

# *The Book of Esther*

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**(1996 Study)**

The following notes on the Book of Esther were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1996. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

## **THE BOOK OF ESTHER**

**(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1996)**

**Esther 1:1** 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:)

Instead of Xerxes, the term Ahasuerus is used. Ahasuerus is a kingly title (such as Pharaoh, Caesar, etc.) and not a personal name. The title of an office like president or prime minister, it is related to the Median branch of the Media-Persian Empire, whereas Xerxes and Artaxerxes are Persian titles. In the image of Daniel 2, the head of gold symbolized Babylon, and the arms and breast of silver represented Media-Persia, an empire of the Medes and the Persians that was formed by a marital relationship. (The daughter of one branch of the empire married the male heir of the other to form the joint empire of Media-Persia.)

The Book of Esther dates back quite far, but probably Esther died after Nehemiah. The last three historical books of the Old Testament are Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Ezra overlaps Nehemiah, but Nehemiah lasted longer. Nehemiah overlaps Esther, but Esther lasted longer.

In time, Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, got news from a relative who came from Jerusalem that conditions there were deplorable because the city walls were broken down and the Jews had no protection against marauding bands that kept robbing them. Nehemiah was very sad to hear of the chaotic state in Jerusalem, and as cupbearer, he was supposed to cheer up the king, in addition to tasting food and drink to make sure they were not poisoned. Nehemiah also oversaw many items pertaining to the personal welfare of the king of Persia. The office of cupbearer was an honorable position.

When King Ahasuerus noticed that his cupbearer was sad, Nehemiah said a quick prayer and then told the king the reason: "I am a Jew, and my posterity are in Jerusalem. Cyrus gave permission for the exiles to return, but conditions are deplorable." Ahasuerus and the queen apparently thought so highly of Nehemiah that the king gave him a 12-year leave of absence to go back to Jerusalem. The Scriptures suggest the queen put in a good word for Nehemiah.

The beginning of the account of Esther predates Nehemiah by a number of years and explains how she got into such a high position of authority in the Media-Persian Empire. Esther was a young girl when she was first made queen. By surviving into old age, she outlived Nehemiah. In other words, the Book of Esther was written after Nehemiah's decease, but it dates back prior to both Ezra and Nehemiah.

While Ahasuerus, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes were titles, Cyrus was the *personal* name of the first Persian king. As shown in Daniel 8:3, the Median power was superior to the Persian power for a little while. The later horn (Persia) superseded the earlier one (Media), and the Media-Persian Empire became the Persian Empire. As stated in Daniel 5:31, "Darius the *Median* took the kingdom [of Babylon]," and his general was Cyrus the Persian. Darius the Mede was over the entire empire and was not a puppet as secular history would have us believe. Thus the Median power was stronger originally, but Cyrus was a great general and did a lot of fighting up in Asia Minor. Through marriage, he merged with the Medes and eventually became the first Persian emperor. The combined powers of Media-Persia reigned from India to Ethiopia, from one end of the earth to the other. It was Cyrus the Persian who issued the decree for the Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem.

**Q:** Is it correct to say that Ahasuerus was Xerxes, and that Xerxes was the predecessor of Artaxerxes?

**A:** Yes. Xerxes is a shortened form of Artaxerxes. Esther married Xerxes first, and when he died, his son Artaxerxes took Esther as his queen. This was not an unusual practice in Egyptian and Babylonian history, for the woman was considered very important for royalty. A king's son was not the heir-apparent unless he married a queen or a woman of the regal line. Therefore, Esther was the queen of both Xerxes and Artaxerxes. The reign of Ahasuerus covered 127 provinces.

Ahasuerus is mentioned or alluded to elsewhere in Scripture. Daniel 7:5 reads, "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." Four animals were used to describe the four universal empires: a lion (Babylon), a bear (Media-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and a dragon (Rome). Although Ahasuerus is not mentioned in Daniel 7, a bear with three ribs in its mouth is portrayed as raising itself up on one side. The three ribs, which told the bear to "arise and devour much flesh," represent three successive princes, or leaders, in the Media-Persian Empire. The prophecy instructing the bear to rise up from its position of lying on one side—that is, sort of elevated—indicated it was to conquer.

Daniel 8:3 reads, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." Instead of four beasts, this chapter mentions only two: a ram and a he goat. The two horns of the ram correspond with the two silver arms of the image in Daniel 2. The horn that came up second was higher than the first, and in secular history, Cyrus the Persian became more prominent than Darius the Mede, who reigned for only two years.

Daniel 9:1 mentions Ahasuerus: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans."

Then in Daniel 11:1,2, the angel Gabriel was presumably speaking to Daniel (compare Daniel 9:21). "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia." Daniel served under several kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian. Secular history purposely drops out Darius the Mede, but why? Because there is so much speculation as to who he was, he is conveniently omitted from the listings. Darius the Mede served less than two years, died, and was succeeded by Cyrus the Persian. Therefore, when we read in secular history about the Media-Persian Empire, the list is headed by Cyrus instead of Darius the Mede. The listing of kings in the records of Persia begins with Cyrus, and the Book of Esther is Persian in influence. However, in the Book of Daniel, superiority is first given to the Median kingdom, and then later in the book, Persia has the prominence.

**Esther 1:2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,**

Shushan was the capital of the Persian Empire.

**Esther 1:3 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:**

The time setting for the beginning of the Book of Esther is the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus. He made a feast for all of his princes, nobles, and servants.

**Esther 1:4** When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

Ahasuerus gave a *six-month* feast, or banquet. The length of the feast indicates how rich the storage of food, wine, and money was, and the feast itself was primarily for the elite.

Daniel 11:2, quoted earlier, mentions this great wealth: “The fourth shall be *far richer* than they all: and by his strength through his *riches* he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” The heart of Ahasuerus was so lifted up that he contemplated an invasion of Greece. However, his efforts were unsuccessful, and he returned to Persia after suffering a great defeat.

The fourth king, whom Esther married, was Xerxes. When he died, she became the wife and queen of Artaxerxes. There is much contention as to who Ahasuerus was. A 1907 *Reprint* article states that Ahasuerus was Xerxes, and this view is supported by the historian Herodotus, who was a contemporary of Xerxes. In the chronology of the *Second Volume*, the Pastor disputes Ptolemy’s Canon, which states that the twentieth year of Artaxerxes was 445 BC. Bro. Russell says the twentieth year was 454 BC.

**Esther 1:5** 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;

At the expiration of the 180 days, or six months, the king made a seven-day feast for all of the people in Shushan, including the common people. Because of the large number of princes, nobles, and others who attended, he held the feast outdoors in the court in the royal garden.

**Esther 1:6** 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.

This verse describes the coloring. In tile work that can still be seen today, blue, green, and white are prevailing colors. How beautiful the palace must have been! Of course the king was showing off his wealth. The name Shushan means “lily.” The magnificence, ornamentation, and cheerfulness of the palace fit the definition.

**Esther 1:7** 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.

**Esther 1:8** 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.

When the 180 days had expired and the feast was open to all people for seven days, wine was served in gold vessels. According to the law, the amount of wine one did or did not drink was voluntary. The conscience of the individual determined the matter. Hence this king, as cruel as he was when crossed, had respect for the diverse eating and drinking customs of the conquered people of the empire.

**Esther 1:9** Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

Queen Vashti made a feast for the women in the royal house.

**Esther 1:10** 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,

**Esther 1:11** To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

The climax came on the seventh day when the king wanted to show off Vashti's great beauty. The Pastor said that the Book of Esther was probably a type. If so, Esther would represent the true Church, and the king would picture Jesus. Vashti would be the nominal Church.

A committee of seven chamberlains was sent to bring Vashti before the king and his guests. In addition to the seven chamberlains, there were also seven princes, and none of the names were duplicated (see verse 14).

It is likely that the seven chamberlains were eunuchs because they were in close association with the king and his concubines. Some men willingly submitted to castration because serving the king as a chamberlain (or a eunuch) was considered an honor.

Spiritually speaking, there are eunuchs in both the true Church (those who are voluntarily celibate for the Kingdom of heaven's sake) and the nominal Church (priests, bishops, etc.). Considered favorably, the eunuchs represent the seven messengers to the Church. Paul was a spiritual eunuch; he had the liberty to marry but chose not to do so lest his ministry be inhibited. We do not know if John married—or Arius or Waldo or Wycliffe. The ministry of Arius included 300 virgin colporteurs, and the fact that no one ever insinuated any immoral impropriety testifies to his being a most outstanding person. Fault was found with Arius's doctrine but not with his conduct. Luther had a wife, but originally he was a eunuch as a monk. Luther's wife was a former nun. And the Pastor lived a celibate life even though married.

