and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus."

- a. At the end of the six-month celebration, a feast lasting seven days was given in the palace. The author was well acquainted with the details of the banquet, even able to describe in detail the decorations that adorned the palace. Of course, one who was inspired could easily report these details, even if he were not present to witness the affair firsthand.
- b. There was enough wine to satisfy the thirst of everyone present. The law did not compel anyone to drink, but those who wished to, had plenty to consume.
- c. While the week-long feast was taking place, Vashti was giving a separate feast for the women. "Vashti the queen also gave a banquet to the women in the royal house (palace) which belonged to King Ahashverosh, probably in the royal apartments of the palace, which were placed at her disposal for this great feast to be given to the women. The name Vashti may be compared with the Old-Persian vahista, i.e., optimus. In Persian štý, means a beautiful woman. This statement serves as an introduction to the scene which follows. Vv. 10 and 11" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

B. Esther 1:10-22: Queen Vashti is Deposed When She Refused to Honor the King's Drunken Request.

1. Verses 10-12: "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."
 - a. Vashti's name means *beautiful woman*. She was ordered by the king to display her beauty at the feast where the men were gathered. One can well-imagine the boasts that Ahasuerus may have made about her beauty, which could have led to this order. Notice that the order came after the king was *merry with wine*.
 - b. Josephus and the Targum say the command was for her to appear before the men unclothed; others say that she was to appear before them without the customary veil. Even if she was fully clothed, parading before a group of drunken men would not be a pleasant experience for any self-respecting lady. It is clear that Vashti possessed a greater degree of morality than did the king.
 - 1) "The queen refused to appear at the king's command as delivered by the eunuchs, because she did not choose to stake her dignity as a queen and a wife before his inebriated guests. The audacity of Persians in such a condition is evident from the history related Herod. v. 18" [Keil, *ibid.*].
 - 2) "Vashti's refusal was morally quite justifiable. Neither a husband's nor a king's authority extends to the wanton requirement of acts that, if done, would disgrace the doer for life. Had Vashti complied, she would have lost the respect not only of the Persian nation, but of the king himself. Therefore was the king very wroth. Had Ahasuerus really loved his wife, or been a man of fair and equitable disposition, he would have excused her refusal, and felt that he had deserved the rebuff. But, not really loving her, and being of a hot and ungovernable

- temper, he was violently enraged with her, as he always was when anything fell out contrary to his wishes (see Herod., 7:11, 35, 39, etc.)” [The Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
- c. Knowing her husband to be a violent and vengeful man, nevertheless she rejected the vile proposal. Doubtless she knew the consequence of rebuffing the king's demand. Ahasuerus was incensed over her refusal; his anger burned within him.
2. Verses 13-15: "Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?"
 - a. The king was sufficiently sober to inquire of his advisors what action he ought to take against Vashti. These advisors were the seers and soothsayers, who sought guidance and wisdom from the stars. The seven men whose counsel he requested were his closest advisors; they "saw the king's face" and "sat the first in the kingdom."
 - b. Although he was under the strong influence of intoxicants, he had enough sense about him to make the inquiry so that his action against the queen would not violate Persian law. These astrologers would offer their counsel based on the law of the land. The Persians were highly committed to the law, so much so that if a decision was enacted as a law, it could not be set aside. When the proposal to kill all the Jews had been made an official edict, even the king could not set it aside; he was able to circumvent the law, but he did not remove it.
 - c. "Angry as he was, Ahasuerus had still some power of self-restraint. He was in the presence of his whole court, and of a great assembly of the people. It would not be seemly that he should vent his passion in violent words, imprecations, or threats. His dignity required that he should at any rate seem calm, and, instead of issuing any hasty order, should proceed deliberately to consider what were the next steps to be taken. Xerxes appears to have been rather fond of asking advice (Herod., 7:8, 48, 234; 8:101); and he now, in a sufficiently dignified way, required the opinion of his "wise men" on the practical question, What was to be done to Vashti?... 'According to law, what is there to do to queen Vashti?' Law is given the prominent place, as though the king would say, Let us put aside feeling, and simply consider what the law is. If a queen disobeys the king openly in the face of his court, what, according to law, is to be done to her?" [The Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 3. Verses 16-20: "And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small."
 - a. The counsel, worded by Memucan, asserted that Vashti's refusal soon would be known throughout the empire and would result in the other women following her example. The husbands would be held in contempt by their wives.
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- b. In their view, Vashti had wronged the king and all the princes; her action could not be tolerated for she had set a bad precedent. She must be removed from her position as queen, and another more-deserving woman should be given her place. Their counsel was that this move be enacted as a royal decree, which would make it a law that could not be altered.
 - c. This proposal would quell any revolt on the part of the wives of the land, and Vashti could never regain favor with the king, due to the changeless nature of the decree. The decree was to be published throughout the empire to all the people.
4. Verses 21-22: "And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people."
- a. The counsel pleased them all, and was quickly put into effect. The edict was published in all the proper languages so that all could know the law. Some scholars think that the notice concerning the language means that the language of the house was to be that of the husband. However, since the empire included people from many different nations and tongues, the former view is doubtless correct.
 - b. Every man should have full authority in his house; the women were thus to be held in check by royal edict. The occasion for the edict was probably included in the published notices of the ruling.
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Esther 2

A. Esther 2:1-4: The Plan for a New Queen.

1. Verse 1: "After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her."
 - a. The king's anger ran its course. No one is able to maintain anger for a long period of time without effort. We will all *cool off* after a period of time. There are some individuals whose hatred never slackens with the passing of time, but may intensify. Ahasuerus, although given to sudden, violent temper, did not retain his wrath for long. After his anger was appeased, *he remembered Vashti*. He may have regretted his vile request and his harsh action against Vashti, but it was too late to change either.
 - b. 'On recovering from the violent excitement of his revelry and rage, the king was pierced with poignant regret for the unmerited treatment he had given to his beautiful and dignified queen. But, according to the law, which made the word of a Persian king irrevocable, she could not be restored. His counselors, for their own sake, were solicitous to remove his disquietude, and hastened to recommend the adoption of all suitable means for gratifying their royal master with another consort of equal or superior attractions to those of his divorced queen. The Persian monarch could legally choose a wife only from six noble ramifies (Herodotus, iii., 84). But, of course, in the exercise of absolute power, he could break through this restriction; and in existing circumstances, irritable, and depressed by the disastrous issue of his expedition into Greece, he was urged by his politic counselors, who were desirous of diverting his mind from gloomy reflections, to search the kingdom for a queen" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 2-4: "Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so."
 - a. The servants of the king suggested a plan by which a suitable queen could be selected. All the fair young virgins of the empire were to be found, brought to Susa, and placed in the house of the women where they would undergo the prescribed purification procedures. From these, the fairest would be chosen by the king to be queen.
 - b. The plan would prevent Vashti from regaining the king's favor. The merits of the strategy being obvious, the king agreed to the recommendation.

B. Esther 2:5-7: Esther and Mordecai Are Introduced into the Narrative

1. Verse 5: "Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite."
 - a. Shushan: Named from its abundant lilies. Capital of Elam, Cissia, or Susiana. Asshur-bani-pal, Esarhaddon's successor, in inscriptions says he took Shur and gives its ground plan sculptured (Layard Nin. 452), 600 B.C. In Belshazzar's last year Daniel was at Shushan in the palace (not actually, but transported in spirit) when he saw the vision (Dan 8:2). Cyrus' conquest transferred Shushan to Persia. Darius Hystaspes and the Achaemenian princes made it the capital. He founded the grand palace described in Est 1:5-6. Near Persia, cooler than Babylon, and having excellent water, Shushan was a suitable metropolis of the Persian empire. The kings left it for

Ecbatana or Persepolis only in the height of summer, and for Babylon in the depth of winter; here Alexander found twelve million and the regalia of the great king. After this it declined. Shushan lay between the two streams of the Eulaeus and the Shapur. Canals joined the two and so surrounded the citadel of Shushan. The Coprates or river of Dizful and the right branch of the Choaspes (Kerkhah) flowed a few miles E. and W. of the city. Hence arose its famed fertility. The Kerkhah water was so excellent that it was carried about with the great king on his journeys. The ruins cover a space 6,000 ft. E. to W. by 4,500 from N. to S.; the circumference is about three miles. Spacious artificial mounds or platforms stand separated from one another. The western one, of earth, gravel, and sundried bricks, is smallest but loftiest, 119 ft. above the Shapur, an obtuse angled triangle, with corners rounded off and base facing E. The sides are so steep as to be unapproachable to horsemen except at three points; round the top is a space of 2,850 ft. This is probably the famous citadel (Herodot. 3:68; Polyb. 5:48,14; Strabo 15:3, section 2; Arrian Exp. Al. 3:16)...[Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright ©)1998 by Biblesoft].

- b. At Shushan dwelt a certain Jew by the name of Mordecai, who occupies a role of great importance in the book of Esther. “Mordecai, the eunuch (Est 2:7,11), has been conjectured to be the same as Matabas, who, according to Ctesias, was the most powerful of the eunuchs during the latter portion of the reign of Xerxes. Mordecai's line of descent is traced from a certain Kish, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 598 B.C.—the year of Jeconiah's captivity—who was his great-grandfather. The four generations, Kish, Shimei, Jair, Mordecai, correspond to the known generations in other cases...” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft]. [Note: the date of the second Babylonian incursion into Palestine is usually put at 597 B.C., instead of 598 as given by Barnes].
 - c. “Mordecai, of the tribe of Benjamin, was the great-grandson of a man named Kish, who had been carried off to Babylon with King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) in 597 B.C. Upon the death of his uncle Abihail (Est 2:15), Mordecai took his uncle's orphaned daughter into his own home and brought her up. ‘Assuming that Hadassah is from (hadhas), myrtle, and that Esther is (sitar), the Persian for star (Sanskrit sta'na; Akk. istar), we have here an early example of the later Jewish practice of giving two names—a Hebrew and a Gentile name, such as, John Mark, Joses Justus, etc.’ (A. Macdonald, *Esther*, The New Bible Commentary, p. 382)” [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 - d. “The Targum says, ‘He was the son of Jair, the son of Shimea, the son of Gera, the son of Kish.’ And ‘this was the same Shimea that cursed David, and whom David forbade Joab to slay because he saw, in the spirit of prophecy, that he was to be the predecessor of Esther and Mordecai; but when he became old, and incapable of having children, David ordered Solomon to put him to death’” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Biblesoft].
 - e. The common feature of Jewish custom in introducing a man is to identify his lineage. Mordecai is said to be the son of Jair, of Shimei, and Kish; he was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. There were prominent men in earlier ages of the Israelite nation who bore the names of Shimei (2 Sam. 16:5; 1 Kings 2:8,36) and Kish (1 Chron. 8:33; 1 Sam. 9:1). Shimei was the name of the man who cursed David; Kish was the name of King Saul's father. Some scholars think that these historical figures are the ones meant by the text, but different people living at different times can have the same names.
2. Verse 6: "Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away."
 - a. The text speaks of someone (Mordecai, Jair, Shimei, or Kish?) having been taken away from

Jerusalem by the Babylonians at the time Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), king of Judah, was captivated. There were three deportations of the Israelites by Babylonia:

- 1) In 606 B.C. (Jehoiakim, Daniel, et al) : "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god" (Dan. 1:1-2).
 - 2) In 597 B.C. (Jeconiah): "Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was* Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those* carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong *and* apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon" (2 Kings 24:8-16).
 - 3) In 586 B.C. (Zedekiah): "And the city was broken up, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about:) and *the king* went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great *man's* house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that *were with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Now the rest of the people *that were* left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away. But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land *to be* vinedressers and husbandmen" (2 Kings 25:4-12).
- b. If Mordecai was carried into captivity in 597 B.C., he would be well over a hundred years of age at the time of Esther (478 B.C.). It is possible [and most likely] that Kish (being the nearest name to the statement concerning the deportation) could be the one stated to have been carried into captivity. However, it is Mordecai who is the principle character in the statement of verses 5-7. It was he who had brought up Esther as his own daughter (verse 7). The NKJ Version states that it was Kish who is stated to have been carried into captivity, and that it was Mordecai who brought up Esther. This is the most likely understanding. "In Shushan the citadel there was a
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certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter" (Esth. 2:5-7, NKJV).

