

Esther

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God, through Esther, saved Israel from destruction so that the promised Messiah could come from Judah.



The Story

Once there was a king of Persia named Xerxes. He was also called Ahasuerus but is best known as Xerxes. He had a great feast where he invited many important people in his kingdom. The feast lasted many, many days. Near the end of the feasting King Xerxes ordered his queen, Vashti, to come to the feast in order to show off her beauty. Queen Vashti refused to come before the king. Because she did not obey the king she was no longer the queen.

All the young beautiful women of the land were brought before the king so that he could choose another queen. He loved Esther above all the other young women and she became the new queen.

Esther was a Jew, one of God's people. She was raised by her cousin, Mordecai, because her parents had died. Mordecai worked in the king's palace.

One day Mordecai overheard two gatekeepers planning to kill the king. He told Esther who told the king of this evil plan. The two gatekeepers were killed and the story of Mordecai's help was written in the history book of King Xerxes.

Later a wicked man named Haman became a leader in the king's palace. He made an order that everyone should bow down to him because he thought he was so important. Mordecai would not bow down because God does not want us to worship anyone but Him. Because Mordecai would not bow down, Haman was very angry. He planned how he could kill Mordecai and all Mordecai's people, the Jews.

Haman came up with a plan. He told King Xerxes that there was a group of people in the kingdom who had their own laws. These people should be killed. King Xerxes let Haman make an order to destroy these

people, the Jews, in one year.

When Esther, Mordecai and all the Jews heard about this order they were very sad. Mordecai told Esther that she should go before the king and ask that the Jews be spared.

Esther knew that she could be killed if she went to the king without being invited. She asked Mordecai and all the Jews to pray for her so that she would not be killed when she went before the king uninvited. She said, "If I perish, I perish."

On the third day, after praying to God, Esther went to the king. He held out his golden scepter to her to show that she found favor in his eyes.

He said, "What do you want, Queen Esther. I will give you up to half of my kingdom."

"You and Haman come to a feast," she told King Xerxes.

Haman felt great pride that he and the king were asked to Esther's feast. At that feast she asked them to come again the next day and then she would make her request.

When Haman then saw Mordecai at the palace he was reminded of how he didn't bow down to him. Again Haman was very angry. Haman had gallows built so that one day he could have Mordecai hung on them.

That night the king could not sleep. He had his servants read from his history book. He was told of how Mordecai had saved his life when the two gatekeepers had planned to kill him.

"What did we do to honor Mordecai?" the king asked.

"Nothing," said the servants.

Later King Xerxes asked Haman what should be done to honor someone the king

avored. Haman thought the king wanted to honor him so he told the king to have royal robes and a royal horse be given to the person the king honored. Then have the person taken through the city and have the people pay their respect to him.

“Hurry, go take robes and a horse to Mordecai and take him through the city so that everyone can honor him,” said the king.

Haman had to do this since he was ordered by the king.

Later Haman and the king again went to see Queen Esther’s feast. Esther told the king about the man who had ordered

the death of her and her people the Jews.

“Who is that man?” asked King Xerxes.

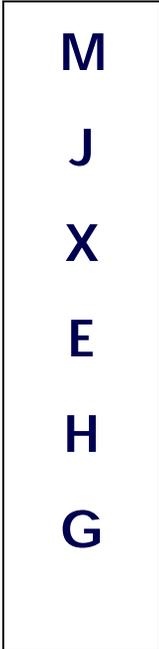
“It is Haman, “ said Queen Esther.

Haman was ordered to be hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. Mordecai was then given Haman’s job in the palace.