**Q:** Not every detail of a type has to fit the antitype, but how could the seven chamberlains, who were all on the scene at the same time, picture the seven messengers, who were successive down through the Gospel Age? Wouldn't that discrepancy militate against their being the seven messengers?

**A:** No, because the chamberlains were eunuchs for the entire seven-day feast. We will consider the antitype later. For now, we will just say that there are both true and false eunuchs.

**Esther 1:12** 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.

The account does not explain the reason for Vashti's refusal. The reason could have been a noble one, but for the sake of the type, it appears to have been pride, independence, disregard, and disobedience. From a personal standpoint, Vashti probably had good reason to disobey because of the excess wine. (We are reminded of the feast with Herod and Salome. On that occasion too, wine was drunk in excess.) According to Jewish tradition, the king wanted Vashti to come in almost naked but wearing a crown. One version of the rabbinical writings supposedly uses the word "naked."

In fact, if the atmosphere of drunken revelry was what caused Vashti to refuse, her doing so was courageous, because for a woman to disobey the king in the presence of the seven-man committee was enough to put her head on the chopping block. If that was the case, she was actually very noble. But for those who were there, Vashti's refusal was seen as disobedience.

**Comment:** If Vashti pictures the nominal Church and the king is Jesus, her refusal fits the antitype.

**Reply:** Yes, the nominal Church reigns as a queen, and it did forsake the way. The true Church will not become a queen until the marriage.

Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, was a horrible king. However, he can still be a type of Jesus, for Xerxes' personality is not brought into the Book of Esther. Similarly, we do not know about the character of the Pharaoh in Joseph's day. In the study of a type, details that are not mentioned are sometimes as important as those that are mentioned. In other words, certain details may be purposely omitted.

**Esther 1:13** 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:

**Esther 1:14** 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;)

Here is the second group of seven: wise men, or princes. This group was political, as opposed to the seven chamberlains, who were more intimate servants. The seven princes "saw the king's face" in that, like cabinet members, they had ready access to Ahasuerus. As advisers, they had political influence.

**Esther 1:15** 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?

**Esther 1:16** 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.

Under such a circumstance and in view of the law of the Medes and the Persians, the refusal of someone to come into the king's presence would have a deleterious effect on the eyewitnesses. They would wonder, "What will the king do?" He did not react the way Nebuchadnezzar did with the three Hebrews, for the latter gave the three an opportunity to recant, commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter, and ordered his mightiest men to throw the three into the furnace when they refused (Dan. 3:13-21). This Persian king did not say, "Off with Vashti's head," but he was angry and puzzled as to what to do.

**Esther 1:17** 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.

**Esther 1:18** 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.

The concern was that Vashti's refusal would cause the women of the realm to likewise disobey their husbands. Then Memucan, one of the seven princes, questioned how their own wives would react.

**Esther 1:19** 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.

**Esther 1:20** 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.

Vashti was not to be put to death, but she would be removed from her previous status and no longer have access to the king. Her royal estate would be given to another.

**Q:** Since Vashti was not destroyed, could she represent the Great Company?

**A:** In principle yes, but not in the type. Papacy was not destroyed either; that is, the destruction will not take place until the end of the Gospel Age.

The Great Company have the same calling as the Little Flock, for both classes are espoused to Christ. The Great Company hope to be the Bride of Christ, but they lose out because they do not pay particular heed to the instructions of the Master and the Heavenly Father. Overall, however, there are difficulties in saying that Vashti pictures the Great Company.

**Comment:** Vashti remained in the king's household, even though not queen.

**Reply:** At this juncture, the representation seems to fit the Great Company, but that will not be true when certain details are introduced later. Our interpretation is not dogmatic, however, for parts of the book still need more clarification.

**Comment:** Vashti also seems to represent Israel, who was formerly in a favorable position but went into disfavor because of disobedience.

**Reply:** At one time, we had that thought, and it is worth putting on the table for further consideration.

**Esther 1:21** And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

**Esther 1:22** 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.

The decree was published extensively in the kingdom, "going to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household" (see NIV).

**Esther 2:1** 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.

**Esther 2:2** Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

Now that Vashti had been banished, the king missed her; that is, he missed having a beautiful queen. Therefore, the king's servants made a suggestion: "Let fair young virgins be sought for the king." The Hebrew word rendered "virgins" is *bethulah*, which means "innocent, young



maidens,” but it also includes the thought of “virgins.” (*Almah* is the stronger Hebrew word for “virgins.”)

**Esther 2:3** 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 Hegai the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

**Esther 2:4** And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

The king liked the suggestion to have an international beauty contest. For the contest, “all the fair young virgins” were to be brought to the palace in Shushan and given into the “custody of Hegai the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women,” for the purpose of preparation and inspection to find out who would be the ultimate queen. Like Eliezer with Rebekah, Hegai pictures the Holy Spirit.

Because Esther was so young when the international beauty contest was announced, it is easy to see how she was also on the scene many years later, without being too old, in the days of Artaxerxes, the next king. The order of Media-Persia’s kings was Darius the Mede, Cyrus the Persian, Cambyses, Darius Hystaspes, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes.

**Esther 2:5** 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;

**Esther 2:6** 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.

Four generations were involved. Kish would have been very young when he was carried off to Babylon with King Jeconiah of Judah. Others taken captive at that time were Daniel and the three Hebrew children. The New Testament lineage goes through this Jeconiah (Matt. 1:11).

**Esther 2:7** 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.

Esther was just one of a number of candidates at this juncture. Mordecai was either a cousin or an uncle of Esther’s—and much older.

**Esther 2:8** 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.

The time setting of chapter 1 was the third year of Ahasuerus (Xerxes). For the international beauty contest to select the new queen, King Xerxes relegated the housing responsibility and the care of the contestants to Hegai, a representation of the Holy Spirit. God gives the custody, care, and nurturing of Christians, His children, over to the charge of His Holy Spirit, which enlightens, feeds, and nourishes them.

**Esther 2:9** 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.**

Hegai was pleased with Esther, so he gave her not only the best housing but also seven maidens to tend to her needs.

**Esther 2:10 Esther had not shown her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it.**

Esther would have been at least 16 years old, but some time elapsed before her turn came to go before the king. She had to wait, even though she was in the best location.

**Esther 2:11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.**

Mordecai was concerned for Esther's welfare.

**Esther 2:12 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;)**

**Esther 2:13 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.**

When a contestant knew it was her turn to go in to see the king, she could have whatever apparel, perfume, cosmetics, jewelry, etc., she thought would best show off or enhance her beauty. In other words, each contestant was given every opportunity to be selected as this queen. This liberty showed that the contest was unbiased.

The 12-month purification period consisted of six months with oil of myrrh and six months with other fragrances or spices. In the Christian's life, the purification process would be sanctification. "Oil of myrrh" represents knowledge and wisdom gained through experience. The other fragrances picture the fruits, or graces, of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that a year of preparation preceded the presentation to the king.

**Esther 2:14 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.**

After the king saw each contestant, she was put in escrow, as it were, or in abeyance in the "second house."

**Comment:** Ephesians 6:13 comes to mind: "Having done all, to stand." After undergoing the preparation process of putting on all the armor of God, the Christian is to stand firm in faithfulness.

**Esther 2:15 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.**

**Esther 2:16** So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Queen Vashti's demotion had occurred in the third year of Xerxes' reign. Now, four years later in the seventh year of his reign, the king selected Esther. Evidently, when the contestants went in before him, others were present, for "Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her." All of the onlookers were impressed with her beauty.

**Esther 2:17** 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.

**Esther 2:18** 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.

**Esther 2:19** And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Here we see Esther receiving the royal crown and replacing Vashti as queen. Afterward the king made "a great feast unto all his princes and his servants" to honor his choice of Esther as queen.

This portion of the Book of Esther about the beauty contest seems to have an antitype. Certain problems arise if the earlier part of the book and some of the subsequent portions are included—except from a broad-brush standpoint. The selection of Queen Esther (the Church) takes place during the Gospel Age, and the marriage is pictured by Esther's receiving the crown. The feast that followed her selection, the second gathering called "Esther's feast," corresponds to the marriage supper, which the Great Company, the other virgins, will attend; it signifies their change from earthly to spiritual conditions.