- c. The reference to Mordecai's lineage identifies his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.
3. Verse 7: "And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."
 - a. Esther's Hebrew name was *Hadassah*; *Esther* was her Persian name. She was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle, making them cousins, although obviously Mordecai was considerably older than Esther.
 - b. Her parents being dead, Mordecai had taken Esther into his house, to rear her as if she were his own daughter. She was "fair of form, and good of countenance" (margin), qualifying her as an entrant in the contest for queenship.

C. Esther 2:8-12: Prospective Queens Are Gathered to Susa.

1. Verse 8: "So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women."
 - a. Esther was included in the group of young ladies who were brought to Susa for the selection process. These girls were placed in the custody of Hegai. Each was treated with special care, as befitting a future queen.
 - b. The gathering of the ladies would of necessity occupy a significant period of time, at least several weeks, and possibly several months, since these maidens were brought from the far reaches of the great empire of Persia.
 - c. "Esther was brought. Some have rendered, 'was forcibly brought;' and in the second Targum on Esther there is a story that Mordecai concealed her to prevent her from becoming an inmate of the royal harem, and that the king's authority was invoked to force him to give her up; but the Hebrew word translated "was brought" does not contain any idea of violence; and the Persian Jews probably saw no disgrace, but rather honour, in one of their nation becoming even a secondary wife to the great king" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 2. Verse 9: "And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women."
 - a. Doubtless all the young ladies were beautiful, but Esther obtained the good pleasure of Hegai, the man given the oversight of their care. Why did he take special interest in Esther? Probably not merely because of her outward beauty; there may have been something exceptional about her inner beauty.
 - b. Taking special interest in Esther, Hegai provided her with the best rooms in the king's house. Her apartment was superior to those of the other contestants. She was given seven maidens from the king's house to assist her. Esther quickly received those items that pertained to the purification rites. Does this imply that the other girls did not receive theirs as quickly? It appears that she was also permitted to have other property that belonged to her.
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- c. "Esther's personal feelings in this matter are not recorded, but we may assume that she trusted Jehovah and was therefore blessed by him (somewhat like Joseph and Daniel). Unlike Joseph and Daniel, however, she did not identify her nationality, and may therefore have partaken of ceremonially unclean food. Why Mordecai charged her to keep her nationality secret (v. 20) is not easy to determine. Perhaps he feared for her safety (v. 11)" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
3. Verse 10: "Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it."
 - a. Setting the stage for the events soon to develop, the author introduces the fact that Esther had not revealed her nationality to the Persians.
 - b. Mordecai had counseled her to keep quiet about it. Perhaps he was wise enough to perceive that her Jewish background would disqualify her from consideration to become queen, or at least keeping that element secret would prevent unnecessary difficulties and opposition. There appears to have been a high degree of prejudice against the Jews.
 - c. "To have confessed that she was a Jewess would probably have roused a prejudice against her, or at any rate have prevented her from being received with special favour. Mordecai, knowing this, had instructed her to say nothing to Hegel on the subject, and no one else, it would seem, had enlightened him" [Pulpit Commentary].
4. Verse 11: "And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her."
 - a. Mordecai was keenly interested in Esther's welfare and future. He walked daily before the court of the women's house in order to keep abreast of her status. In some way he was able to learn of her welfare; perhaps messages were passed to him by Esther's attendants; maybe he was able to obtain that information in some other manner.
 - b. "Mordecai seems to have been one of the porters at the main entrance to the palace, and his proper place was at the gateway. He contrived, however, during some part of each day to visit the court in front-of the seraglio, in order to see Esther, or at any rate obtain intelligence concerning her" [*ibid.*].
 - c. "Mordochai walked every day before the court or enclosure of the women's house, to know the welfare (shaalowm (OT:7965)) of Esther and what became of her (baah (OT:871 a) yee`aaseh (OT:6213), properly, what was done to her). Hence Mordochai was in constant communication with Esther. How this communication was effected is not more particularly stated; probably by means of the maids appointed to wait on her. Jewish expositors are of opinion, that Mordochai held high office, and that having consequently free access to the royal palace, he could easily find the means of communicating with his relative" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

D. Esther 2:12-18: Esther's Preparation and Selection.

1. Verses 12-14: "Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name."
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- a. The purification procedures included the application of oil of myrrh for six months, and sweet odors for an additional six months. The year-long preparation would reveal whether the individual was with child, and would give Hegai the opportunity to learn the character of each. By this process, the king was able to identify the special person to become his queen.
 - b. Those found worthy to go in to the king were each provided with whatever the candidate desired. This would include clothing, jewelry, and cosmetics. Anything that might enhance the individual's chance of being selected as queen was available upon request. Each of those thought worthy went in to the king in the evening and returned to the "second house of the women" in the morning, which was under the custody of Shaashgaz, the keeper of the concubines.
 - c. The young women were placed in one house during the twelve month period of preparation; after their visit with the king, they were placed in the second house, where the concubines lived. Only if the concubine was requested by name did she ever go in to the king again. The queen had a special residence of her own. "The gynaeceum comprised at least three distinct houses:—1. A residence for the queen, corresponding to that which Solomon built for the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kings 7:8); 2. A house for the secondary wives, or concubines; and, 3. A house for the virgins. On returning from her first visit to the king's chamber, a woman ordinarily became an inmate of the 'second house.' This 'second house' was under the care of a eunuch called Sha'ashgaz" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - d. Did this evening meeting with the king include intimacy? Doubtless it did. Persia was a pagan society, and the Jews in the land of captivity were under the domination of the Persians. Esther had no choice in the matter. The time was one in which God saw fit to overlook certain things which he will not permit today: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).
 - e. "A whole year was spent in preparation for the intended honour. Considering that this took place in a palace, the long period prescribed, together with the profusion of costly and fragrant cosmetics employed, was probably required by state etiquette. At the same time, as it is said that from the dirty and neglected way in which the girls of Georgia and Circassia are brought up in their humble homes, a long process of purification is absolutely necessary before these celebrated beauties are fit for being brought into the Turkish markets. Reasons of a similar kind may have originated the cleansing processes at Shushan. But fragrant perfumes were an indispensable mark of royal gratification to the kings of Persia, that these were burnt before them whenever they went abroad; and it is most likely, therefore, that fondness for cosmetics led to the course described in this passage. In fact, perfumes were used profusely, without regard either to cost or to quality" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - f. "Six months with oil of myrrh. Myrrh was highly esteemed, both for its scent and for its purifying power, by the ancients. In Egypt it was employed largely in the preparation of mummies (Herod., 2:86). The Jews were directed to make it one of the chief ingredients in their 'holy anointing oil' (Ex 30:23-25). Dresses and beds were scented with it (Ps 45:8; Prov 7:17). And six months with sweet odours. The word translated 'sweet odours' seems to mean 'spices' generally (comp. Song 4:16)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 15-18: "Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house
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royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king."

- a. When Esther's turn came, she requested nothing special to wear or use; she took the ordinary appointments. If God was to be behind the selection, extravagant adornments would not increase her chances, and their omission would not lessen her prospect. She had no special concern with pleasing the king with lavish dress and adornments. She pleased all who saw her. Years earlier, when Daniel and his friends were carried to Babylon (606 B.C.), those young men were groomed to serve in the king's court. Daniel refused to partake of the meat provided for them, requesting instead to be given *pulse*. He did not need royal treatment to be fair of countenance (Dan. 1:1-16).
- b. Esther's turn came during the king's seventh year of reign, in the month of Tebeth. His invasion of Grecian territory apparently occurred between the time that Vashti was deposed and the selection of Esther to the royal family. "Four years after the disgrace of Vashti, probably in January, B.C. 479. Xerxes had recently returned from the Grecian expedition defeated and disgraced. He was glad to dismiss warlike matters from his thoughts, and to console himself for his failure by the pleasures of the seraglio" [Pulpit Commentary].
- c. Esther found favor of all those who were around her, including the other contestants. She was chosen to occupy the queen's office. In honor of the occasion, the king gave a great feast for a great number of important officials, and "made a release to the province." This release was a remission of taxes or labor on the part of the people. He also presented gifts to certain unidentified recipients, according to his bounty.

E. Esther 2:19-23: Mordecai Sits at the King's Gate.

1. Verses 19-20: "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him."
 - a. The occasion of verse 19 was likely well-known to the Jews of the time, so a simple reference was sufficient to identify for them the incident.
 - b. Esther had still refrained from identifying her nationality, in keeping with the charge given her by Mordecai. She no longer resided in her cousin's house, but had not forsaken his counsel. In some fashion, Mordecai had been given the honor of sitting "in the king's gate" (verse 21; cf. Prov. 31:23).
 - 1) Esther 2:21: "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus."
 - 2) Proverbs 31:23: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."
 2. Verses 21-22: "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name."
 - a. In ancient times, judges and wise men dispensed their decisions and counsel at the gates of the cities. Mordecai evidently had received such an appointment, possibly through the influence of Esther, or perhaps through his own merit.
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- b. While Mordecai sat at the king's gate, he came into possession of information about a plot being laid by two of the king's foes to assassinate the monarch. Mordecai related the information to Esther, who in turn gave the report to the king. She made sure that Ahasuerus knew that the source of the information was Mordecai.
 3. Verse 23: "And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."
 - a. The plotters were Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains who were angry at the king for some reason.
 - b. The report was investigated, and the guilt of the two men was determined. They were both hanged on a tree. Some scholars say that this hanging may have been by impaling the victim on a sharp stick, which was set into the ground. "Generally, where the word is used in connection with punishments, it appears to have reference to the hanging of the corpse after execution. We find but two clear instances of death by hanging, i.e. strangulation—those of Ahithophel and Judas (2 Sam 17:23; Matt 27:5), and both these were cases of suicide, not of execution. The foregoing Hebrew word is clearly used for 'hanging' as a mode of execution in Est 5:14; 6:4; 7:9 ff; 8:7; 9:13-14,25; but probably the 'gallows' or 'tree' ('ets) was a stake for the purpose of impaling the victim. It could be lowered for this purpose, then raised 'fifty cubits high' to arrest the public gaze. The Greek word used in Matt 27:5 is apagchesthai, 'to strangle oneself'" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright ©)1996 by BibleSoft].
 - c. The writer of the book is a master storyteller, inserting the essential details at the proper junctures. The best writer is one who is empowered to inscribe an inspired message! At this point, we are told that the proper notice was placed in the book of the king's chronicles, a fact that later proves to be a highly significant detail.
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Esther 3