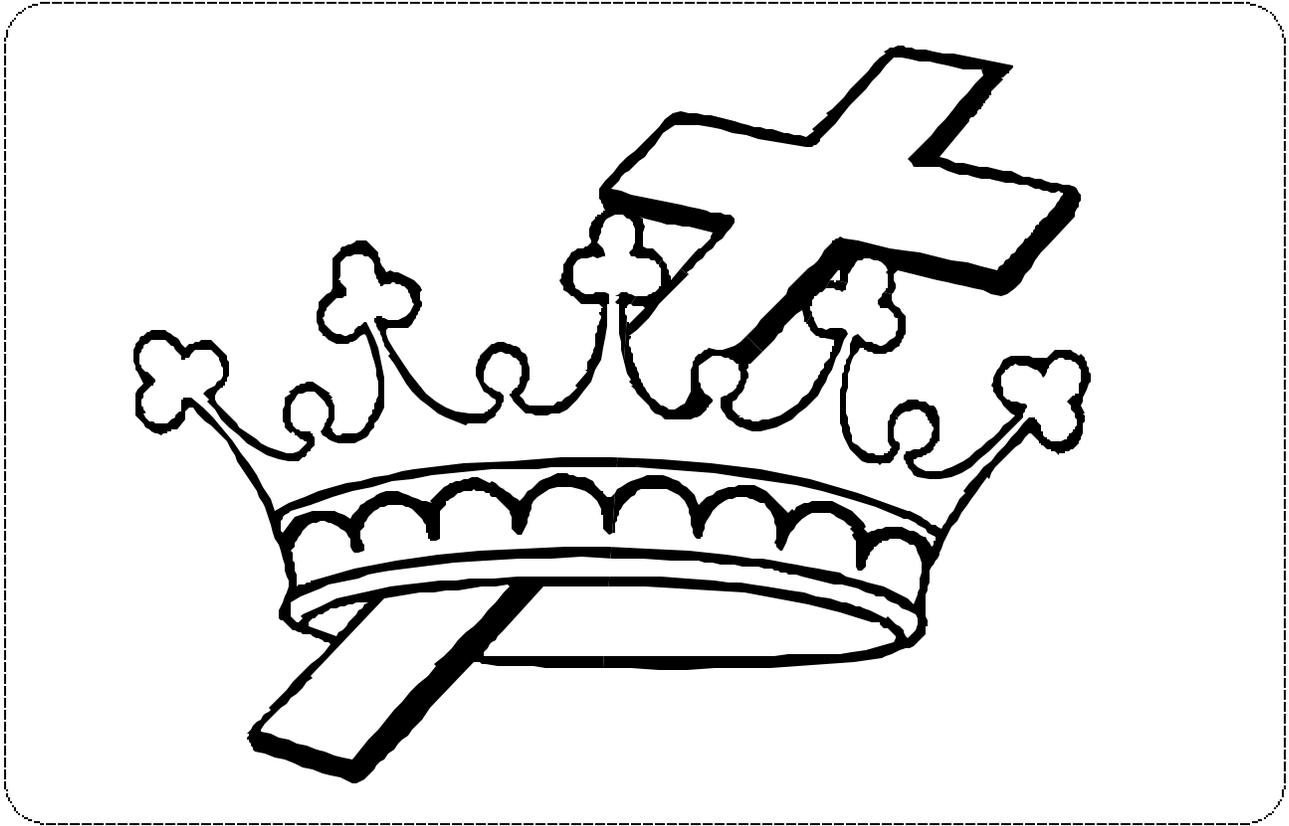
When the time of Haman’s order came, the Jews were not killed but were allowed to defend themselves and kill their enemies. A special celebration was started called Purim to honor the time that God spared the Jews from death.

Activity One - Draw in the beginning letter of the names in the sentences.

1. ____ erxes was the King of Persia.
2. ____ sther was the Queen of Persia.
3. ____ aman hated the Jews.
4. ____ ordecai was the Jew who helped the king and queen.
5. ____ od took care of His people.
6. ____ esus died for everyone.



Activity Two - Connect the dashes around the picture. Then color the picture.



"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Revelation 2:10

Passages

Acts 5:29 -We ought to obey God rather than men.

Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

God, through the Holy Spirit in the Word, has led us to Jesus.

Hymn & Prayer - Worship Supplement 2000 #785

Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy. Amen.

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The next day she went to the king. He held out his golden scepter to her to show that she found favor in his eyes.

He said, "What do you want, Queen Esther. I will give you up to half of my kingdom."

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“It is Haman, ” said Queen Esther.

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When the time of Haman’s order came, the Jews were not killed but were allowed to defend themselves and kill their enemies. A special celebration was started called Purim to honor the time that God spared the Jews from death.

Activity One - Draw a line to match the names to the sentence about them.

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. I am the King of Persia... | ...Mordecai |
| 2. I am the Queen of Persia... | ...Haman |
| 3. I am a wicked man who hated Jews... | ...Jesus |
| 4. I am a Jew who worked in the king’s palace... | ...Xerxes |
| 5. I will save the Jews... | ...God |
| 6. I will die for all people... | ...Esther |

Activity Two - Find the names from the story in the WORD SEARCH below.