**Q:** Antotypically speaking, who were the seven maidens assigned to Esther during the preparation period?

**A:** They were not contestants in the selection process. If the king represents Jesus, Esther pictures the Bride of Christ, and Hegai represents the Holy Spirit, then the seven maidens who were supplied to Esther would be the guardian angels who provide the Church with custodial care throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Age. The antitypical Esther will be made queen at the end of the Gospel Age.

Who does Mordecai represent? At the time the feast took place, he sat at the gate; that is, he was promoted to a position of importance. To say he represents the Ancient Worthies would seem to fit this picture, even though he was on the scene earlier, because the Apostle Paul tells us that the Church is purified and sanctified not only by the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ but also by the ashes of a red heifer. In other words, the deeds of the Ancient Worthies are set as an example. In fact, Paul devoted chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews to the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies. Including Hebrews 12:1, he said (paraphrased), "Let us run this race, which Christ ran as our Forerunner, but we also have other examples in the Old Testament." The memory and deeds of the Ancient Worthies have been continually before the Church down through the Gospel Age. Thus, in a sense, the Ancient Worthies are alive to us. In fact, the best way to read the Old Testament is to put ourselves back there, to make believe we are living at that time and having those experiences.

The sequence is important. The Ancient Worthies cannot be raised from death until the Church is complete and the Great Company is off the scene. At that point, the blood of Christ can be released for the Ancient Worthies and the world. Therefore, the sequence is that just before the severity of Jacob's Trouble at the end of the age, the Great Company will have its change. The Elisha picture shows that this class will not be changed until three-plus days (years) after Elijah's departure. After Elisha crosses the Jordan the second time and begins to perform miracles, he becomes a type of the Ancient Worthies rather than of the Great Company. Stated another way, Elisha ceases to represent the Great Company after that class is complete.

What we are trying to say is that we can somewhat particularize this segment of the Book of Esther, which occurred in the seventh year of Xerxes. The earlier portion of the book took place in the third year of Xerxes, and the last portion occurred in the twelfth year. If we consider the Book of Esther as three separate sections, the pictures will not get scrambled. Then if we reasonably try to search for a spiritual antitype, at least we are rightly dividing the Word of truth in regard to time sequence.

**Q:** When the king is considered to be a type of Jesus, is his character disregarded?

**A:** Yes, and that is true of other pictures and types in Scripture—of unclean animals that are considered holy in the antitype, of Cyrus the Persian king as a type of Jesus, etc. We do not know anything about Xerxes' character from the Book of Esther except that his heart was merry with wine. After his marriage to Esther, he did not live long. His son, Artaxerxes, succeeded him and also married Esther. The Book of Esther takes us only to the twelfth year of Xerxes, or Ahasuerus. "Ahasuerus" is a Hebraized Persian word. For example, sometimes we Anglicize the French, modifying the pronunciation and/or spelling. Thus Ahasuerus is closer to the actual Persian name than Xerxes, but Xerxes is a more identifiable name in secular history.

**Esther 2:20** **Esther had not yet shown 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.**

The spiritual picture about the selection of the Church ends with this verse. At this point, therefore, it would be helpful to have a little review.

The process of selecting a queen to replace Vashti corresponds to the call of the Church, which comprises peoples out of all nations and tongues. The contest was broadcast throughout the realm. Those who appeared to be promising candidates were screened and then inducted into the court of the king to await further screening and selection. And so the gospel went out in a general call to all peoples, searching for the Bride of Christ. Since the Church is a *multitudinous* seed, Esther represents a *class* in the antitype, not an individual. Similarly in the Song of Solomon, the *one* queen pictures the Church *class*.

**Q:** Could Vashti represent the Jewish nation instead of the nominal Church?

**A:** She could, but to avoid problems, we find it is better to omit or separate the first chapter from the type of Esther that appears in the second chapter. For one thing, the Jewish nation was never the queen of King Jesus. The Old Testament tells us that God married Israel, so if chapter 1 is a type and Vashti is the Jewish nation, Xerxes would have to picture God.

**Comment:** It makes sense for the type of Esther as the true Church to begin with the beauty contest. The same principle of interpretation has been used for other Bible characters, such as Samson. There are a number of incidents in his life, and they must be considered separately.

**Reply:** That is correct. Moses is another example. He pictures several things, some good and

some bad.

**Q:** Since we know Esther was a woman of pure character, was her second husband, Artaxerxes, a better character than her first husband, Xerxes? If so, could one reason why the Lord permitted Xerxes to die soon after the marriage be for Esther's sake? It would be nice to know that Esther had a reasonable husband for most of her life.

**A:** We do not know of anything especially cruel that Artaxerxes did.

**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.

**Esther 2:22** And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

**Esther 2:23** 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.

After the crowning of Esther, after Esther's feast, and after Mordecai sat in the king's gate, there was a time lapse. How long we do not know—one year, three years?—but in the interim, two chamberlains plotted to assassinate the king. Mordecai revealed the plot to Esther, who informed the king. As a result, the two conspirators were put to death.

Whether or not the plot to assassinate the king is a type we do not know. Satan is both anti-Semitic and anti-Christian, and we do know that at the end of the Kingdom Age, he will have a plot to deceive the nations in the Little Season. He will lead many people to Israel, to the "camp of the saints" (Rev. 20:7-9). Evidently, he will give the appearance of being successful, and in that way, a great number of people will be deceived, for their seed is described as the "sand of the sea." Out of earth's billions of people (perhaps 20 billion at the end of the Kingdom), if even 5 percent, or 1 billion people, go into Second Death, that number would be comparable to the sand of the sea. We have thought, based on certain pictures, that the ratio of those getting life to those going into Second Death will be almost 50-50. Many in the Bible Student movement would consider this estimate to be a harsh judgment, but several Scriptures seem to insinuate this thought.

**Q:** If the percentage of mankind that goes into Second Death is anywhere near 50-50, then wouldn't a similar percentage also apply to the consecrated of the present age?

**A:** Yes, we think the ratio is about the same based on the Levitical priesthood and other pictures. The Pastor wrote an article about Saul being the good bad man and the bad good man. There is a distinction. Anyone who will live forever, whether in this age or the next, must develop a crystallized character for good. In this age, the character attainment is more difficult, for we walk a straight and narrow way with a special testing. However, the human race will also be tested in the next age. The character God is looking for is not putty, and many people have a putty-like character that must be changed if they would get life. In other words, a number of people whom the world considers "good" will not get life.

**Comment:** Such individuals are too submissive and will not take a stand.

**Reply:** Yes. In the next age, God will not permit evil. After the Gospel Age ends, there will be no more permission of evil. If evil crops up, it will be *immediately* dealt with.

**Comment:** 1 Peter 4:17,18 reads, “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous *scarcely be saved*, where shall *the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”

Putty-like characters would be a risk for eternity, for they could leaven society in the ages of ages. Therefore, plenty of education and advice will be given in the Kingdom. Now we try to reason and compare Scripture with Scripture, but in the future, the Bible will be perfect and history will be truth; that is, history will not be slanted, biased, or distorted.

In the test for humanity in the Little Season, Jesus will appear to withdraw himself, and the Adversary will seem to be successful. Meanwhile, the human race will be given plenty of time to develop characters that can withstand that test.

We are not trying to draw a type with Bigthan and Teresh, but when the Kingdom is set up, certain cities in Egypt will not comply with the government of Christ, and it will be necessary for them to receive corrective judgment. Upon the nation that will not representatively go up to Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, no rain will fall (Zech. 14:16-19). This text is hinting that some, at least at first, will not believe the Kingdom has started. Similarly, some today refuse to believe the Holocaust took place in Germany, even though it is documented on film. Such characters will have to change if they want life. Judgments on the rebellious will be examples to mankind not only that there is a new authority in the earth but also that it means business with an iron rule which will not tolerate disobedience. Every knee must bow, and the individuals who refuse will be blotted out of existence. Some will not comply when they see the type of retribution that will be required of them for past willful, atrocious sins. An example of an especially heinous sin is a king of the past who buried conquered rulers alive up to the neck and then left them there to perish. Such wicked people will receive equivalent stripes and retribution for their sins.

**Comment:** In Matthew 11:23,24, Jesus said it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum.

**Reply:** Immorality can perhaps be forgiven more easily than the sadistic torturing to death of others who may be screaming for mercy. God is not mocked; what a man sows, he will reap (Gal. 6:7). All who take the sword will perish by the sword is the general principle, and those who violently kill others who are pleading for mercy will receive retribution (Matt. 26:52).