A. Esther 3:1-6: Haman is Exalted Above the Other Princes of the Empire.

1. Verses 1-2: "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence."
 - a. "Haman is called the son of Hammedatha haa'agaagiy (OT:91), the Agagite, or of the Agagites. 'agaagiy (OT:91) recalls 'agaag kings of the Amalekites, conquered and taken prisoner by Saul, and hewn in pieces by Samuel, 1 Sam 15:8,33. Hence Jewish and Christian expositors regard Haman as a descendant of the Amalekite king. This is certainly possible, though it can by no means be proved. The name Agag is not sufficient for the purpose, as many individuals might at different times have borne the name 'agaag, i.e., the fiery. In 1 Sam 15, too, Agag is not the nomen propr. of the conquered king, but a general nomen dignitatis of the kings of Amalek, as Pharaoh and Abimelech were of the kings of Egypt and Gerar. See on Num 24:7. We know nothing of Haman and his father beyond what is said in this book, and all attempts to explain the names are uncertain and beside the mark" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - b. Haman, for some unnamed cause, was selected by Ahasuerus to be elevated above his peers. The king had given instruction that all his servants were to bow and show reverence for Haman.
 - c. However, there was one of the king's subjects who declined to offer that reverence for Haman—Mordecai. Why not? Doubtless it was because Mordecai sought to follow the Mosaic Law, which forbade worship being done to any but the Almighty. "And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exod. 20:1-6).
 - d. Jews are shown to have bowed before kings on other occasions.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 14:4: "And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 18:28: "And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."
 - 3) 1 Kings 1:16: "And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou?"
 - e. Some ancient kings ascribed deity to themselves, requiring their subjects to treat them as such. Certainly, it would be wrong for any God-fearing person to worship some earthly creature as a divine being.
 - f. "The obsequious homage of prostration, not entirely foreign to the manners of the East, had not been claimed by former viziers; but this minion required that all subordinate officers of the court should bow before him with their faces to the earth. But to Mordecai it seemed that such an

attitude of profound reverence was due only to God. Haman's being an Amalekite, one of a doomed and accursed race, was, doubtless, another element in the refusal; and on learning that the recusant was a Jew, whose non-conformity was grounded on religious scruples, the magnitude of the affront appeared so much the greater, as the example of Mordecai would be imitated by all his compatriots. Had the homage been a simple token of civil respect, Mordecai would not have refused it; but the Persian kings demanded a sort of adoration, which, it is well known, even the Greeks reckoned it degradation to express; and as Xerxes, in the height of his favouritism, had commanded the same honours to be given to the minister as to himself, this was the ground of Mordecai's refusal" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].

2. Verses 3-4: "Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew."
 - a. Mordecai's associates inquired why he did not bow before Haman, and pressed him daily about the matter. Finally, when it became clear that he would not heed the king's direction, they reported to Haman that Mordecai did not do obeisance to him.
 - b. Mordecai had revealed to them earlier that he was a Jew; this fact was included in their report to Haman (see verse 6).
3. Verses 5-6: "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai."
 - a. Haman took note of the fact that Mordecai did not bow to him, and was filled with indignation over this lack of respect for the king's appointed! The pre-eminent problem of Haman is conspicuous: pride.
 - b. Haman thought at first that he would destroy Mordecai, but on reflection, he decided that it would be better to destroy the entire Jewish race! To bring about Mordecai's death would be a poor recompense for the disgrace that stubborn Jew had caused Haman! It seems that his scheme reflected an awareness of the reason Mordecai refused to do obeisance: an unwillingness on the part of all Jews to worship any but God. Thus, to remove this stubborn attitude, all the Jews must be slain. In the process, Haman's thirst for vengeance would be fully appeased.
 - c. The harshness of Haman, which was brought out by his pride, was a sin which adversely affected many people. Sin often hurts more than the sinner. Sin does not long remain alone; it is expressed through other avenues, and deepens even as it spreads.

B. Esther 3:7-11: Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews.

1. Verse 7: "In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar."
 - a. During the twelfth year of Ahasuerus, from the first month (Nisan) to the twelfth month (Adar), the Persian schemers cast lots to determine the exact day for the massacre of the Jews. The date they decided on was the 13th day of the twelfth month, eleven months away (verse 13).
 - b. The Persians were very superstitious people. Their casting of lots (called *Pur* by the inspired author) was for the purpose of identifying a good day for the plot to be consummated. The feast of Purim developed from this event, a feast that is still celebrated by the Jews of our time.

- c. The casting of lots might have taken place on the occasion (during Nisan), with each day of the year being tested by the lot to see if it would be a good day for the massacre.
 2. Verses 8-9: "And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries."
 - a. Haman told the king that the law of the Jews was different from, and contradicted, the king's own law, and that they refused to obey the king's law. He asserted that it was not in the king's best interest to allow them to continue this rebellious practice.
 - b. His suggestion on how to eliminate the problem was to exterminate the people themselves. Notice how casually he and the king could decide to slaughter a whole nation of people.
 - c. As an incentive, Haman offered to pay into the king's treasuries the sum of 10,000 talents of silver. This offer took into account the fact that the loss of the Jews would result in a decrease in the income of the state; the money he promised to give would make up for a sizeable portion of the decrease. Ten thousand talents of silver represented a great amount of money! The money Haman promised may have been the sum he expected to take from the slaughtered Jews.
 3. Verses 10-11: "And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee."
 - a. Ahasuerus gave his signet ring to Haman, which was tantamount to giving him a free hand to carry out the recommendation. The gift of the ring was implicit approval of whatever action Haman took.
 - b. The king said that the silver could be divided between Haman and those who did the foul deed; it was not necessary to bring it into the king's treasuries.
 - c. In an almost off-hand fashion, the fate of the Jews was determined; however, neither Haman nor Ahasuerus reckoned with the providential power of the Almighty.
- C. Esther 3:12-15: The Decree to Destroy the Jews is Issued.
 1. Verses 12-13: "Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring."
 - a. On the 13th day of Nisan (the first month in the Jewish calendar), the scribes were instructed to write the plan into law. The plan became official and immutable. The day of massacre was set for the 13th day of the 12th month.
 - b. The enactment of the law took place the day before the Passover was to be observed. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover" (Lev. 23:5). The timing of the law could hardly have come at a worse time!
 - c. The empire of Persian was far-flung, from Ethiopia to India, with many races, nations, and languages being included. The law announcing and describing the massacre of the Jews was to be published in the language of the various people of the kingdom. This would require the work of many people, over many days. Think of the anguish this law would have on the Jews prior to the fateful day! They could count the days as the time approached, but apparently had

no means of forestalling the slaughter intended; they were a people living under domination of the Persians; they were few and weak, but the oppressors had the full power of the Persian Empire behind them. How fearful it would be to us today if the United Nations were to decide to kill every member of the Lord's church.

2. Verses 14-15: "And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed."
 - a. Notice the legal language of the law: "...to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women...."
 - b. Think of the effect if such an announcement were to be spread throughout our land! There would be great anxiety and excitement. The people were perplexed. "The Jews had enemies in Susa (Est 9:12-15); but the bulk of the inhabitants being Persians, and so Zoroastrians, would be likely to sympathize with them. There might also be a widespread feeling among persons of other nationalities that the precedent now set was a dangerous one. Generally the people of the capital approved and applauded whatever the great king did. Now they misdoubted the justice, and perhaps even the prudence, of what was resolved upon. The decree threw them into perplexity" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - c. Why nearly a year between the order being issued and its execution? It would take a considerable amount of time for the message to be sufficiently spread so as to be executed. A certain amount of time was also necessary for God's providence to bring about its effect.
 - d. The callousness of the king and Haman is shown by the text: as the letters went forth, they sat down to drink.
 - e. "The posts went forth hastening (daachap like 2 Chron 26:20) at the king's commandment, and the decree was given (promulgated) in the citadel of Susa—an explanatory clause; and the king and Haman sat down to drink while the messengers went forth with the decree, but the city of Susa, in which it was first published, was in perplexity (on naabowkaah (OT:943) comp. Ex 14:3; Joel 1:18). The cruel measure could not but fill all peace-loving citizens with horror and anxiety.—Here the question is forced upon us, why the decree should have been so prematurely published. The scribes were summoned to prepare it on the thirteenth day of the first month. For this purpose, even though many copies had to be made in different languages, no very long time would be required in a well-appointed government office. As soon as the scribes had finished their work, the decree was sent out by the posts into all quarters of the realm, and would arrive in even the most distant provinces in three weeks at furthest. This would place almost eleven, and in the remotest parts about ten months between the publication and execution of the decree. What then was the motive for such an interval? Certainly so long a time could not be required for preparing to carry it out, nor is this hinted at in the text, as Bertheau supposes. Nor could it be intended that the Jews should suffer a long period of anxiety. On the contrary, the motive seems to have been, as Clericus and others have already conjectured, to cause many Jews to leave their property and escape to other lands, for the sake of preserving their lives. Thus Haman would attain his object. He would be relieved of the presence of the Jews, and be able to enrich himself by the appropriation of their possessions (comp. p. 192). On the other hand, the providence of God overruling the event in the interest of the Jews, is unmistakably evident both in Haman's haste to satisfy his desire for vengeance, and in the falling of the lot upon so

distant a day. It was only because there was so long an interval between the publication of the decree and the day appointed by lot for its execution, that it was possible for the Jews to take means for averting the destruction with which they were threatened, as the further development of the history will show” [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

Esther 4

A. Esther 4:1-3: Mordecai Mourns Over the Law.

1. Verse 1: "When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry."
 - a. When Mordecai came into possession of all the pertinent facts regarding the new law, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth and ashes, going out into the city, bitterly crying aloud. He did not have too much pride that he would not show his sorrow. There is no shame in shedding tears. Some of the greatest men and women of the Bible wept: Abraham; Peter; women at the Lord's crucifixion; Paul; Christ.
 - 1) Abraham: "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (Gen. 23:1-2).
 - 2) Peter: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75).
 - 3) The women at the Lord's crucifixion: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:28-31).
 - 4) Paul: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).
 - 5) Christ: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).
 - b. This was a man who took to heart the national calamity ordered against his people. He was not like some who are indifferent to the Lord's Cause when it faces defeat.
 - 1) Lamentations 1:12: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."
 - 2) Judges 5:23: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty."
 - c. There are also many in our society who are callous toward the problems of their fellowman. What a great change would be seen in our world if all men were to faithfully practice the Golden

Rule!

- 1) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - 2) Luke 6:31: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
 - d. Mordecai did not go forth in mourning until he learned the whole story of the new law. He did not act rashly or prematurely. Some of us tend to react with too much haste when it only *appears* that a problem is in the offing; some of us sometimes over-react to distressing situations.
2. Verse 2: "And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."
 - a. Many ancient kings did not permit sorrow or weeping in their presence. It was considered to portend some evil. The custom was followed in ancient Persia, for Mordecai could not enter the courts of the palace; he could proceed no farther than the gates.
 - b. "Notice is here taken of a law that none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth; though the arbitrary power of their kings often, as now, set many a mourning, yet none must come near the king in a mourning dress, because he was not willing to hear the complaints of such. Nothing but what was gay and pleasant must appear at court, and every thing that was melancholy must be banished thence; all in king's palaces wear soft clothing (Matt 11:8), not sackcloth. But thus to keep out the badges of sorrow, unless they could withal have kept out the causes of sorrow—to forbid sackcloth to enter, unless they could have forbidden sickness, and trouble, and death to enter—was jest. However this obliged Mordecai to keep his distance, and only to come before the gate, not to take his place in the gate" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 3. Verse 3: "And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."
 - a. Throughout the vast empire of Persia, in the places where Jews dwelled, there was great mourning. Their nation has faced many such sorrowful experiences. Even today, they are hated and opposed by the Arabs and others.
 - b. While much (perhaps most) of the trouble Israel has suffered through the ages has been brought on them on account of their own rebellion against God, in this particular instance it was precipitated by the hatred of one man, whose pride was injured by a Jew who was trying to be obedient to the Law.