XERXES	MORDECAI	SCEPTER	BOW DOWN	GALLOWS
ESTHER	HAMAN	PERISH	FEAST	KILL
	PERSIA	VASHTI	ASSASSINATE	

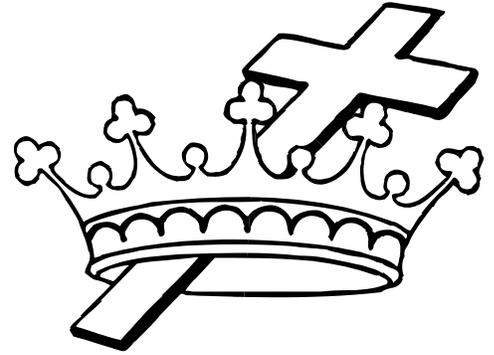
A B O W D O W N S L
S I H A M A N J Y M
S H U S H A N W G O
A P U R I M P V A R
S N X W G A E A L D
S C E P T E R S L E
I O R F M S I H O C
N W X E C T S T W A
A T E A E H H I S I
T X S S P E R S I A
E V Y T V R K I L L

Passages

Acts 5:29 -We ought to obey God rather than men.

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This drawing shows someone's life being spared. Do you know whose life it is? This is Esther. What do you know about her? We'll read her story today to find out more.



Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for again bringing us together to study Your Word in Sunday School. Be with our teacher so that the lesson may be taught to Your glory and with us so that we will listen and learn about the truths of Your Scripture. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Story - Esther 1-10 paraphrased

There was a king of Persia named Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes. He was ruler over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. His palace was in Shushan.

Once he made a feast and invited all his officials, nobles, princes and important powers of his kingdom. The feast lasted 180 days and the king showed off his riches and the splendor of his kingdom. Near the end of the feast days he had a special celebration for all his people with much expensive food and drink served in golden vessels. The queen of Persia, Vashti, was commanded to come before the king to show off her beauty to the people. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command and the king was furious. It would be a bad example for others if the wife of the king did not listen to her husband, therefore Queen Vashti was never allowed to come before the king again. A new queen was needed.

A beauty contest was held to find a

new queen. Many beautiful, young, unmarried women were brought to the palace including a young Jew named Esther. She had been raised in the house of her cousin, Mordecai. Mordecai worked in the king's palace.

After a year of beauty treatment each young woman was brought before the king. So Esther was taken to King Xerxes and he loved Esther more than all the other women, and so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

One day while near the gate of the palace Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther who told the king, and the two gatekeepers who plotted the assassination were hanged. All of this was written down in the history book of the king.

After these things King Xerxes promoted a wicked man named Haman and set him above all the princes. All the king's servants bowed and paid homage to Haman, but



Mordecai would not bow or pay homage because he was a Jew and it was forbidden by God. This made Haman very angry and he planned how he might destroy Mordecai and his people, the Jews, who were captives in Persia.

Haman went to the king with his plan and said to the king, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed."

So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman saying, "The people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

Haman made the decree that in one year's time all the Jews in the provinces of King Xerxes were to be killed.

When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes in sorrow and put on sackcloth and ashes. All Jews everywhere mourned. Esther was also distressed.

Mordecai asked that Esther go before the king and plead for her people. King Xerxes did not know she was Jewish. It was also dangerous to go before the king without being invited. You would be killed for bothering him unless he held out his golden scepter to you, then you would live.

Esther was afraid to go to the king but Mordecai reminded her that she was a Jew. He also said, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther said, "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me for three days. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

After three days Esther put on her royal robes and went before King Xerxes. So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

The king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? It shall be given to you; up to half the kingdom!"

Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared."

The king and Haman went to Queen Esther's feast. Again the king asked what Esther requested. She asked that they again come to a banquet the next day and she would then tell her request.

Haman felt great pride that he was important to the king and queen but later when he saw Mordecai who did not bow down to him he was angry. He planned to ask the king to have Mordecai killed and even had a gallows built that would hang Mordecai one day.

But that night the king could not sleep. He commanded that the book about his history be read to him. There he heard and was reminded of how Mordecai saved his life from the two gatekeepers who were planning to kill him.

The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?"

The servants said that nothing had been done to honor him. So the king asked Haman, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"

Haman, thinking the king was talking about him, said, "Let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden be delivered to the man. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"

The king said, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do this for Mordecai the Jew."

So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square. Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

Later the king and Haman went to dine



with Queen Esther. She now told the king her request, "If I have found favor, O king, please spare my life and the lives of my people. For we are to be destroyed because of the wishes of someone."