It took a long time for the Book of Esther to be canonized as part of Scripture. Why? Because the name of God is not mentioned in the entire book. However, it is mentioned acrostically five times, that is, in code fashion. The Book of Esther was originally written in the Persian language. Some Persian kings were very good to the Jews, and with others, the Jews were in constant jeopardy. Therefore, the Jews had to be careful, for a Persian king who favored them could be living one day and dead the next, only to be succeeded by a king who despised them and could easily persecute them or put them to death.

What is an acrostic? In this case, the name of God (consonants only) appears in a phrase. The first word of that phrase begins with the first letter in the name Jehovah, the second word of that phrase begins with the second letter, etc. In reading the Book of Esther, the Jew knew what to look for, so he saw God’s name there five times. Since Hebrew is written “backwards,” that is, from right to left, that is also how the code language read.

**Esther 3:1** 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.

Haman was an Agagite or Agogite, that is, of the family of Gog of Magog. (Since the vowels are supplied in the Hebrew, they can be changed or omitted.) Thus Haman is a fitting symbol of the enemy of the Jew at the end of the Gospel Age when Gog of the land of Magog comes down as a cloud and threatens to expunge Israel from history (Ezek. 38:1-9; 39:1). Gog and Magog are mentioned again in connection with the rebellion in the Little Season at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9). This particular tribe is an appropriate symbol of the bitter enmity toward Israel. Certain interesting and informative facets of Haman's character will become evident as the account continues.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 39:11-16 gives (1) Hamon-gog as the name of the future cemetery for the forces of Gog who die in Jacob's Trouble and (2) Hamonah as the name of the future city where the cemetery is located.

**Reply:** Yes, the name "Hamon" (Haman) is used in two compound words: for the gateway and for the plot of ground itself.

Through providence, Haman was advanced in the kingdom of Persia. Like Daniel, he was promoted from a relatively high status to an even higher status over the other princes.

In this second portion of the Book of Esther, King Xerxes of Persia is a representation of God. God similarly raised up Pharaohs of Egypt to picture either Himself (at the time of Joseph) or Satan (at the time of the Exodus). Each picture must be considered as a separate unit, and the symbolization of the characters depends upon the action that takes place. For example, the same individual Moses can represent God, the Law, Jesus, The Christ, or a Second Death class depending upon the picture.

**Esther 3:2** 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.

Whenever Haman entered or exited the gate leading to the inner court of the king's palace in Shushan, the people gave deference to him because of his status. However, Mordecai, a Jew, courageously refused to bow to or reverence Haman. This detail shows the exemplary character of Mordecai, who was a very unusual person. Of course his refusal to bow to Haman was noticed by others, as well as by Haman himself.

Character-wise, Mordecai was probably even superior to Esther, but morals in that sense are not to be considered for the type. Esther exercised character too, but Mordecai nurtured her and brought her up. At the time of the beauty contest, she humbly listened to his advice and obeyed him. Later she needed prodding from Mordecai in regard to going in to see the king on behalf of the Israelites, but then she was willing to do so, even if the action cost her her life.

**Esther 3:3** Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

**Esther 3:4** 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.

The king's servants informed Haman about Mordecai's refusal to bow to him. Hence Haman was being prodded to do something about the matter. Although earlier Mordecai had advised Esther not to reveal at any time that she was a Jew, and although she had obeyed for a long time and even through her reign as queen, he now disclosed to the king's servants that he was

Jewish.

It often happens when a Christian is among the unconsecrated in the world—at work, for example—that his behavior is noticed because his conscience is involved. But here Mordecai was in the king's entry gate, a *very conspicuous place*. Regarding his lack of deference to Haman, the king's servants confronted Mordecai and asked why he transgressed the king's command. In the beginning, Mordecai probably delayed the revelation, but after the pressure kept increasing, "he told them that he was a Jew." As we continue, we will see facets of both Haman's and Mordecai's character.

**Esther 3:5** And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

**Esther 3:6** And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shown 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.

Haman may have previously noticed Mordecai's lack of deference, but because of the adulation of all the others, he may have felt it was beneath his dignity to recognize the conduct of a single disorderly person. Pomp, pride, and circumstance are all factors. But now that the matter was called to his attention, he observed Mordecai's behavior more circumspectly. Although he was full of wrath, he remained outwardly calm because he wanted to get rid of all the Jews, not just Mordecai. An anti-Semitic feeling may have been quite prevalent in the Persian Empire. For instance, when Daniel and the three Hebrew children were elevated, their religion marked them for persecution. Because Daniel faithfully worshipped as usual, he was cast into the den of lions, and the three Hebrew children, who were next to Daniel in honor and position, were thrown into the fiery furnace. The fact that four Jews were in top positions in the capital city of Babylon provoked the other princes to envy and anti-Semitism. Today anti-Semitism continues because the Jewish race seems to be intellectually superior due to the training of God's Law over many centuries. Despite the persecutions (or perhaps because of them) and through the Law, the Jews have become analytical and persistent as a people. These qualities have helped them get ahead in business. Percentage-wise, a majority of the Nobel prize winners are Jewish. They are not necessarily superior in morals, however, because more light brings more responsibility.

The account does not go into the details of Mordecai's refusal to give deference to Haman. There are two types of deference toward people in authority. Consider the pope, for example.

1. Deference and respect are shown to the pope just because he is a religious leader, yet a certain reserve is retained.
2. Abject deference is shown by kneeling and kissing the pope's ring.

Thus there is a difference between (1) standing at attention and acknowledging a person with a slight nod and (2) bowing down to another human being. (Incidentally, rather than focus on an individual, we object to the *doctrine* of the Roman Catholic Church.)

The king's servants noticed that Mordecai was much more reserved than they were. As far as they were concerned, being reserved was equivalent to giving no deference at all, so they informed Haman. And Haman, who was now filled with hatred and wrath, contemplated the destruction of all Jews throughout the empire.

**Esther 3:7** 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.

This verse is separate by itself. Who “cast Pur ... before Haman from day to day, and from month to month,” and what was it? A cross-reference is Esther 9:24, which reads, “Haman ... had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them.” The Feast of *Purim* is prominently observed by Jews, particularly the non-Orthodox.

A modern example somewhat akin to casting Pur would be fortune cookies. The cookie is opened to see what the wrapper inside says. Of course the wrappers have many different sayings, but the superstitious person feels that the particular wrapper he or she opens is providentially directed. An ancient example would be King Nebuchadnezzar’s examination of the entrails of an animal to determine which fork in the road to take, the one leading to Jerusalem or the one to what is now Jordan. In an Oriental rug or in a painting, some people imagine all kinds of objects or symbolisms. These are all forms of casting lots. Astrology is another example. Based on their date of birth, advocates of astrology seek advice under their supposed sign. Casting lots would be something like taking a lot of sticks and throwing them down in the hope that the pattern formed would indicate a certain providence.

Here in verse 7, Haman was concentrating on the casting of straws (or whatever) and then examining them to discern a favorable time to consult the king about executing all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Lots were cast *every day for almost an entire year* to determine the providential time. Imagine Haman’s doing this every day and just biding his time! He was a dreadful kind of enemy to have—one who kept looking for the most advantageous time to strike the object of his hatred.

**Comment:** The time setting was now the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus.

**Reply:** Yes, the account jumped from the third year to the seventh year to the twelfth year, and this year was very momentous.

**Q:** Is there an antitype to this portion of the Book of Esther? Haman’s hatred for Mordecai sounds like the Muslim hatred for the Jews in Jacob’s Trouble and the Arab hatred, as expressed in Psalm 83, where an Arab conspiracy wants to eliminate the nation of Israel.

**A:** Yes. There will be a Gog and Magog antitype at the end of both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age. With the destruction of Gog and its allies in Jacob’s Trouble, even the cemetery and the town contain “Haman” as part of their names. The Gog of Ezekiel 38 represents the forces that Satan will organize to invade Israel, whereas the Gog of Revelation 20 is a symbol of Satan himself.

The twelfth year of the reign of King Ahasuerus was probably the last year of his life. The history books do not provide this information, but it can be deduced from indirect reasoning. The same principle of indirect reasoning applies to the conclusion that Methuselah died either the day before the Flood or the very day of the Flood. Methuselah would have believed Noah, and the fact the Flood waited for his death indicates he was an unusual person.

Satan’s plans for a counterattack on the Church have been building up all down the age. His master plan boomeranged in an abortive attempt at the time of the French Revolution, but since then, he has been devising another plan to defeat the feet members and even Christ himself. He is proud, and he trusts in his own wisdom.