B. Esther 4:4-9: Queen Esther Grieves Over the Law.

1. Verse 4: "So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not."
 - a. Mordecai's mourning was brought to the attention of Esther by her attendants. She did not know of the new edict, and thus did not understand the cause of Mordecai's sorrow.
 - b. Knowing that mourning was not permitted in the sight of her husband, she sent clothing to Mordecai so that he might remove the sackcloth, which was a clear indication of mourning even without audible cries. Sackcloth was made of rough, dark animal hair.
 - 1) Matthew 3:4: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey."

- 2) Revelation 6:12: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."
 - c. Mordecai refused to take the clothing. She likely intended for Mordecai to don the clothes so that he could enter the courts and then be able to bring her a report about his grief.
 2. Verses 5-6: "Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was. So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate."
 - a. Esther, still gravely concerned and puzzled over Mordecai's grief, sent Hatach, one of the king's servants assigned to Esther, to make inquiry of her kinsman.
 - b. Mordecai had chosen a very public place to bewail the horrors facing his people. His mourning could have brought the anger of the king upon him, but he cared not for any possible danger to himself. If the law was not changed, his earthly days would soon be over anyway.
 - c. "Communication with the women in the harem is hardly ever to be obtained, and only through the medium of the keepers. The chief eunuch receives the message from the lips of the queen, conveys it to some inferior officer of the seraglio, and when the commission is executed, the subaltern communicates it to the superintendent, by whom it is delivered to the queen. This chief eunuch, usually an old man who has recommended himself by a long course of faithful service, is always appointed by the king, but it is his interest, as well as his duty, to ingratiate himself with the queen also; and, accordingly, we find Hatach rendering himself very serviceable in carrying on those private communications with Mordecai, who was thereby enabled to enlist her powerful influence" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verses 7-9: "And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai."
 - a. Mordecai told Hatach the whole story about the new decree, including the details regarding Haman's offer of ten thousand talents of silver for the king's treasury.
 - b. Esther, living in her residence, was insulated from many outside affairs. She was unable to mix and mingle with the population, or even to visit with her relatives. The king still did not know of Esther's lineage.
 - c. Mordecai not only gave the report to Hatach, he also sent a copy of the law to the queen so that she could see the reality of the report. He sent word also to her that she should intercede with the king in Israel's behalf.
 - d. At about the same time in history, the life of Grecian women is delineated as follows: "She may, if properly veiled and attended, visit her relatives or intimates, and may take part in the religious celebrations, including attendance at the plays; but for the rest she is expected to stay at home, and not allow herself to be seen at a window. Most of her life is spent in the women's quarters at the rear of the house; no male visitor is ever admitted there, nor does she appear when men visit her husband" (Will Durant, *The Life of Greece*, p.306). The Persian women were likely even more restricted.
- C. Esther 4:10-14: Mordecai's Immortal Counsel to Esther.
1. Verses 10-12: "Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man
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or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And they told to Mordecai Esther's words."

- a. Esther sent word back to Mordecai by Hatach that she had not been called to come to the king for the past thirty days, and to go in unbidden was to risk death. There was an unalterable law in the kingdom which said that anyone entering to see the king without a previous invitation to do so, would be slain, except in the case that the king should hold out the golden sceptre to the uninvited person.
 - b. Evidently, the guard would immediately slay one who presumed to enter the inner court without being summoned. Also, if she went in unsummoned, she would have to announce the purpose of her visit without delay on entering, assuming that the king extended the golden sceptre to her. To make the request on first arriving would not assure success; it would likely cause the supplication to be denied.
 - c. It would not be easy to get the king to address the edict, even under the best of circumstances. Before he would be willing to hear her request, she would have to make known to him her reason for asking. She must reveal her nationality, which would itself condemn her to death unless the entire decree were lifted. But as we have seen, the law of the land did not allow a law, once enacted, to be overthrown. A good purpose this served was as a caution on enacting a new law; on the downside, the rule would not permit a bad law to be repealed.
2. Verses 13-14: "Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
- a. The conversation between Mordecai and Esther was conducted through Hatach. Mordecai responded to the queen's latest communication by reminding her that even though she was queen, that did not insure that she would escape the evil edict; information regarding her true race was bound to come out during the fatal massacre, for among the Jews there were those who knew her, and perhaps to avoid death themselves, would incriminate the queen. Esther had nothing to lose by taking the chance of having the king to extend to her the sceptre.
 - b. If Esther did not take the initiative to influence the king to overturn the decree, the Jews would obtain their deliverance from another source, but she and her father's house would perish. Although the name of God is not found in the entire book, the very statement of Mordecai here clearly implies that God would deliver the Jews somehow. It is certain that Mordecai was not trusting to mere chance for their salvation!
 - c. Mordecai, knowing the Law of Moses and hence acquainted with the promises God had made to Abraham, fully trusted in God's ability to fulfill his commitments. Lying at the heart of God's promises to Abraham, was the continuation of the nation of Israel. Correctly understanding the proposition, Mordecai knew that if Haman's scheme were to succeed, then God's pledges would be completely voided. This development was unthinkable! Jehovah would fulfill his promises!
 - d. Mordecai raised the point that it might very well be the case that Esther had risen to her queenly office for the express purpose of preserving the Jews. Knowing the outcome of the story, we can safely affirm that she did indeed receive that position for that precise purpose! God's providence brought her there, but she must have the faith and courage to take the proper action to fulfill her destiny.
 - e. "Mordecai is confident that God will not allow the destruction of his people. Without naming
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his name, he implies a trust in his gracious promises, and a conviction that Haman's purpose will be frustrated; how, he knows not, but certainly in some way or other. If deliverance does not come through Esther, then it will arise from some other quarter. But thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. A denunciation of Divine vengeance. Though the nation will be saved, it will not benefit you. On you will fall a just judgment—having endeavoured to save your life, you will lose it—and your father's house will be involved in your ruin. We may gather from this that Esther was not Abihail's only child. Who knoweth, etc. Consider this also. Perhaps (who knows?) God has raised you up to your royal dignity for this very purpose, and none other, that you should be in a position to save your nation in this crisis" [Pulpit Commentary].

D. Esther 4:15-17: Esther Decides to Take Action.

1. Verses 15-16: "Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."
 - a. Esther sent back an answer which revealed her courageous decision: she would go in to see the king; she was perfectly willing to face the hazards involved, for her obligation was exceedingly plain!
 - b. However, there was something that she and Mordecai could do to influence the outcome of the venture. She did not decide to rashly rush in without certain important steps being taken. She asked Mordecai to gather the Jews together, who were in Shushan, and fast for three days and nights. She and her maidens would do the same.
 - c. Their fasting was doubtless accompanied by praying. If they fasted they prayed, and if they prayed, there is inherent in that fact an allusion to the Almighty. Fasting and prayer go together:
 - 1) Psalm 35:13: "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom."
 - 2) Daniel 9:3: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."
 - 3) Acts 10:30: "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing."
 - 4) Acts 14:23: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."
 - d. Her resolve is stated in her statement, "If I perish, I perish." She was determined to do what she could, using the best wisdom she possessed; this, coupled with their fasting and prayers, would perhaps bring the problem to a successful conclusion. However, she was not deceived as to the difficulty of the case. She knew the immutable nature of Persian decrees, and that it would be most difficult and hazardous to obtain a reprieve for the Jews. To overturn the edict would be greater in difficulty than getting our government to overturn the ruling which permits abortion. In fact, to overturn the Persian decree would require the overthrow of the kingdom. The Supreme Court could reverse its 1973 ruling which permits abortion—the court reversed the decision in the Dred Scott case in an earlier time.
 - e. Esther gives us a great example of faith and courage. Her example also illustrates the importance of asking for the help of heaven before beginning a fateful and meaningful mission. Christ prayed before the great undertakings of his ministry; he prayed before he was arrested;

he prayed while hanging on the cross.

- f. This must be our disposition and practice. "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (Jas. 4:13-15).
 - g. "Fasting for another is fasting to obtain God's blessing on that other, and is naturally accompanied with earnest prayer to God for the person who is the object of the fast. Thus here again the thought of God underlies the narrative. It has been supposed that Esther could not have meant an absolute fast—complete abstinence from both food and drink—for so long a period as three days; but Oriental abstemiousness would not be very severely taxed by a fast of this length. The time intended—from the evening of the first to the morning of the third day—need not have much exceeded thirty-six hours. I also and my maidens will fast likewise. 'Likewise' is to be taken here in its proper sense, as meaning 'in like manner.' We also will abstain both from meat and drink during the same Period" [Pulpit Commentary].
2. Verse 17: "So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him."
- a. On receiving this latest communication from Esther, Mordecai went his way, and did what the queen had asked him to do. The time for public mourning was over; the time now was for fasting and prayer. Perhaps God would be able to do what they could not themselves accomplish. Esther assumed that her cousin would have sufficient influence to move the Jews to assemble for the purpose of fasting and praying. Indeed, they would be happy to do so, in view of the horrible fate that awaited them without God's intervention.
 - b. It is not specifically stated that Esther fasted, but that was her plan, and there is certainly every reason to believe she did what she planned to do. Everything that could be done, was being done. Would the king extend to her the golden sceptre when she entered his court?
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Esther 5

A. Esther 5:1-8: Esther Invites Ahasuerus and Haman to a Banquet.

1. Verse 1: "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house."
 - a. After having fasted (and prayed) for three days, Esther donned her royal apparel. In keeping with her plan, she entered the court of the king's house, within sight of the throne.
 - b. Having humbled herself before God in fasting (and prayer), and having thus invoked God's assistance, she now stands ready and committed to the perilous task.
 - c. "Esther put on her royal apparel. This is certainly the meaning, though the elliptical phrase used is uncommon. Esther, while she fasted, had worn some garb of woe; now she laid it aside, and appeared once more in all the splendour of her royal robes. She took up her position directly in front of the king's apartment, with the object of attracting his attention, and perhaps with the knowledge that he was upon his throne, whence he could not fail to see her" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - d. "The palace of this Persian king seems to have been built...with an advanced cloister, over against the gate, made in the fashion of a large pent-house, supported only by one or two contiguous pillars in the front, or else in the center. In such open structures as these, in the midst of their guards and counselors, are the bashaws, kadis, and other great officers accustomed to distribute justice, and transact the public affairs of the provinces. In such a situation the Persian king was seated; and, at least in Shushan, 'the house of the women' was separated from the 'king's house' by the intervention of a 'court.' similar was the position of the harem at Khorsabad ('Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 646; Fergusson's 'Palaces of Nineveh,' p. 254; Botta, 'Monumens de Nineve,' v., p. 42). The seat he occupied was not a throne according to our ideas of one but simply a chair, and so high that it required a footstool. It was made of gold, or, at least, inlaid with that metal, and covered with splendid tapestry, and no one except the king might sit down on it under pain of death. It is often found pictured on the Persepolitan monuments, and always of the same fashion. A fly-flapper usually attended at the side or back of the throne" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 2: "And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre."
 - a. Seeing Esther standing in the royal court, he was pleased to see her, and extended to her the golden sceptre. Her life and the life of Israel hung in the balance, first in her appearing before the king without invitation. This initial risk had been successfully met when the king held out the sceptre to her.
 - b. She went forth to the throne, and touched the top of the sceptre. Would the second phase of the plan be as successful as the first? Would there be a way for Esther to successfully plead for Israel's life?
 - c. It seems strange to us today that there would be such a rule that meant death to one who entered the royal court without invitation. There was a sensible reason behind the law. Without it, a king could be more easily assassinated, for if any would-be assassin knew that he would be summarily slain if he approached the king, he would hesitate to try. Apparently, the guards

carried the continuing responsibility to kill any one who entered the royal court without summons, unless the king quickly offered permission. It is difficult and dangerous for one to impose his presence on the United States President—the offender might not be immediately slain, but he would be instantly subdued.

