

THE BOOK OF ESTHER – NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY

PART THREE – CHAPTERS EIGHT TO TEN

CHAPTER EIGHT

Haman had been dealt with and Esther and Mordecai are safe. The authority previously given to Haman is now transferred to Mordecai but the order to wipe out every Jew from India to Ethiopia is still in force and the clock is ticking down to the fateful day. It is one thing to deal with the devil but the consequence of his plan may still be in place. Esther takes her life in her hands one more time in approaching the king. Again he welcomes her to hear what she is asking. She explains how the death sentence on the Jews still stands unless it is revoked by the king's order. Ahasuerus finally grasps the situation and gives authority to Mordecai to send messengers throughout the Persian empire which not only cancels Haman's orders but gives the Jews control over their own lives and communities and the power to defend themselves against any threat to them. A great number of royal horsemen spread out through every one of the 127 provinces with the king's new order. It is one thing to give instructions but they need to be delivered to every man, woman and child. Jesus came to earth with good news but it still needs to be distributed to the whole creation, to every nation.(Mk.16:15; Matt.28:18-20) In Esther's time there is a coming day before which the news must be given. Today we do not have forever to carry out Christ's instructions because there is a day when He will return after which it will be too late.

The news of the Jews' redemption from death brought 'light and gladness and joy and honour.' The good news of forgiveness and new life in Christ is equally cause for immense celebration. But first that news must be faithfully delivered.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER EIGHT

1. In what way is our situation today similar to the Jews predicament at the start of chapter eight? What instructions were given by the king then which are still appropriate to us now?
2. The practical task of carrying out Mordecai's plans was enormous. How are the Holy Spirit's instructions to us also immensely demanding of time and resources? What would have happened if people had said to Mordecai, 'We are too busy. We will get around to it later.'

CHAPTER NINE

The message of the redemption of the Jews has been delivered throughout the empire. The planned murder of the Jewish nation becomes the cause of the judgement of their enemies. On the very same day the Jews would have died, those who supported Haman are to be executed instead. Many had pledged their support to Haman's plan because they would have profited from the Jews being wiped out. Their reward would be the Jews' possessions which by this time in their captivity could have become substantial. Haman had spent 10,000 talents of silver to gain his way but it is likely that he and his supporters would have reaped a reward many times that amount. When the Jews kill their enemies it is noticeable that they gain no financial reward whatsoever. We can celebrate our salvation but we are not to benefit from the judgement of God's enemies. Haman's 10 sons in particular are to die as the sons of the evil one.(Jn.8:44) This 13th day of the month Purim was a day of judgement and at the same time the first of 3 great days of celebration. This time of year has been remembered by the Jews right down to the present time. Through their history they have faced many attacks on them such as the Nazi holocaust intended to wipe them out but they continue to survive. As they did many of them would have remembered the book of Esther.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER NINE

1. Salvation is wonderful but judgement is horrible. What role are we to have if any in the judgement of others? What can we learn from this story about righteous judgement and unrighteous judgement?(Matt.7:1-5; I Cor.14:29)
2. Is it right for us as Christians to celebrate the fact that God will eventually judge all believers?

CHAPTER TEN

There is a final postscript describing how king Ahasuerus honours Mordecai for his courage and wisdom on behalf of his people. He replaces Haman as the king's second in charge. While God is never mentioned in this book His work through Mordecai is obvious. The faith of Esther and Mordecai is clear. What remains a mystery is whether Ahasuerus ever recognised the miracle of God which had taken place before his eyes.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TEN

1. Summarise the story of the book of Esther and then set it in modern circumstances. How might we use this story today to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. Why do you think God included this book in the Bible without any direct reference to Him? When is it sometimes appropriate to tell the Christian message without any obviously spiritual words?