**Esther 3:8** 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.

**Esther 3:9** 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.

What a plan! Haman even had a large sum of money in reserve (10,000 talents of silver) to pay those who would be in charge of putting the Jews to death. He was certainly trying to pave the way for the murderous decree to expunge all Jews from the Persian Empire. Haman's hatred was personal, but he deceptively reasoned that killing all the Jews would benefit the king.

**Esther 3:10** And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

**Esther 3:11** 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.

The king not only gave his consent to Haman but, instead of instructing him to deposit the money in the treasury, told him to use it for the intended purpose. The king was saying to Haman in effect, "I have confidence in you and in your advice that the eradication of these people who have diverse laws and customs will promote the welfare of the kingdom." The king's giving his ring to Haman indicated that the advice could be implemented.

At the end of the Kingdom, Satan will be loosed to do what he plans. This picture of Haman shows the character of Satan and of those who most closely emulate his disposition. Even though Satan is called the "god of this world" and Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the devil," most people serve Satan and not God because they like the pleasures and the rewards of unrighteousness, but this deep-seated hatred of Haman carried the matter still further (2 Cor. 4:4; John 8:44).

**Esther 3:12** 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.

**Esther 3:13** 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.

A further attraction for complying with the decree was that the ones who murdered the Jews would get their possessions as a spoil. In effect, the decree both gave added incentive and granted immunity to those who did the killing.

**Esther 3:14** 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.

**Esther 3:15** 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.**

The decree was sent out from Shushan, the capital, with all urgency (“being hastened by the king’s commandment”). “And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.” A number of the inhabitants of Shushan were Jews. (Frequently down through history, Jewish populations have been concentrated in the cities because the Jews became a mercantile people.) The Jews were perplexed over the decree; there was great consternation.

**Esther 4:1** 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;

When Mordecai heard about the decree, he “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.”

**Comment:** Proverbs 29:2 reads, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

**Reply:** Yes. Imagine hearing the news that all were to be put to death: men, women, and children. We can see why the people were ready to fast subsequently.

**Esther 4:2** And came even before the king’s gate: for none might enter into the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth.

Mordecai demonstrated publicly “before the king’s gate.” He was a person of prominence before Jewry.

**Esther 4:3** 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.

**Esther 4:4** 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.

Mordecai could not enter the king’s gate because he was attired in sackcloth and ashes. Hence he could not give the information to Esther personally.

**Esther 4:5** 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.

**Esther 4:6** So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king’s gate.

**Esther 4:7** 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.

**Esther 4:8** Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show 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.

Not only did Mordecai give Esther (through Hatach) a copy of the decree, but also he advised her, as queen, to go to the king and make supplication for her people.

**Esther 4:9** And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

**Esther 4:10** Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

**Esther 4:11** All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man 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.

Esther told Mordecai of the problem she would have in trying to gain access to the king's ear. First, she had to get an audience with him.

**Comment:** If Esther sought an audience with the king and he did not hold out his scepter to her, indicating favor, she would be put to death.

**Esther 4:12** And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

**Esther 4:13** Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

**Esther 4:14** 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?

Mordecai recognized that Esther had providentially become the queen for this very occasion, that is, to be a means of deliverance for the Jews.

**Comment:** What faith Mordecai had! He was saying, "Esther, if you do not go to the king for deliverance, God will find another means of delivering them."

**Reply:** Yes, Mordecai's comment and question were a good goad to get Esther to act. He realized that her life was in jeopardy even if she did not seek an audience with the king. Mordecai knew that God was able to raise up someone else if Esther refused.

**Esther 4:15** Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

**Esther 4:16** 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.

**Esther 4:17** So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Esther heeded Mordecai's good advice, and saw the appropriateness of fasting and having others fast because of the seriousness of the situation. The Jews in Shushan had already been fasting and wearing sackcloth, but now the fasting and praying would be particularly for Esther. It could be said that she realized she needed the prayers of her Jewish brethren.

Of course they would now begin to realize that Esther was a Jew, and this awareness would enhance their prayers.

**Comment:** Esther's maidens must have respected her, for they readily fasted and expressed no jealousy and she could trust them.

**Reply:** Generally those who served in this capacity were faithful to their master or mistress because they realized that their own fortunes would rise or fall with that individual.

**Esther 5:1** 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.

The Jews in the city had agreed to mourn and fast for three days in preparation for Esther to go to the king with a petition for their welfare. Esther's maids also fasted. Now would come the crucial moment.

Notice that everything in this chapter was providential timing. The king could have been elsewhere, but he was sitting on his throne. And out in the inner court, Esther was directly opposite his seated position on the throne when she came into his view.

**Comment:** It was said in an earlier study that the Hebrew expression "three days" is explained by the wording here. Verse 1 proves that three days in Scripture do not have to be three *full* days and nights. The people fasted *for three days*, yet Esther went to the king *on the third day*.

**Reply:** Yes. Matthew 12:40 reads, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Some say this time period had to be a full 72 hours, but it was approximately only half of that time.

**Esther 5:2** 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.

When the king saw Esther, she obtained his favor. Touching the top of his scepter was an ancient custom. The scepter is a symbol of kingly authority, as in "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Thus the scepter, or the rod, was significant. When Moses lifted his rod (his symbol of authority), the Red Sea parted (Exod. 14:15,16).

**Q:** Psalm 45:6 reads, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." Since the scepter is a symbol of justice here, would Esther's touching the king's scepter have indicated that she was asking for justice?

**A:** That could be true in the sense that the very throne is meant to be a symbol of justice, and the king was the administrator of justice. Even the worst dictators like to appear as benefactors of the people.

**Esther 5:3** 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.

The statement "It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom" reminds us of Herod's rash promise to Salome when her dancing pleased him (Mark 6:23).

**Esther 5:4** 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.

**Esther 5:5** 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.

Esther's reply seemed like a simple request. Of course Haman would have wondered why the queen was singling him out—and probably thought the banquet would be very special.

Not only was Esther's invitation to the king and Haman given on short notice, but it was an exercise of faith on her part. Of course she put her life on the line by appearing in the court without being sent for by the king, but in addition, the fact that she had already begun the preparations for the banquet was an exercise of faith.

Since the king did not know where Haman was, he sent his courier to get Haman posthaste, and they both attended Esther's banquet. A psychological factor will enter the account as we proceed.

**Esther 5:6** 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.

**Esther 5:7** Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is:

**Esther 5:8** 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 tomorrow as the king hath said.

While the banquet of wine on the first day would have been an adequate banquet, Esther might have felt that by extending the banquet to the second day, she could make it even better. The delayed response heightened the suspense on the part of the king and Haman as to what she had in mind. Probably the Holy Spirit prompted her to reason along natural and rational lines, but the delay had a psychological effect on Haman, as will be seen.

**Q:** Would the wine have been a factor?

**A:** Yes. After drinking the wine, the king waited for Esther to make her petition "even to the half of the kingdom." The king could have demanded to know the petition that very day, but the wine may have softened him.

**Esther 5:9** 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.

**Esther 5:10** Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

After banqueting with wine, Haman went forth joyfully. When Mordecai provoked him with a lack of deference, Haman did not take immediate action because he had a more comprehensive action in mind involving all Jews.

**Esther 5:11** 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.

**Esther 5:12** 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 tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

Haman's conclusion was logical based on his interpretation of the facts and providence.

**Esther 5:13** Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

**Esther 5:14** Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow 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.

Haman's family also logically assumed the situation was very favorable for him. His wife and all his friends said that the time had come to kill Mordecai, and accordingly, they suggested that a 75-foot-high gallows be constructed overnight for this purpose. Haman was wealthy, so he could easily obtain many men to do his bidding within the time frame.

Of course Satan was operating behind the scene. He reasoned, "This matter must be taken care of right away lest the opportunity be lost. I will act quickly while the iron is hot." And so the gallows was hastily made. Moreover, Mordecai's hanging was to be accomplished before Esther had the opportunity to express what was really on her mind.

**Q:** A height of 75 feet would be extremely tall for a gallows. Wouldn't that height be roughly equivalent to a ten-story building?

**A:** Yes, close to it. Haman's motive for such a high gallows was to make the hanging known. Similarly, Jesus was crucified on Calvary, the highest location nearby, to make him a public example. Those in Jerusalem could see him above the city walls. Also, the site was overruled by God because the higher location was conducive to recording the Crucifixion in history.