3. Verse 3: "Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom."
 - a. Knowing the queen would not have risked her life without a proper cause, the king inquired as to her request. He stated his willingness to give her anything, up to half of his great kingdom.
 - b. If the king was so well-disposed toward Esther, should she not have been aware of it? And if that was the case, why did she think there was grave danger in approaching him? It may very well have been the case that she did not know what his disposition toward her was. He had not seen her for thirty days. And his temper was well-known. There most certainly was a weighty danger.
 - c. "The practice of granting requests beforehand is one common among Oriental monarchs. Sometimes no limit at all is placed to the petitioner's liberty of choice—seldom any less wide limit than that of the present passage. According to Herodotus (9:111), there was one day in the year on which the king was bound to grant any request made by a guest at his table. To the half of the kingdom. Compare Mark 6:23, where Herod Antipas makes the same limitation" [Pulpit Commentary].
 4. Verses 4-5: "And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared."
 - a. Her response was to offer an invitation to the king and to Haman to attend a banquet she had prepared for them that day.
 - b. He did not put her off by claiming to have such a heavy schedule that he could not come. Neither did he think the request was too insignificant for her to have risked her life in order to extend it. As will be seen in the passage, he perceived that this invitation was not the real petition. He would bide his time, trusting his queen to reveal her request at the appropriate time.
 - c. The king sent word to Haman for him to attend the banquet. "Such an invitation as this was very unusual. Ordinarily the king and queen dined separately, each in their own apartments; family gatherings, however, not being unknown (Plut., 'Vit. Artaxerx.,' § 5; Athen., 'Deipnosoph.,' 4. p. 145, A). But for the queen to invite not only the king, but also another male guest, not a relation, was a remarkable innovation, and must have seemed to the fortunate recipient of the invitation a high act of favour" [Pulpit Commentary].
 5. Verse 6: "And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."
 - a. Ahasuerus was wise enough to understand that Esther would not have placed her life in jeopardy merely to invite her husband and Haman to a feast. Hence, he inquired again what her petition was, once more saying that it would be granted, even to half his empire.
 - b. Even with this promise of a receptive hearing of her petition, still she did not reveal it. The wisdom of her plan is seen in the eventual success with which it met.
 - c. "Ahasuerus has understood that it was not for the mere pleasure of entertaining himself and his prime minister at a banquet that Esther adventured her life. He knows that she must still have a request—the real favour that she wants him to grant—in the background. He therefore repeats the inquiry and the promise that he had made previously (ver. 8)" [Pulpit Commentary].
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6. Verses 7-8: "Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is; If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said."
 - a. Her reply was fascinating. "If you and Haman will attend a feast which I am preparing for tomorrow, then I will reveal my petition." His curiosity was certainly aroused by now. What is it that Esther wants? Nothing short of a national emergency would have kept him from attending the banquet on the morrow!
 - b. "Esther still hesitates to prefer her real request. We are not likely to be able in the nineteenth century to understand all the motives that actuated her, or all the workings of her mind. Perhaps nothing kept her back but the natural fear of a repulse, and a desire to defer the evil day; perhaps she saw some real advantage in putting off the determination of the matter. At any rate, she again declined to declare herself, and merely gave her two guests a second invitation for the ensuing evening. She concludes, however, with a promise that she will ask no further respite. I will do to-morrow as the king hath said. i.e. I will prefer my real request; I will ask the favour which was in my thoughts when I adventured myself in the inner court without having received an invitation" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft].

B. Esther 5:9-14: Haman's Evil Designs Against Mordecai.

1. Verse 9: "Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai."
 - a. Haman was overcome with joy when he left the banquet and started home! "Just wait until my wife hears the good news! I've been invited to another banquet; only the king and I are to attend."
 - b. His joy turned to bitter anger when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate. He went from an emotional high to an emotional low at the mere sight of Mordecai. We should never allow another person or circumstance of life to dictate the disposition of our hearts. Happiness that is dictated by others or by outside situations is one that will ever be transitory. Happiness that is generated within us, and which grows out of the knowledge that all is well with our souls, is a joy that cannot be extinguished by evil men or distasteful circumstances.
 - c. "Originally Mordecai had merely declined to prostrate himself before Haman on religious grounds. Now he looked upon Haman as his personal enemy, and would not even acknowledge his presence. There is nothing more galling than such utter contempt shown openly in the presence of others" [*ibid.*].
 2. Verses 10-13: "Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."
 - a. Haman managed to get control of his emotions. The good news was too good to keep. Continuing to his house, he called his friends and his wife, to share the information about his good fortune with them.
 - b. He surveyed for them his accomplishments, speaking of his great riches, of the large number of his children, of the promotion he had received from the king (3:1), and how he had been
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- exalted above all his peers.
- c. In addition to these blessings and honors, Queen Esther had invited only himself and the king to the banquet he had attended that day; furthermore, she had invited him and the king to another banquet the next day.
 - d. But then he remembered Mordecai, that outrageous old Jew who would not bow before him. All of these great bounties he had received amounted to nothing as long as he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate! Here was a man who had everything going his way. Only his injured pride kept him from enjoying his lot in life to the fullest. If he could have rid himself of the pride, and the hatred it produced, he might have lived a long and contented life.
3. Verse 14: "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made."
- a. His wife and friends had a good solution to offer. Construct a gallows fifty cubits high, and while dining with the king the next day, obtain permission from the king to have Mordecai hanged upon the gallows.
 - b. The plan pleased Haman. The king had acceded to his plan to massacre the whole Jewish nation, even giving him his signet ring as authority to enact the law prescribing the slaughter. There should be no obstacle in securing the king's permission to hang Mordecai.
 - c. "The Persians did not hang men, as we do, but ordinarily executed them by impalement...Haman's wife and friends assume that so trifling a matter as the immediate execution of one Jew will be of course allowed at the request of the chief minister, who has already obtained an edict for the early destruction of the entire people. It certainly would seem to be highly probable that Xerxes would have granted Haman's petition but for the accident of his sleeplessness, as narrated in the next chapter" [*ibid.*].
 - d. "A gallows, in the ordinary sense, is scarcely intended, since hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention, no doubt, was to crucify (see the Est 2:23 note) or impale Mordecai; and the pale or cross was to be 75 feet high, to make the punishment more conspicuous" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - e. "In former times the Jews were accustomed to burn Haman in effigy; and with him a wooden cross, which they pretended to be in memory of that which he had erected for the suspension of Mordecai; but which was, in fact, to deride the Christian religion. The emperors, Justinian and Theodosius, abolished it by their edicts; and the practice has ceased from that time, though the principle from which it sprang still exists, with the same virulence against Christianity and its glorious Author" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Biblesoft].
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Esther 6

A. Esther 6:1-11: An Unexpected Turn of Events.

1. Verses 1-2: "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus."
 - a. The night in question was the one following the first banquet Esther had served the king and Haman. On this night, the king could not fall asleep. He commanded that the chronicles of the kings be brought and read to him. He likely thought that he might as well get caught up with some of the past events of his reign; there might be something of importance that would be brought to his attention.
 - b. "In Eastern courts there are scribes or officers whose duty it is to keep a journal of every occurrence worthy of notice. A book of this kind, abounding with anecdotes, is full of interest; and it has been a custom with Eastern kings, in all ages, frequently to cause the annals of the kingdom to be read to them. It is resorted to, not merely as a pastime to wile away the tedium of an hour, but a source of instruction to the monarch, by reviewing the important incidents of his own life, as well as those of his ancestors. There was, therefore, nothing uncommon in this Persian monarch calling for the court journal. But, in his being unable to sleep at that particular juncture, in his ordering the book then to be read to him, and in his attention having been specially directed to the important, and as yet unrewarded, services of Mordecai, the immediate interposition of Providence is distinctly visible" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - c. The records revealed the information concerning the plot by Bigtha and Teresh to "lay hands on the king." Obviously, they intended to kill him, for a king could not be "roughed-up" with impunity!
 - d. The fact that the king could not sleep on that particular night, and the fact that the reading from the royal records covered Mordecai's exposing the scheme of Bigtha and Teresh, were more than mere coincidence. These events formed a most significant part of the developments which led to Israel's salvation from the intended massacre.
2. Verse 3: "And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."
 - a. Esther 2:21-23 gives the details of the original episode: "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."
 - b. The king naturally wanted to know what honor had been accorded Mordecai for his report of the plot. The answer was, nothing had been bestowed on him. The grateful king understood that his very life was spared by Mordecai's action.
 - c. "The discoverer of a conspiracy against the life of the king would in any country have been regarded as entitled to some reward. In Persia, where 'royal benefactors' formed a distinct class, and had their names inscribed on a special list (Herod., 8:85), it was especially incumbent on the monarch to see that every such person received a return proportioned to the value of his

service. Ahasuerus seems to have supposed that some honour or dignity must have been conferred upon Mordecai, though he could not recollect what it was; and it is difficult to understand how the omission to reward him had occurred, unless there was a prejudice against him among the high court officials, who may have known that he was a Jew, though his fellow-servants did not (Est 3:4)" [Pulpit Commentary].

3. Verses 4-5: "And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in."
 - a. The king took immediate steps to bring proper honor to Mordecai. He inquired as to which official was in the court at present, and was told that Haman was there. Haman, unwilling to wait until the banquet of the next day to make his request to hang Mordecai, had come to the court at night, hoping to have a word with the king. Learning of Haman's presence, he sent for him at once. Haman must have thought that everything would be all right; he would get to approach the king even at this late hour.
 - b. "His carpenters having worked all night to finish the gallows, Haman arrived at the court early in the morning to ask the king's permission to have Mordecai hanged. But before he could make this request, the king summoned him to the throne room to answer an important question. Apparently the king wanted to consult any statesman he could find, and Haman happened to be the most available man at that moment!" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 - c. In these events, the providential hand of the Almighty may be clearly seen. The king had a sleepless night; the chronicles were handy to be read; the servant picked up the proper book; Haman entered the palace at the best possible moment; he suggested the honor that would bring him the greatest sense of shame—his enemy received the distinction he had intended for himself.
 4. Verse 6: "So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?"
 - a. "This is a clear illustration of the text: 'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall' (Prov 16:18; cf. 11:2; 18:12). Haman immediately began to list those honors which would be most highly esteemed in the Orient, as though he had often meditated on this possibility and was ready to give an answer if the king should ever ask him!" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 - b. Invited in to see the king, Haman was enthralled at the words the king spoke. The king asked, "What do you suggest to be done for a man whom the king wishes to honor?"
 - c. Haman immediately thought, wrongly, that the king alluded to him, and that he was to receive some great, additional honor from Ahasuerus. The answer he gave was the best honor he could hope to obtain.
 5. Verses 7-9: "And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."
 - a. Describing the honors he would like to receive, Haman suggested that the man honored should
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- be allowed to wear the royal apparel, and sporting the royal crown, should be granted the privilege of riding through the city on the king's horse.
- b. Further, let one of the most noble princes deliver these items to the man honored, and let the honoree be led through the streets of the city, with the announcement being made: "This is how the king honors one who has met with his approval."
6. Verse 10: "Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."
- a. The king immediately saw the wisdom in the words of Haman; this was a very appropriate manner with which to honor Mordecai. The king was aware that Mordecai was a Jew, but why did he not connect this fact with the edict he had earlier made that would result in the utter destruction of the whole Jewish race?
 - b. Haman was directed to proceed as quickly as feasible; take the apparel and the horse; deliver them to the house of Mordecai the Jew; do everything that you have suggested, without a single omission. "Mordecai's nationality and his employment were probably mentioned in the book of the chronicles. From these the king has learnt them, and he uses probably the very phrase of the records" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - c. The plan was carried out on the next day; it would not have been done in the middle of the night, although the apparel and horse might have been taken before daylight.
7. Verse 11: "Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour."
- a. Despite the humiliation Haman felt, he knew better than to disobey the royal orders. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).
 - b. Delivering the clothing and horse to Mordecai was an ordeal to Haman; but having to lead the horse through the city, proclaiming as he went, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delight-eth to honor" offered the ultimate indignity.