King Xerxes answered, "Who is he who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"

Esther said, "The enemy is this wicked Haman!"

Then the king saw the gallows and said, "Hang Haman on the gallows!"

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. On that day King Xerxes promoted Mordecai to the position Haman had held.

Esther then went again to the king and he again held out the golden scepter for her. She said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight let it be written to take back the letters sent by Haman ordering the death of the Jews."

Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in

the king's name, for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

So the king's scribes were called at that time and it was written that the Jews were permitted to gather together and protect their lives and to kill all the forces of any people or province that would assault them. The Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday.

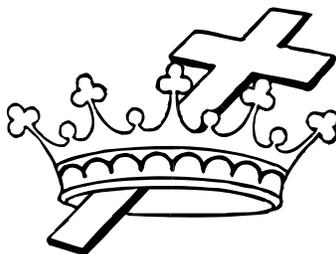
When the time came for the enemies of the Jews to carry out the order of Haman the Jews gathered together and defeated their enemies, killing thousands. All the officials of the provinces even helped the Jews defeat their enemies and followed the order given by Mordecai and Esther. Haman's ten sons were also hanged.

Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces. A special day of celebration was established for the Jews to remember this time when God spared His people from destruction. It was called Purim.

Outer Aim - God, through Esther, saved Israel from destruction so that the promised Messiah could come from Judah.

Passage

Revelation 2:10 - "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."



What the Story Tells Us - Complete the CROSSWORD PUZZLE using the words in the Word Box.

XERXES	MORDECAI	SCEPTER	BOW	GALLOWS
ESTHER	HAMAN	PERISH	FEAST	KILL

Across

- 4. ___ was a Jew who worked for the king.
- 5. Haman wanted to ___ Mordecai and the Jews.
- 7. Mordecai did not ___ down to Haman.
- 8. The king held out a golden ___ to show when a person had found his favor.
- 10. Esther invited the king and Haman to a ___.

Down

- 1. ___ was a wicked man who worked for the king.
- 2. Esther said, "If I ___, I ___."
- 3. Haman had these built for Mordecai.
- 6. ___ was the king of Persia.
- 9. ___ was the new queen of Persia.

Inner Aim - God, through the Holy Spirit in the Word, has led us to Jesus.

What God's Word Tells Us - Find the missing words in the Bible Passages below. Then discuss the questions together in class.

Acts 5:29 - We ought to obey _____ rather than _____.
When did Mordecai do what this passage said?

Psalms 37:5 - _____ your way to the LORD, _____
also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.
When did Esther remember these words?

Psalms 65:2 - O You who hear _____, to You all flesh will come.
What is God's promise to believers who pray to Him?

Your Turn - Find these Bible references and match the God-fearing leaders.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. _____ Genesis 41:41 | A. David |
| 2. _____ Exodus 4:21 | B. Moses |
| 3. _____ Judges 6:24 | C. Mordecai |
| 4. _____ 1 Samuel 16:13 | D. Daniel |
| 5. _____ 2 Kings 5:15 | E. Naaman |
| 6. _____ Daniel 2:48 | F. Joseph |
| 7. _____ Esther 10:2 | G. Gideon |

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Outer Aim - God, through Esther, saved Israel from destruction so that the promised Messiah could come from Judah.

Inner Aim - God, through the Holy Spirit in the Word, has led us to Jesus.



What the Story Tells Us - Answer the following questions then find the answers in the WORD SEARCH.

1. There was a king of _____ named _____, also known as _____.
2. Queen _____ did not come when summoned by the king.
3. She was replaced by Queen _____, a Jew.
4. She had been raised by _____, her cousin upon the death of her parents.
5. The capital city was _____.
6. One day Mordecai uncovered a plot to _____ the king by the gatekeepers.
7. A wicked man, _____, ordered every one to honor him and _____ down to him.
8. Esther said, "If I _____, I _____." *(The word will only be found one time in the puzzle.)*
9. The king held out his _____ to receive Esther when she went in uninvited to see him.
10. Esther invited the king and Haman a _____.
11. Haman had _____ built to hang Mordecai.
12. The Jews made a celebration called _____ to honor the day the Jews were saved from destruction.