**Esther 6:1** 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.

**Esther 6:2** 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.

The stirring up of the king's spirit by the Lord through a dream reminds us of the account of Joseph, in which the king, the butler, and the baker all had dreams (Gen. 40:5-8; 41:1-8); King Nebuchadnezzar, who dreamed of a great image (Dan. 2:1); and the dream of Pilate's wife at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 27:19). All of these dreams were directed by Divine Providence. At whatever hour King Xerxes awoke from his dream, he was so disturbed that he ordered his servants to bring the chronicle records and read them that very night. The dream must have been powerful in order to demand such attention in the middle of the night. The king could not go back to sleep until he had heard the records.

**Esther 6:3** 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.

**Esther 6:4** 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.

**Esther 6:5** And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

Notice the crucial timing. At the very time the king inquired what honor had been given to Mordecai for warning years earlier of the assassination attempt, Haman came into the king's court with the purpose of destroying Mordecai. In other words, Mordecai was the center of the thinking of both the king and Haman, but for *opposite* reasons—one was for Mordecai, and one was against him.

**Esther 6:6** 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?

**Esther 6:7** And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

**Esther 6:8** 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:

**Esther 6:9** 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.

What split-second timing! Haman wanted to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai, but the king spoke first: "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" The question diverted Haman's thinking to himself, for he assumed the king wanted to honor him, and circumstantial evidence seemed to justify Haman in his vain and ambitious thinking. Of course Satan was in back of Haman, and God was in back of the king.

Haman suggested multiple ways of showing honor: "Let [1] the royal apparel be brought ... and [2] the horse that the king rideth upon, and [3] the crown royal which is set upon his head." The royal apparel and the horse were to be delivered to one of the noblest princes underneath the king so that the prince could clothe the man whom the king delighted to honor, lead the horse carrying him through the city streets, and proclaim him.

**Comment:** How presumptuous Haman was to ask for the royal crown!

**Reply:** In contrast, Jesus did not meditate a usurpation of power; however, the inference is that the other archangel, Lucifer, did.

**Esther 6:10** 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.

**Esther 6:11** 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.

**Comment:** Imagine the expression on Haman's face when he realized Mordecai was to be



honored!

**Reply:** Nothing in fiction could compare with this account from the annals of history.

The king's words to Haman were very significant: "Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." Then the king must have said to Haman, "You are the one to lead the horse."

**Comment:** It is appropriate that the king added "the Jew" after Mordecai's name. "Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, ... and do even so to Mordecai *the Jew*." The bestowing of honor fits the antitype in which the Ancient Worthies, mostly Jews, will be elevated and honored. Earlier Mordecai had instructed Esther not to disclose her identity, but now it was an honor to be a Jew.

**Comment:** We can also imagine the expression on Mordecai's face when he heard that such honor would be shown to him. He had asked the Jews to pray and fast so that they would not all be put to death, and now he was elevated to a high position in the empire.

**Esther 6:12** And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

**Esther 6:13** 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.

**Esther 6:14** 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.

Everything was being done promptly and peremptorily.

**Comment:** Haman was supposed to eat at Esther's banquet when he was emotionally upset.

**Esther 7:1** So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

**Esther 7:2** 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.

**Esther 7:3** 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:

**Esther 7:4** 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.

"For we are sold, *I and my people*, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." It was not until this point that Esther revealed she was a Jew.

Esther was now reminding the king of the nature of the decree. However, he did not immediately grasp the situation, even though earlier he had agreed to the decree that went through the empire proclaiming the Jews were to be slain. Although he listened attentively to Esther's request, he was not putting two and two together except from a natural standpoint.

Obviously, he thought very highly of Esther, but he was impulsive by nature. If he had weighed the matter calmly, he would have understood the situation.

Sometimes impulsiveness is good—that quality has its time and place—but not in regard to rational judgment. For instance, Moses was impulsive (and properly so) when he came down from Mount Sinai and broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments out of righteous indignation. Moreover, earlier he had killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew, and later he rescued the daughters of Jethro at the well, beating off the shepherds. As the situation required, Moses was both impulsive and very controlled. Thus there is a time and a place for righteous indignation. We should not be docile when the truth is being slandered.

**Comment:** Verse 4 reads as follows in the NIV: “For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.” In the RSV, the verse ends, “For our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.”

**Esther 7:5** 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?

**Esther 7:6** And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

Haman’s wife and friends had surmised that his future was ominous, but before Haman could think on their words, the king’s emissaries hastened him to Esther’s banquet. Esther spoke bluntly: “The adversary and enemy is this *wicked* Haman.” In other words, “The wicked person is right here before you.” Imagine Haman’s countenance now!

**Esther 7:7** 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.

**Esther 7:8** 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.

When the king heard what Haman had done about the decree, he had such a fit of anger that he momentarily left the banquet and went into the palace garden to think about how to handle the situation and what would be an appropriate punishment. After all, the king himself had elevated Haman.

Esther was on a couch, or a cushioned lounge. In desperate straits, Haman got down on his knees before Esther and then put his hand on her. Next he draped himself over her to beg for his life. Again the timing was perfect, for at that moment, the king returned and jumped to the conclusion that Haman was molesting Esther.

“As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.” Bodyguards at the door quickly sized up the situation. Before the words were fully out of the king’s mouth, they realized Haman was doomed. Therefore, they came over and covered his face. Again the events occurred *in haste*. It was as though prophecy had to be fulfilled *on time*. From the time Esther invited the king and Haman to the feast, everything was done in haste. For example, the building of the 75-foot-high gallows in one night was remarkable. The entire picture is one of feverish activity.

**Comment:** As the king returned, he would have shouted in great rage, “Will he [Haman] force the queen also before me in the house?” The whole palace would have heard the king.

**Reply:** What a sensational drama!

**Esther 7:9** 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.

**Esther 7:10** So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified.

Harbonah, one of the king’s chamberlains, made the suggestion to hang Haman on his own gallows. (Of course the Holy Spirit prompted him to speak these words.) Harbonah said in effect, “This wicked man, Haman, was going to hang Mordecai, so why not hang Haman on that very gallows?”

With the gallows being so high, the hanging was a public spectacle. When the gallows was erected overnight and the people saw it in the morning, they would have known a hanging was imminent.

This segment of Esther—that is, the account about Haman and Mordecai—illustrates the contest between Satan’s and God’s authority. It is a picture of the Gog and Magog setting at the end of the Gospel Age, which introduces the Kingdom Age, and also at the end of the Kingdom Age, which introduces the age beyond the Millennium. In other words, there are two Gog and Magog settings, and common to both is hatred of the Jew. In Ezekiel 38 and 39, Gog and Magog will be drawn down to Israel by evil motives to exterminate the nation of Israel. Instead the forces of Gog and Magog will themselves be executed. The cemetery, called Hamon-gog, will be the equivalent of the gallows in the Book of Esther.

In the incident at the end of the Kingdom Age, the Adversary, when loosed, will gather the people of earth who are in sympathy with his thinking, and they will go up against the land of Israel to demonstrate. Their protest will be that the lease of authority for the Ancient Worthies has expired, and it is time for the Kingdom to be handed over to the children of men. Bible prophecies indicate that at the end of the Kingdom Age, all who get life will become kings, as Adam was. The Kingdom will be handed over to those who remain after the testing of the Little Season, and every man will be a king. As perfect, tried, and proven individuals, they will no longer need an earthly government to enforce obedience to rules, for they will live forever in the ages of ages.

**Comment:** The Adversary has repeatedly used the tactic of applying Scriptures ahead of their due time for fulfillment, and he will again try that tactic at the end of the Kingdom Age. The Kingdom rod-of-iron rule will still be in effect, but the rebellious of mankind will demand power, thinking the Millennium is over.

**Reply:** When Jesus momentarily relaxes his authority, it will seem as if the Millennium has ended, but it will still be the Messiah Age. Jesus will not hand over the Kingdom to the Father until everyone is tried and proven and death is destroyed. Those who enter the ages of ages will not die anymore, but there will be weeping and many deaths during the Kingdom Age.

At the end of the Gospel Age, the Ancient Worthies will be raised as perfect human beings at the time of Jacob’s (the Holy Remnant’s) deliverance. At the end of the Kingdom Age, the

Ancient Worthies will get their change to spirit nature. Stated another way, at the beginning of the Kingdom Age, the Ancient Worthies will be on the earthly scene, and at the end of the Kingdom Age, they will go off the earthly scene.