B. Esther 6:12-14: The Disgrace of Haman.

1. Verse 12: "And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered."
 - a. Following the honors, Mordecai stationed himself at the king's gate, as was his custom. Haman, on the other hand, rushed in shame back to his house, having his head covered in disgrace. No deeper humiliation could have been heaped on his haughty head!
 - b. "After this honour had been paid him, Mordochai returned to the king's gate; but Haman hasted to his house, 'sad and with his head covered,' to relate to his wife and friends all that had befallen him. A deeper mortification he could not have experienced than that of being obliged, by the king's command, publicly to show the highest honour to the very individual whose execution he was just about to propose to him. The covering of the head is a token of deep confusion and mourning; comp. Jer 14:4; 2 Sam 15:30. Then his wise men, and Zeresh his wife, said to him: 'If Mordochai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, thou wilt not prevail against him, but wholly fall before him'" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

2. Verse 13: "And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."
 - a. He told his shame to his wife and friends at home, holding nothing back. He had arrived home the day before with the happy report of his recent invitations to feast with the queen and king. His story was of a different stripe today.
 - b. The wise men he consulted, apparently on call whenever he needed their counsel, were joined with his wife in predicting the ultimate victory of Mordecai. If Mordecai was representative of the Jews, Haman could not hope to win (Meredith, ADL, p.311). One can almost feel sorry for Haman, until reflecting on the horrible plan he had engineered to bring about the destruction of Mordecai and of all the Jews.
 - c. "The sudden change in Mordecai's fortunes made them realize, with a superstitious awe borne of careful observation of God's providential care for his people since the days of Cyrus, that Haman's preliminary fall would not stop short of total destruction" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 3. Verse 14: "And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared."
 - a. While they were still discussing the matter, the chamberlains came to conduct Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared. Events were moving very fast! They had taken a turn which only the Almighty could have arranged!
 - b. "There was a dreadful banquet before him, of which he knew nothing: and he could have little appetite to enjoy that which he knew was prepared at the palace of Esther. ONE grand design of this history is, to show that he who lays a snare for the life of his neighbour, is most likely to fall into it himself: for, in the course of the divine providence, men generally meet with those evils in life which they have been the means of inflicting on others: and this is exactly agreeable to the saying of our Lord: 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you withal'" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Biblessoft].
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Esther 7

A. Esther 7:1-4: Esther Finally Reveals Her Petition.

1. Verses 1-2: "So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom."
 - a. The king's curiosity was indeed aroused; Esther had come into his court uninvited, risking her life, and the only thing she requested was that the king and Haman attend a banquet she had prepared. At that banquet, she had again turned aside his appeal to know what she wanted, by merely inviting the same two men to attend a second banquet on the following day.
 - b. At this second banquet, the king once more pressed the queen to reveal her request. It was quite obvious to him that Esther would not have hazarded her life (4:11; 5:1-2) for the simple purpose of inviting the king to a feast! Something of far greater significance was involved. Once more, he assures her that whatever her petition, it would be granted, up to giving her half of his kingdom.
 - c. The time was now ripe for her to reveal her petition. Her request is not, however, for any worldly wealth, but for her life.
 2. Verses 3-4: "Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage."
 - a. Speaking formally and with manifest sincerity, Esther identifies herself with the condemned Jewish nation, but without actually naming the Jews directly.
 - b. She states: If I have truly found favor in your sight, and if it is pleasing to you, I ask that my life be spared, and the life of my people. Since he was so well-pleased with the queen that he was willing to give her even half of his kingdom, it is plain that he would be willing to spare her life at her request. Consider the impact of the revelation that it was for her life that she was making request.
 - c. The king could not have been in ignorance as to the fate of the Jews; he had granted Haman the authority to prosecute his hatred of the Jews even to the extent of exterminating the entire nation. However, it doubtless came as a strong surprise to him that his queen was a member of the doomed race. If this fact was a surprise to Ahasuerus, it was a tremendous shock to Haman!
 - d. The queen states that she and her people had been sold, which implies someone did the selling. They had been sold to be destroyed. This is a reference to the large sum of money Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury if the Jews were all destroyed. She affirms that if she and her people had been sold into slavery, no complaint would have fallen from her lips.
 - e. The last clause is thought by some scholars to refer to the financial loss the king would suffer if the Jews were destroyed. However, Keil offers this explanation: "Hence the phrase may be understood thus: For the enemy is not equal to, is not worth, the damage of the king, i.e., not worthy that I should annoy the king with my petition. Thus Esther says (vs 4): The enemy has determined upon the total destruction of my people. If he only intended to bring upon them grievous oppression, even that most grievous oppression of slavery, I would have been silent, for the enemy is not worthy that I should vex or annoy the king by my accusation" (pp.364f).
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"Countervail" means "to match or equal; counteract; make up for."

B. Esther 7:5-6: The King's Immediate Response.

1. Verse 5: "Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?"
 - a. The king knew from Esther's statement that some wicked individual had devised the scheme whereby the queen's people (the Jews) were to be destroyed. He demands to know the identity of this man. His indignation is shown by the repetition: who is he and where is he?
 - b. The king is aware that this evil plot had originated in the heart of the responsible man; he had presumed in his heart to concoct this wicked arrangement. Evil originates in the heart.
 - 1) Matthew 15:19: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
 - 2) James 1:13-15: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."
2. Verse 6: "And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen."
 - a. Without hesitation, Esther identified the enemy as Haman. She did not go behind Haman's back with a subtle accusation, but exposed his wickedness to the proper authority in his presence. Haman is described as (1) the adversary, (2) the enemy, and (3) as wicked.
 - b. Haman could not refute the charge; his actions were known to the king, and had been enacted into law. It was a matter of public record. The king's wrath was well known; Haman could correctly envision it being directed toward him. He knew he was in immediate and dreadful danger.
 - c. How his heart must have melted, especially in view of his experiences just preceding the banquet, when he was required by the king to take the royal apparel and the king's horse to Mordecai, and lead that hated man through the streets of the city, giving him the glory that Haman thought should have been bestowed upon himself.

C. Esther 7:7-10: The Wrath of the King and the Death of Haman.

1. Verse 7: "And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king."
 - a. The king arose in his wrath from the banquet, and went into the palace garden. A royal rage was upon him, but he did not act in haste. Apparently, he wanted to think the problem through, so he went into the garden to consider the problem. Clearly, the king was greatly agitated at the news, for he would not have allowed himself to be disturbed otherwise. Haman could know, therefore, that he was in imminent peril.
 - b. Haman quickly stood up to plead with Esther to spare his life. It was clear to him that the king was already determined to punish him. Nothing is indicated that he denied his guilt; he wanted the queen to spare him.
 - c. But the matter was out of her hands now. "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him" (Prov. 26:27; cf. Gal. 6:7-8).
 - d. Haman was willing to slay many thousands of Jews without mercy, but he now wanted mercy for himself.
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- e. What he obtained was justice. Many guilty sinners will vainly plead for mercy at the Judgment, but will receive justice. In this life, mercy is freely offered by God, but few are interested in it now. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).
2. Verse 8: "Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face."
 - a. When Ahasuerus returned to the banquet room, he saw Haman kneeling beside or prostrate upon the couch where Esther was seated. The king put the worst possible interpretation on the scene: "Will he force the queen also before me in the house?" The violence he meant was rape.
 - b. He pronounced the sentence of death on Haman. The guards immediately covered Haman's face, signifying his arrest and condemnation. The head of the condemned victim was often covered during execution. In our country, those to be hanged usually had their heads covered with a hood. Covering one's face can also be intended to conceal shame (cf. Esther 6:12).
 - c. "Haman also rose from table, and standing near her, began pleading with Esther for his life, which he felt that she, and she alone, could save. Evil, he saw, was determined against him by the king; but a woman's heart might be more tender, and he might perhaps move the queen to allay the storm that she had raised, and induce the king to spare him. He therefore pleaded with all the earnestness in his power, and at last threw himself forward on the couch where Esther reclined, seeking perhaps to grasp her feet or her garments, as is usual with suppliants in the East. At this crisis the king returned, and misconstruing Haman's action, or pretending to do so, exclaimed aloud, 'Will he even force the queen with me in the house?' The terrible charge brought matters to a conclusion—it was taken as a call on the attendants to seize the culprit and execute him. They covered his face, apparently, as that of a condemned man not worthy any more to see the light, according to a practice common among, the Romans (Liv., 1:26; Cic. 'pro Rabir., 4:13) and the Macedonians (Q. Curt., 'Vit. Alex.,' vi. 8), but not elsewhere mentioned as Persian" [Pulpit Commentary].
 3. Verse 9: "And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon."
 - a. One of the king's chamberlains reported to Ahasuerus that Haman had constructed a fifty-cubits-high gallows at his house. A cubit was about eighteen inches, hence this gallows was about seventy-five feet in height. It seems that Haman was not popular among the king's servants.
 - b. The king quickly commanded: "Hang him thereon." Haman had intended the gallows to be the means by which Mordecai should be slain, but it was his own life that was extinguished there. This story illustrates the ageless truth, that we reap what we sow.
 - 1) Proverbs 26:27: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."
 - 2) Psalm 7:15: "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made."
 - 3) Psalm 9:15: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."
 - 4) Psalm 57:6: "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves."
 - 5) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

4. Verse 10: "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."
- a. There does not appear to be any delay in executing Haman. The death of Haman pacified the wrath of the king, but as we shall soon see, it did not eliminate the problem the Jews faced.
 - b. What brought Haman to this horrible end? Maybe other factors were in the background, but the immediate cause was his own pride. When Mordecai refused to bow before him, Haman was determined to be avenged.
 - 1) His pride led to his demand for reverence from his fellow-servants; his pride was wounded when Mordecai refused to bow before him; his wounded pride led to his anger, and his anger led him to a hatred of the Jews; his hatred caused him to concoct a plan by which Mordecai and all the Jews were to be slain; but his plot backfired, and he lost his own life.
 - 2) Proverbs 16:18-19: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."
 - 3) Psalms 9:15: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."
 - c. "He has not been the only plotter of mischief whose feet have been taken in the net which they hid (Ps 9:15). But never was condemnation more just, and retribution more merited, than the execution of that gigantic criminal" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
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Esther 8

A. Esther 8:1-2: Mordecai is Exalted.

1. Verse 1: "On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her."
 - a. Haman's property was confiscated by the king, who gave the house to Esther. The house included all that pertained to it. Esther "set Mordecai over the house of Haman" (verse 2). He had this property to use as he saw fit, so in practical terms at least, Haman's property became Mordecai's.
 - b. Esther revealed to the king the kinship she sustained with Mordecai. There was no longer any need for this fact to be concealed.
2. Verse 2: "And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."
 - a. Ahasuerus had retrieved his ring from Haman; he now presented it to Mordecai, with the authority to act in the king's behalf. Understanding the full story at last, the king could see the wisdom and trustworthiness of Esther's cousin.
 - b. The queen gave to her cousin Haman's house; it was a fitting place for Mordecai to live, now that he was to act in the king's business. The appointment he received was similar to prime minister. Compare Genesis 41:42: "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck."