A	H	A	S	U	E	R	U	S	L
S	I	H	A	M	A	N	J	Y	M
S	H	U	S	H	A	N	W	G	O
A	P	U	R	I	M	P	V	A	R
S	N	X	W	G	A	E	A	L	D
S	C	E	P	T	E	R	S	L	E
I	O	R	F	M	S	I	H	O	C
N	W	X	E	C	T	S	T	W	A
A	T	E	A	E	H	H	I	S	I
T	X	S	S	P	E	R	S	I	A
E	V	Y	T	V	R	K	B	O	W

What God's Word Tells Us - Find the missing words in the Bible Passages below. Then discuss the questions together in class.

Acts 5:29 - We ought to obey _____ rather than _____.

When did Mordecai do what this passage said?

Psalm 37:5 - _____ your way to the LORD, _____ also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

When did Esther remember these words?

Psalms 65:2 - O You who hear _____, to You all flesh will come.

What is God's promise to believers who pray to Him?

1 Corinthians 10:12 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

This passage points to Haman. From what sin did Haman suffer?

Your Turn - Find these Bible references and match the God-fearing leaders.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. _____ Genesis 41:41 | A. David |
| 2. _____ Exodus 4:21 | B. Moses |
| 3. _____ Judges 6:24 | C. Mordecai |
| 4. _____ 1 Samuel 16:13 | D. Daniel |
| 5. _____ 2 Kings 5:15 | E. Naaman |
| 6. _____ Daniel 2:48 | F. Joseph |
| 7. _____ Esther 10:2 | G. Gideon |

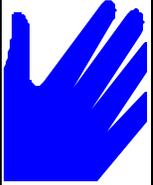
Hymn & Prayer- Worship Supplement 2000 #785

Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy. Amen.



STORY

Esther

TEACHER PRAYER

Grant me, Lord, greater insight in the working of your providence which works all things for my temporal and eternal good.

VOCABULARY

Proper Nouns - Ahasuerus - Xerxes - Esther - Star

Political nouns - Satrapy - Province

OUTER AIM

To understand that the might of the nations are but pawns in the hands of the Almighty.

INNER AIM

To be comforted in the knowledge that all things work out for good for God's people.

BACKGROUND

Time Frame - The history recorded in the book of Esther took place during the era that the Jews were under the Persian Empire, specifically between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, that is after the return of Zerubbabel, but before the return of Ezra. (As there had been three deportations, so there were three returns--538, Ezra 1-6; 458 or 7, Ezra 7-10; and 445, Nehemiah 1-13).

King Xerxes - attempted to conquer Greece. His father Darius failed, being defeated in the battle of Marathon in 490 BC. Xerxes likewise failed, being defeated in the sea battle at Salamis and the land battle at Platea. To get his army into Greece Xerxes had a pontoon bridge built across the Hellespont. A storm destroyed the bridge. Xerxes was enraged, had his construction engineers executed, and the seagods chained and whipped! Example of his hotheaded, irrational behavior.

Characters-Plot: Xerxes held a banquet, ordered Queen Vashti to appear so he could show off her beauty, but she refused to come. Xerxes had her deposed as queen and ordered an empire-wide beauty contest to be held to find a new queen. Esther was chosen. She was a cousin of Mordecai who appears to have been a minor official in the Persian Court. Enter Haman, an officer of the King who hated Mordecai because he refused to honor him by bowing down to him. Haman plotted the destruction of all Jews in the empire. His plot backfired to his own destruction and blessing for the Jews.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, grant me grace to take all my cares to You, for You have assured me that you care for me.

PRESENTATION

1. Xerxes' banquet, his deposing Queen Vashti, the beauty contest with Esther being crowned Queen.
2. Mordecai had exposed the assassination plot against the King. His action had been officially recorded.

3. Xerxes couldn't sleep one night, ordered chronicles to be read, discovered that Mordecai had not been honored, ordered Haman to arrange a suitable honor. Haman thought he was to be honored, but ended up bestowing his prescribed honor on Mordecai.

4. Xerxes acknowledging Esther, offering her up to half of his kingdom, accepting her repeated invitation to her banquet. Haman accused, executed. The Jews saved. Mordecai elevated to a position of power. (Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai--Jewish statesmen in earthly kingdoms.)

APPLICATION

Features of the Book:

1. No mention of God in the book. No reference to Esther in the NT or Dead Sea Scrolls.
2. Pride precedes the fall. ""Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," I Cor. 10:12.
3. Man proposes; God disposes! God's providence achieves His purposes in history.
4. God blesses earthly empires with God-fearing leaders--Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Gen. 50:20 - But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Ps. 37: 5 - Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

HYMN CHOICES

Jesus, Lead Thou On - TLH #410

Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be - TLH 346