**Esther 8:1** On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jew's enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

**Esther 8:2** 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.

Mordecai replaced the position that Haman had formerly occupied. The king gave the "house of Haman" to Queen Esther, but since she had the regal palace, she let Mordecai occupy the house.

In this portion of the Book of Esther, Mordecai seems to represent the Ancient Worthies, who will be "princes in all the earth" during the Kingdom Age (Psa. 45:16). The "house" (the earth) was the possession of Esther (the Church), but the king (Jesus) was behind the whole arrangement. Since Haman represents Satan, the god of this present evil world, the elevation of Mordecai would indicate the transfer of power to the Ancient Worthies at the beginning of the Kingdom (2 Cor. 4:4). Of course in the antitype, Haman goes into Second Death.

**Esther 8:3** 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.

**Esther 8:4** Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

Up to this point, the matter against the Jews had been remedied on only the local level; that is, Haman's house and family were destroyed in Shushan, the capital. Now Esther sought the king's help in reversing the extermination order throughout the realm, or internationally, as it were.

**Esther 8:5** 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:

**Esther 8:6** 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?

**Q:** Wouldn't it have been unusual for a decree made according to the law of the Medes and the Persians to be reversed?

**A:** The decree was still in effect, but it was subsequently offset by another unalterable decree that allowed the Jews to fight back. And what was the effect of the second decree upon the enemies of the Jews? Having already planned how to eliminate the Jews, their enemies were completely unnerved and fearful. Haman's reaction had been similar. He was joyfully expecting further honors, but when he realized the tables were turned, he feared for his life—and justifiably so!

Esther's emotional state reminds us of Nehemiah the cupbearer, whose countenance was sad

before the king. When the king inquired as to the reason for the sadness, Nehemiah replied, “How can I be happy when the city of the sepulchers of my fathers lieth waste and the walls are fallen down?” (Neh. 2:3 paraphrase).

**Comment:** The account here is also a reminder of when Isaac gave the firstborn blessing to Jacob, and Esau later besought Isaac with tears. Isaac could not change the blessing already given to Jacob, but Isaac did give Esau a lesser blessing.

**Esther 8:7** 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.

**Esther 8:8** 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.

When the king said, “Write ye also for the Jews,” he was addressing both Esther and Mordecai, but the focus of attention was really on Mordecai, who was in a position to organize a response to the former decree. Mordecai had the “king’s ring,” that is, the authority.

**Esther 8:9** 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.

**Esther 8:10** 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:

**Comment:** That was quite a procession: mules, camels, horses, and young dromedaries!

**Reply:** Yes, and each kind of animal was specially adapted to certain terrain; for example, the camel was excellent in the desert. With 127 provinces, the Persian domain was extensive.

**Esther 8:11** 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,

**Esther 8:12** 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 enemies of the Jews (entire families—men, women, and children) were to be exterminated.

**Comment:** There was a nine-month gap from the time Mordecai started to send out the decree until it would go into effect. That would be adequate time to reach all 127 provinces.

**Reply:** Yes, for the vast empire extended from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1). The edict went out from Shushan, which was close to India, relatively speaking, whereas Ethiopia, the other extremity, was considered the end of the earth in those days.

**Esther 8:13** 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.**

**Esther 8:14** 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.

The decree went out posthaste.

**Esther 8:15** 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.

**Esther 8:16** The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

The King James margin suggests "violet" instead of "blue," but blue is probably correct because it was the royal color of the Persian Empire.

**Comment:** Mordecai's appearance would have been striking and noble.

**Reply:** That is true, especially since he had a great golden crown and wore "a garment of fine linen and purple."

**Comment:** The very items Mordecai now possessed—the king's ring, royal apparel, etc.—were what Haman had wanted for himself.

**Reply:** Yes, Mordecai was now second in authority, and the Jews were very happy with this turn of affairs.

**Comment:** Verse 16 describes how the Jews will be regarded in the Kingdom. They will have "light, and gladness, and joy, and honour."

**Reply:** Yes, and there will be a "feast of fat things" (Isa. 25:6).

**Esther 8:17** 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.

Many became Jewish proselytes out of fear and pressure.

**Comment:** The Gentiles' becoming Jewish proselytes fits the antitypical Kingdom picture.

**Reply:** Yes, the people in the Kingdom will have to bow the knee, and since the New Covenant will be made with the Holy Remnant, it will essentially be Jewish. In order to get a blessing in the Kingdom, the Gentiles will have to become Jewish proselytes. They will "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew" (Zech. 8:23).

**Esther 9:1** 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;)

**Esther 9:2** 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.**

Under the changed circumstances, any who would still take action against the Jews were inveterate enemies. Nevertheless, when they started to battle the Jews, they became unnerved because the Lord's spirit and providence overruled the situation.

**Esther 9:3 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.**

**Esther 9:4 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.**

Of all histories that have been written, the Bible is the most authentic and the most reliable. It is very complete; in as few words as possible, the Bible covers as much ground as possible. For example, neither Mordecai nor Moses is mentioned in secular history.

**Comment:** Verses 3 and 4 are a beautiful description of the Ancient Worthies in the Kingdom. They will be great in King Jesus' "house," they will be princes in all the earth ("all the provinces"), they will wax "greater and greater" in reputation, and the people will "fear" them in the sense that, like the apostles, they will be able to get at the heart of any evil matter.

**Reply:** The Ancient Worthies' supernatural communication with The Christ will enable them to know who is at fault and what the problem is.

**Q:** Mordecai's name means "dedicated to Mars," and with Mars being the god of war, wouldn't that very name also describe the Ancient Worthies, who will be strong for the Lord and for a sense of justice?

**A:** When Jesus rules with a rod of iron, he will rule through the Ancient Worthies, his earthly representatives, who will be backed up with authority and power. The Great Company will be in the role of not only subservient messengers and servants but also a police force that will keep an eye on anything done secretly.

**Esther 9:5 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.**

**Esther 9:6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.**

Instead of "palace," the Revised Standard Version more accurately renders Shushan as the "capital." The Jews killed 500 men in the capital city of Shushan (or Susa).

**Esther 9:7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,**

**Esther 9:8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,**

**Esther 9:9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,**

**Esther 9:10 The ten sons of Haman the sons of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.**

Some people, mostly Jews, have devoted their whole life to the Kabbalah, which is the study or meaning of numbers in the Bible. While numbers in science, nature, and the Bible are significant, fallen human beings are not able to make proper judgments on these matters at the

present time. Similarly, astrology is a dangerous subject, even though Genesis 1:14 tells us that the sun, moon, and stars were set in the heavens as signs. Likewise, all insects and animals have a figurative or spiritual connotation that will be known in the future and will take an eternity to fully explore. The Kingdom Age will be a reconstruction period for the people to make themselves straight with God and Jesus. Therefore, not until after the Kingdom will mankind have time to delve into these subjects. In the ages of ages, there will be plenty of time for leisure, study, etc. Eternity will not be boring.

In the Book of Esther, however, the study of numbers does have a value at the present time, for God's name is not mentioned anywhere in this book. For a book to be considered part of the sacred canon, God's name has to be included, and indeed it is there in the Hebrew in code language, or in an acrostic form. This book was written in Persia, and because the Persian Empire had a different god from Jehovah, the Jews had to use discretion in public documents. While the Book of Esther had a special appeal for the Jews, even Gentiles appreciated it as a nice story. The point is that Jehovah's name appears in an acrostic fashion in four places in the Book of Esther.

Verses 7-9, which list the names of the ten sons of Haman, confirm that the acrostic method is not a figment of our imagination. In addition, the Book of Esther gives the names of Haman and Zeresh, his wife. If we take every letter of the names of the ten sons, convert them into numerical values, and then total the numbers, the result is 10,244. The numerical value of Haman is 117, and Zeresh is 507. The total of all the names is 10,868. What is the point? There is only one number that divides exactly into all four categories: the number 13. Moreover, the decree was made on the thirteenth day, and Jesus was the thirteenth at the Memorial. Jesus was made a curse, but the curse became a blessing. He is the Life-giver because he died and took Adam's place. Thus not only was he a Life-giver, but he suffered for man. The division is as follows:

$$10,244 \div 13 = 788$$

$$117 \div 13 = 9$$

$$507 \div 13 = 39$$

$$10,868 \div 13 = 836$$

The number 13 indicated an *ominous omen* (death) to the ones upon whom the decree would fall. At the same time, *joy* resulted from the decree and from Jesus' death. The point is that these numbers, all perfectly divisible by 13, could not have occurred by chance. Therefore, not only is it remarkable that these variables agree in such an unusual fashion, but *Divine Providence* overruled that the ten sons would be given these names when they were born. In other words, God foresaw what was going to happen, yet the individuals exercised their own free moral agency. Here is an evidence of Jehovah's *omniscience*. Likewise with Cyrus, another Persian king, his name was declared in Holy Writ many years before he was born. The advance recording was providential because years later, when his attention was called to the Hebrew Scriptures, Cyrus issued a favorable decree for the Jews. The above reasoning gives great credence to acrostics for the name Jehovah.