B. Esther 8:3-6: Esther Beseeches the King in Behalf of the Jews.

1. Verse 3: "And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews."
 - a. Once more, Esther approached the king, falling down at his feet to beg his assistance in delivering the Jews from the penalty Haman had imposed upon them. She besought him with tears.
 - b. It appears from the next verse that Esther had entered uninvited into the king's court once more; it is said there that he extended to her his golden sceptre.
 - c. "The chief enemy of the Jews was now destroyed; but the edict, written in the king's name, sealed with the royal seal, and published in all the provinces of the kingdom, for the destruction of all the Jews on the 13th day of the twelfth month, was still in force, and having been issued in due legal form, could not, according to the laws of the Persians and Medes, be revoked. Queen Esther therefore entreated the king to annul the designs of Haman against the Jews. Vv. 3 and 4. 'Esther spake again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and wept, and besought him to do away with...the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he devised against the Jews. And the king held out his golden sceptre towards Esther, and Esther arose and stood before the king.' This verse gives a summary of the contents of Esther's speech, which is

reported verbally in vv. 5 and 6....She spoke before the king, falling at his feet and beseeching him with weeping, that he would do away with...the evil that Haman had done, and his device against the Jews. The king stretched out his sceptre (comp. Est 4:11) as a sign that he would graciously grant her petition; whereupon she arose, stood before the king, and made known her request" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

2. Verses 4-6: "Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"
 - a. She arose from her prostrate position when the king extended the sceptre toward her, and stood before the king.
 - b. On the basis of the proposition that she was pleasing to the king and that the request met with his approval, she requested that he produce a writing which would reverse the legislation produced by Haman which ordered the destruction of the Jews.
 - c. However, the law enacted by the efforts of Haman was one of those unalterable decrees. A tremendous problem still persisted. A law could not be repealed without undermining the whole legal system of the Empire. "Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed" (Dan. 6:15; cf. Esther 1:19; 3:8-15).

C. Esther 8:7-14: Mordecai is Commissioned to Solve the Problem.

1. Verses 7-8: "Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse."
 - a. Ahasuerus had given his ring to Mordecai, empowering him to act in the king's behalf. He is commissioned to produce a writing which would alleviate the problem for the Jews.
 - b. The document Mordecai is asked to create will be an irreversible decree. But since the original edict which condemned the Jews was also an unalterable law, Mordecai is to develop a plan which will deliver the Jews, and at the same time, not interfere with the decree Haman had issued. This sounds like an insoluble problem, but an ingenious plan was forthcoming.
2. Verse 9: "Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language."

- a. On the twenty-third day of Sivan, the king's scribes were called before Mordecai to inscribe the words of the plan which Mordecai had developed. Sivan corresponds to our May-June.
 - b. Copies of the writing produced were to be sent to all of the 127 provinces of the Empire, which extended from India to Ethiopia. The document was to be written in all of the languages of the many nations and tribes governed by Persia, including the Jewish language.
 - c. “The king had said enough. Mordecai saw a means of reconciling the king's scruple with the safety—or if not with the absolute safety, yet with the escape and triumph—of his people. The Jews should be allowed to stand on their defence, should be encouraged to do so, when the time came should be supported in their resistance by the whole power of the government (Est 9:3). A new decree must issue at once giving the requisite permission, and copies must be at once distributed, that there might be no mistake or misunderstanding. So the ‘king's scribes’ were summoned and set to work. In the third month, the month Sivan. This is another Babylonian name. The month was sacred to the moon-god, Sin, and its name may be connected with his. It corresponded with the latter part of our May and the early part of June. To the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers. Compare Est 3:12, where the same three classes of rulers are mentioned. An hundred twenty and seven. See the comment on Est 1:1. And to the Jews. Copies of the former edict had not been sent especially to the Jews. They had been left to learn their danger indirectly from the people among whom they dwelt; but Mordecai took care that they should be informed directly of their right of defence” [Pulpit Commentary].
3. Verse 10: "And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries."
 - a. The plan was written in all the languages indicated, and copies were quickly sent forth to all of the local rulers of the vast kingdom. These letters were sent by posts who rode on horseback, on mules, on camels, and young dromedaries. All of the means available to disseminate the information were used.
 - b. “They were sent to the Jews and to the satraps, etc., of the whole wide realm from India to Ethiopia (see 1:1), while those of Haman had been issued only to the satraps, etc.....To show the speed with which the letters were despatched, (messengers) ‘on horseback, on coursers, government coursers, the sons of the stud,’...meaning swift horses, coursers...” [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publis-hers, Inc.].
 4. Verses 11-13: "Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies."
 - a. The solution offered in the letters was very simple; it did not reverse the original edict, but it made it possible for the Jews to be delivered.
 - b. The plan permitted the Jews to take up arms to defend themselves on the fateful day in which
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there were intended to be slain. Instead of standing by as docile sheep before the slaughter, they were vigorously to oppose the attackers.

- c. Haman had created the original law about two months previously; the present law was processed about nine months before the first was to be executed. The fateful day was the 13th day of the 12th month.
5. Verse 14: "So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace."
- a. The plan was adopted, decreed, sealed with the king's ring, and delivered to the whole empire as quickly as possible. The solution upheld the respect of the law, but rendered the decree of Haman relatively harmless.
 - b. "The verse repeats Est 3:15, with small additions. It appears that the later posts were urged to haste still more strongly than the earlier ones—not that time really pressed, but from superabundant caution — that there might be an opportunity for further communications between the provinces and the court, if doubt was anywhere entertained as to the king's intentions" [Pulpit Commentary].

D. Esther 8:15-17: Mordecai's Advancement in the Kingdom.

1. Verse 15: "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad."
 - a. Mordecai's advancement in the empire was attested by the glorious apparel with which he was attired. The description of the garments conjures up a picture of beauty and grandeur in our minds.
 - b. Even the Gentiles of Shushan rejoiced over the turn of events. They had been perplexed (Esther 3:15) on hearing the initial decree, but now they were glad. The cruelty of Haman's edict shocked even those pagans.
 2. Verses 16-17: "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."
 - a. Many of the Gentiles became Jews. The faith and piety of Mordecai and Esther elicited the providential assistance of God, which was not unnoticed by the heathen. Many of them adopted the Jewish religion.
 - b. "Ahasuerus was not content even now with what he had done for Mordecai. Before his minister quitted the presence, the king presented him with a crown of gold, and a robe and vest of honour; and thus arrayed he proceeded into the city of Susa, where the new edict was already known, and had been received with satisfaction (ver. 15). The Persians, who formed the predominant element in the population of the town, sympathised with the Jews, and rejoiced in the king's favour towards them; while the Jews of Susa, having passed from despair to confident hope, were full of gladness and thankfulness. In the provinces the decree had a still warmer welcome. Its arrival was celebrated with 'a feast' (ver. 17) and 'a good day.' It led also to many
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of the heathen becoming proselytes to the Jewish religion—some perhaps from conviction, but others because they thought it safer to place themselves manifestly on the Jews' side before the day of the struggle” [Pulpit Commentary].

- c. Godliness and faith are likewise noticed by many today. While we are not to parade our righteousness before the unbelieving world, yet we are not to conceal our faith and love from their sight.
 - 1) Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:11-12: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."
 - 3) Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
 - d. It seems certain that the pagans could see the hand of the God of the Jews behind the proceedings that had come to light. Otherwise, how could the demise of Haman be explained, or the ascendance of Mordecai?
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Esther 9

A. Esther 9:1-10: The Jews Battle Their Enemies.

1. Verses 1-2: "Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people."
 - a. The portentous day finally arrived! It was perhaps about March 24th, according to our reckoning. There were many in the kingdom who hated the Jews, even as there are many today who harbor malice toward them.
 - b. Because of the influence of Mordecai which backed the Jews, and partly because of the Jews them-selves, the people of the land feared the Jews. "The tenor of the second decree made it perfectly clear to Persian officials that the king, to say nothing of Mordecai, his prime minister, now favored the Jews. To have joined in the attack against the Jews now would surely have brought wrath upon them. Perhaps they remembered the fate of those rulers who had opposed the true wishes of Darius the Mede in a somewhat similar situation (Dan 6:24)" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 2. Verses 3-4: "And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater."
 - a. Mordecai, occupying the exalted office he had been given by the king, exerted a huge amount of influence in the land. With the name of the king's appointed officer behind the new edict, the rulers and other officials in the provinces feared him, and lent their support to the Jews. They may have been aware of Mordecai's meteoric rise to office, and correctly attributed it to heavenly power.
 - b. The power and influence of Mordecai continued to increase. How could this be accounted for without the power of heaven being behind it?
 3. Verses 5-10: "Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand."
 - a. The dreadful day the Jews had long anticipated with great trepidation finally arrived, but instead of being the day of slaughter they feared, it became a day of victory. They fought against their enemies, and overcame them. In the city of Shushan, they Jews slew five hundred men who opposed them. They killed the ten sons of Haman.
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- b. There was a sizeable amount of spoils that developed from the fighting, but the Jewish fighters did not touch any of it. One reason the Jews were hated was their ability to accumulate property, even in the land of captivity. But the Jews did not take advantage of their triumph to enrich themselves at the expense of their enemies. This might have turned the population against them. They were forbidden to take spoils after the victory over Jericho (Josh. 1-7).

B. Esther 9:11-19: The King is Appraised of the Outcome of the Fighting.

1. Verses 11-12: "On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king. And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done."
 - a. Following the victory, the five hundred victims at Shushan were reported to the king. Ahasuerus stated with some degree of wonder, that if the Jews had slain five hundred at Shushan, how many more had they killed throughout the empire? There does not appear to be any resentment or fear on his part. Notice that it was the *number* of the slain that was brought before the king, not the actual bodies of those slain.
 - b. The king was still in a benevolent disposition, and asked Esther whether she had any further request to make, assuring her that it would be granted.
 2. Verses 13-14: "Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons."
 - a. Esther, knowing that there were still many enemies in the land who would look to take advantage of the Jews, asked that her people be permitted to defend themselves the next day. She also asked that the ten sons of Haman be hanged.
 - b. According to the previous report, the ten sons had been slain during the first day's fighting. She was asking, therefore, that their dead bodies be suspended on the gallows. Ahasuerus granted her petitions.
 - c. "Their enemies, adroitly concealing themselves for the first day, might have returned on the next, when they imagined that the privilege of the Jews was expired; so that that people would have been surprised and slain. The extension of the decree to another day, at the queen's special desire, has exposed her to the charge of being actuated by a cruel and vindictive disposition. But her conduct in making this request is capable of full vindication, on the ground: (1) that Haman's sons having taken a prominent part in avenging their father's fall, and having been previously slain in the melee, the order for the exposure of their dead bodies on the gallows was only intended to brand them with public infamy for their malice and hatred to the Jews; and (2) the anti-Jewish party having, in all probability, been instigated through the arts or influence of Haman to acts of spiteful and wanton oppression, the existing state of feeling among the natives required some vigorous and decisive measure to prevent the outbreak of future aggressions....To order an extension, therefore, of the permissive edict to the Jews to defend themselves, was perhaps no more than affording an opportunity for their enemies to be publicly known; and
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though it led to so awful a slaughter of 75,000 of their enemies, there is reason to believe that these were chiefly Amalekites, in the fall of whom on this occasion the prophecies (Ex 17:14,16; Deut 25:19) against that doomed race were accomplished" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].

3. Verses 15-16: "For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand. But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey."
 - a. The fighting continued on the second day, with the Jew slaying another three hundred at Shushan. Meanwhile, those in the provinces fought for their lives, killing a total of seventy-five thousand enemies.
 - b. The Jews did not lay their hands on the spoils that fell to them. "In these several executions it is taken notice of that on the prey they laid not their hand, v. 10, 15, 16. The king's commission had warranted them to take the spoil of their enemies for a prey (Est 8:11), and a fair opportunity they had of enriching themselves with it; if Haman's party had prevailed, no doubt, they would have made use of their authority to seize the goods and estates of the Jews, Est 3:13. But the Jews would not do so by them, [1.] That they might, to the honour of their religion, evidence a holy and generous contempt of worldly wealth, in imitation of their father Abraham, who scorned to enrich himself with the spoils of Sodom. [2.] That they might make it appear that they aimed at nothing but their own preservation, and used their interest at court for the saving of their lives, not for the raising of their estates. [3.] Their commission empowered them to destroy the families of their enemies, even the little ones and the women, Est 8:11. But their humanity forbade them to do that, though that was designed against them. They slew none but those they found in arms; and therefore they did not take the spoil, but left it to the women and little ones, whom they spared, for their subsistence; otherwise as good slay them as starve them, take away their lives as take away their livelihoods. Herein they acted with a consideration and compassion well worthy of imitation" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 4. Verses 17-19: "On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwall'd towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another."
 - a. The occasion following the fighting became a day of happiness and feasting. At Shushan, the festivities were entered into on the fifteenth day of Adar; in the unwall'd villages of the countryside, the gala was conducted on the fourteenth.
 - b. Apparently, the enemy was overcome more easily and quickly in the outlying districts; at Shushan, there must have been a higher concentration of the enemy, with a more unified opposition.
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C. Esther 9:20-32: The Feast of Purim Instituted.

1. Verses 20-21: "And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly."
 - a. Mordecai, using the facilities of his office, sent letters to all the Jews throughout the empire that they should observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar as an annual feast, in commemoration of the victory. These instructions instituted the feast of Purim, which is still observed by the Jews.
 - b. "It has been supposed that thus far that part of the book of Esther, which was written by Mordecai extends: what follows, to the end, was probably added either by Ezra, or the men of the Great Synagogue, though what is said here may refer only to the letters sent by Mordecai to the Jews of the provinces. From this to the end of the chapter is nothing else than a recapitulation of the chief heads of the preceding history, and an account of the appointment of an annual feast, called the feast of Purim, in commemoration of their providential deliverance from the malice of Haman" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Biblesoft].
 2. Verses 23-25: "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows."
 - a. The Jews determined to observe the instruction regarding the keeping of the feast of Purim. It was not a feast that God had appointed, but he took no action to deter their observation of it.
 - b. The text gives a brief summary of the events that lie behind the feast. The feast would remind the Jews of each following generation of their victory, and encourage them to remain unified in the future.
 - c. "And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordochai had written to them. They had begun, as v. 22 tells us, by keeping both days, and Mordochai wrote to them that they should make this an annual custom. This they agreed to do in consequence of Mordochai's letters. The reason of their so doing is given in vv. 24 and 25, and the name of this festival is explained, v. 26, by a brief recapitulation of the events which gave rise to it....Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; For Haman, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them (comp. Est 3:1,6 f.), and had cast Pur, that is the lot (see on 3:7), to consume them and to destroy them. haamam (OT:2000), mostly used of the discomfiture with which God destroys the enemies, Ex 14:24; Deut 2:15, and elsewhere. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by
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letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

3. Verses 26-28: "Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed."
 - a. The Jewish people committed themselves to keep the feast, every year, in every family, in every generation, where ever they lived. They were determined to keep it lest the memory of their deliverance should be forgotten. It has been kept for about 2500 years; the Passover has been observed for more than 3500 years.
 - b. Purim: From a Persian word, "lots"; because Haman had cast lots to find an auspicious day for destroying the Jews (Est 3:6-7; 9:24). The feast of Purim was kept on the 14th and 15th days of Adar. An introductory fast was subsequently appointed on the 13th, commemorating that of Esther and of the Jews by her desire before she ventured into Abasuerus' presence (Est 4:16). When the stars appear at the beginning of the 14th candles are lighted in joy, and the people assemble in the synagogue. Then the megillah "roll" of Esther is read through histrionically. On Haman's name being mentioned the congregation exclaim, "let his name be blotted out!" His sons' names are read in one enunciation to mark they were all hanged at once. At the close of reading the megillah all cry out, "cursed be Haman, blessed be Mordecai; cursed be Zeresh (Haman's wife), blessed be Esther; cursed be all idolaters, blessed be all Israelites, and blessed be Harbonah who hanged Haman!" The repast at home is mainly milk and eggs. At morning service Ex 17:8-16, the doom of Amalek the people of Agag (1 Sam 15:8), Haman's ancestor (Est 3:1), is read. Saturnalian-like drinking and acting, the men assuming women's attire (the Purim suspending the prohibition, Deut 22:5), and offerings for the poor, characterize the feast (Est 9:17-32). The feast began among the Jews of their own accord; Mordecai wrote confirming it, and Esther joined with him in "writing with all authority to confirm this second letter of Purlin." [Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright ©)1998 by Biblesoft].
 4. Verses 29-32: "Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, To confirm these days of Purim sin their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book."
 - a. Esther sent a letter to all the Jews, confirming the institution of the feast of Purim. All the Jews would know her to be the queen, and a Jew by birth. Her letter would carry much weight.
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- b. The book of verse 32 may be the book of Esther; some scholars think the reference is to a book not now extant. It is contained in the book of Esther.
 - c. “The first letter is the one which is mentioned in vers. 20 and 26. That letter having elicited the favourable reply contained in vers. 26-28, a ‘second letter of Purina’ was now issued, "confirming" and establishing the observance. It went forth not as an edict, or in the king's name, but as a letter, and in the names of Esther and Mordecai....In addition to the formal ‘letter of Purina,’ which was of the nature of an ordinance, though not of legal force, Mordecai sent informal letters, which embraced other topics besides the Purim feast, as, for instance, words of salutation, and perhaps a reference to the keeping of a fast before the two Purina days (ver. 31). These he sent to all Jews throughout the whole empire, inclosing with them the formal ‘letter of Purim.’ With words of peace and truth. Perhaps beginning thus: ‘Peace and truth be with you’—a modification of the usual, ‘Peace,’ etc. (Ezra 4:17), or, "All peace" (ibid. 5:7), with which letters ordinarily began” [Pulpit Commentary]. Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 2001 by Biblesoft)
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Esther 10

A. Esther 10:1-2: The Power and Greatness of Ahasuerus.

1. Verse 1: "And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea."
 - a. Scholars have been somewhat perplexed to explain this brief, and seemingly unconnected, thought. It seems to have been given to show the power and greatness of the empire of Ahasuerus, that he was able to levy a tax on the great region indicated.
 - b. "The notice of this tribute is a natural and appropriate conclusion of the book of Esther; and without the mention of some such fact, there would have been a want in the filling up or completeness of this record, which would have detracted very much from its value as a historical document. It was with a view to defray the expenditure, to repair the ruin of his expedition into Greece, that he 'laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.' Thus between the first verse of this last chapter, and narrative contained at the commencement of this book, there is one of those minute coincidences on which *Paley*, in his 'Horae Paulinae,' insists as affording that strong, because an undesigned, evidence of the truth and authenticity of the book—viz, that it is consistent with itself. Neither the nature nor the amount of the tax has been recorded, only it was not a local tribute, but one exacted from all parts of his vast empire" (JFB, p.650).
 - c. "Darius, the son of Hystaspes, was the first to do this (Herod., 3:89); but, as the tribute had to be rearranged from time to time (ibid., 6:42), any subsequent Persian monarch who made a fresh arrangement might be said to 'lay a tribute on the land.' Xerxes is not unlikely to have done so after his return from Greece, as he had lost portions of his territories. And on the islands of the sea. The Hebrew expression translated by 'islands of the sea' includes maritime tracts. Xerxes by the Greek expedition lost the islands of the Aegean, but still held certain tracts upon the coast of Europe, which were occupied for a considerable time by Persian garrisons (Herod., 7:106, 107). These would necessarily be included in any assessment that he may have made, and it is even not unlikely that Xerxes would lay his assessment on the Aegean islands, though he might not be able to collect it" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - d. The statement shows that the kingdom of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) continued its uninterrupted control over its vast territory.
 2. Verse 2: "And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?"
 - a. The Persians kept extensive records, including the *chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia*. The records of Xerxes' power and might were inscribed therein, as was the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai.
 - b. "The Persians have ever been remarkable for keeping exact chronicles of all public events. Their *Tareekhs*, which are compositions of this kind, are still very numerous, and indeed very important" (Clarke, p.828).
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B. Esther 10:3: The Greatness of Mordecai.

1. Verse 3: "For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."
 2. Mordecai had been promoted by Xerxes to the position next to himself in authority. He was accepted by all the Jews and held in great repute by them; he sought their good and promoted peace for all his people.
 3. "Xerxes died in 465 B.C. Looking back over his reign shortly afterward, the author emphasizes the stupendous power and wealth of this king (v. 1) in order to show the marvelous providence of God in elevating a despised Jew to a position of honor in such an empire. Speaking peace to all his seed (v. 3). This does not refer to Mordecai's own children, but to Israel, his race (cf. 2 Kings 11:1)" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1962 by Moody Press].
 4. "The elevation of this pious and patriotic Jew to the possession of the highest official power was of very great importance....[T]he providence of God is plainly traceable an all the steps that led to his unexpected advancement; and this providential interposition is all the more remarkable that, as in the analogous case of Joseph, it was displayed in making the ordinary and natural course of things lead to the most marvelous results....The sudden advancement of individuals from obscurity and neglect to the highest stations of power and influence is, in Eastern courts, no extraordinary nor unfrequent occurrence. The caprice, the weak partiality, of the reigning sovereign, or, it may be, his penetrating discernment in discovering latent energy and talent, has often 'raised the beggar from the dunghill, and set him among princes.' Some of the all-powerful viziers in modern Persia, and not a few of the beys in Egypt, have been elevated to their respective dignities in this manner. And therefore the advancement of 'Mordecai, who was next to Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews,' was in perfect accordance with the rapid revolution of 'the wheel of fortune' in that part of the world. But, considering all the circumstances of Mordecai's advancement, not only his gaining the favour of the king, but his being 'accepted of the multitude of his brethren,' it was beyond all controversy the doing of the Lord, and was truly marvelous in His people's eyes. Accepted of the multitude of his brethren. Far from being envious of his grandeur, they blessed God for the elevation to official power of so good a man" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright ©) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 5. "In the story of Joseph, God's hand is pointed out, so that we can see how his providence wrought out his purpose. The story of Esther follows without even the name of God, and we are left, with the training imparted by the former story, to find God for ourselves in this. When we have found Him, we are prepared to find Him in our own lives" [J.W. McGarvey, *Sermons*, p.246).
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Preface and Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven members of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these are well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn, Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The material was put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over many decades. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we hardly cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad! "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

Feel free to copy quotations from this material. It is designed to bring glory to God and information to souls! The same goes for the articles printed in my monthly publication: *Studies in the Old Paths*. This paper is free via e-mail.