In summary, this unusual providential factor for the number 13 furnishes the Book of Esther with the secret seal of divine endorsement, or approval. The *power* of this unique evidence should be realized, for the consistency of evenly dividing these four numbers by 13 would be almost impossible without divine overruling. The number 13 is significant in other ways as well. For instance, the skull and crossbones symbol, used to indicate poison and/or death, comes from Golgotha (Skull) Hill, where Jesus was crucified, and the "X" stands for his name. Then, too, there is the saying "X marks the spot."

**Comment:** Even from the standpoint of English, the ten names are unusual. Five of them begin with "A" and three with "P."



**Comment:** Verse 10 states, “But on the spoil laid they not their hand.” The king’s decree gave the Jews permission to seize the possessions of those whom they killed, but the Jews refused. Their refusal shows a pure and noble attitude.

**Esther 9:11** On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

**Esther 9:12** 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.

**Esther 9:13** Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

Part of the account is not sequential; it is repeating and giving the detail that Haman’s ten sons were put to death by hanging.

**Esther 9:14** And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

**Esther 9:15** 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.

**Esther 9:16** 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,

**Q:** That is a large number of enemies to be slain: 75,000. Is this number a subtle hint that many will go into Second Death in the Kingdom?

**A:** Yes, they will be as the “sand of the sea” (Rev. 20:8). The 75,000 were hard-core enemies, for lesser enemies would have either fled to desolate areas or become converts. The account in the Book of Esther is remarkable in that it follows what is prophesied concerning the Kingdom Age, which will end after the Little Season with the last enemy (death) being destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

**Esther 9:17** 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.

**Esther 9:18** 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.

**Esther 9:19** Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled 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.

The Jews sent gifts to one another on the day of feasting and gladness.

**Esther 9:20** 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,

**Esther 9:21** To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

The fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar were considered holidays.

**Esther 9:22** 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.

**Esther 9:23** And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

**Comment:** The turning of mourning into joy is a reminder of Psalm 30:5, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

**Esther 9:24** 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;

**Esther 9:25** 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.

**Esther 9:26** 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,

**Esther 9:27** 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;

**Esther 9:28** 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.

**Esther 9:29** Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

There is a play on words here. For 12 months, Haman had cast lots daily to see if the day was favorable to ask the king for a decree for the death of all Jews in the empire. Finally, in the twelfth month, the lots indicated a favorable time. However, that which at first appeared to be favorable became a curse to him and resulted in his extinction. At the same time, the day of the casting of the lots, which seemed to be a curse to the Jews, became favorable to them. The same reversal will occur at the end of the Kingdom when some from all nations (described as “Gog and Magog,” and as the “sand of the sea” in number) follow the Adversary up to the “camp of the saints” and demonstrate in Jerusalem, but instead of receiving what they desire, they will be destroyed (Rev. 20:7-9). That will be the final fulfillment, or antitype, of the Jews singing on the far side of the Red Sea during the Exodus when they saw the waves cover Pharaoh (Satan) and all his host.

**Comment:** The Feast of Purim is still celebrated on the fourteenth of Adar in commemoration of the Jews' deliverance from the massacre plotted by Haman.

**Esther 9:30** 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,

**Esther 9:31** To confirm these days of Purim in 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.

**Esther 9:32** And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

**Esther 10:1** And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

**Esther 10:2** 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?

**Esther 10:3** 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.

**Comment:** Perhaps "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia" will be found in the Kingdom.

**Reply:** Yes, that book, Jeremiah's deed, the stones in the Jordan River, etc., will all be found.

**Comment:** When the generation who lived back there and actually saw these things is about to come forth from the grave, there will be great anticipation by the already-resuscitated right-hearted of mankind. The latter will look forward to seeing such confirmations of Scripture.

**Comment:** Proverbs 16:33 tells about the casting of lots: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

## ESTHER CHAPTER 2

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1983)

Chapter 1 of the Book of Esther tells that Vashti was the original wife and queen of King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes), but following her insubordination, he was forced to divorce her through the advice and counsel of other administrators in the kingdom. Now, in the second chapter, the king's advisers suggested that he get a new wife and queen to fill the place of the former wife. Who would King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, and Esther represent in this picture? Vashti represents the nominal Church, which acted like a queen before the due time and was presumptuous. Of course the king represents Jesus, and Esther, who was chosen to replace Vashti, pictures the true Church, which will ultimately attain to regal honors.

In verses 3 and 4 of chapter 2, the king's advisers said, "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 Hegai 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." The account adds, "The thing pleased the king; and he did so." The advice was the background for the subsequent beauty contest, and the successful candidate would be accepted to the throne as queen of the kingdom.

Psalm 45:10,11 fits in nicely with the concept of a beauty contest. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The spiritual beauty of those in the Church class is enhanced by (1) the completion of their separation from the world and its interests and influences and (2) their obedience to the instructions of God.

The selection process for this *international* beauty contest included all 127 provinces in the Media-Persian Empire (Esth. 1:1). In fulfillment of the proclamation to gather "all the fair young virgins," appointed officers in all the provinces went out to inspect and find prospective candidates. Those who came to Shushan, the capital, for purification rites would be on their way as candidates. This search for the ideal queen corresponds to the call of the Church, which goes to all nations. Just as the Bride class is composed of peoples from all nations, so in the type, the Lord's goat was selected from the people (Lev. 16:5). The description "fair young virgins" indicates that Christians, called "saints" in the present life, are to be separate and holy (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 1:1; 13:13; Eph. 1:15; 3:18; 4:12; etc.). We are reminded of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish *Virgins* (Matt. 25:1-13).

The candidates for selection as queen were put under the custody of Hegai, "the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women," who pictures the Holy Spirit. The justification for this interpretation is Eliezer, Abraham's oldest servant, who was sent out to select a wife for Isaac. Eliezer's role was similar to that of Hegai, for both were involved in selecting a bride. Just as Eliezer preceded Isaac, so the Holy Spirit existed before Jesus, the first created Son of God. As chamberlain, Hegai was the king's right-hand man, and in that office, he was given the added responsibility of being in charge of the most promising candidates. When they were brought to Shushan, he inspected them more closely. That inspection was something like the leading, or the drawing power, of the Holy Spirit before consecration, which is not the same as the leading of the Holy Spirit after consecration. The Holy Spirit is vitally necessary after consecration.

The second chapter continues with verses 5-7: "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; 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.

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." Notice that in Hebrew, the name Esther is Hadassah.

Mordecai now becomes a principal character in this picture. Based on the natural relationship, whom does he represent? How did he get involved in the upbringing of Esther? Esther was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle; that is, Esther and Mordecai were cousins (see the NIV). After her parents died, the older Mordecai brought up Esther as if she were his own daughter.

The gospel call originally went forth to the Jews. When the Seed of Promise came, the nation of Israel had exclusive favor for 3 1/2 years, and to as many as received him, Jesus gave the power and liberty to become the sons of God (John 1:12). As a people, however, the Jews rejected Jesus; hence they died with regard to receiving the promise. Only a select few of that race, including the apostles, properly responded. In the large picture, Esther shows the calling of the Gentiles. In the ultimate fulfillment, she pictures the Church, but numerically speaking, very few are Jews. In another picture, Ruth the Moabite represents the Gentile Church.

Now we go back to the question about Mordecai's representation. He pictures the Jewish nation, which was called out, and particularly the Ancient Worthies of the "older generation." John the Baptist, a Jew and the last of the Ancient Worthies, introduced Messiah to the nation. When Esther's parents died, she went over to a new but related relationship; she was under a new custodianship. Two things happened. (1) The Ancient Worthies were involved in the instruction and edification of the Church from a prophetic standpoint, for they pointed forward to Christ. (2) Faithful Jews who lived past John the Baptist came into the Church. And so Esther was a Jew, but in the large picture, in the selection of the Bride, many vacancies were left. The Bride was not successfully found in the nation of Israel, even though thousands of Jews were originally called. Therefore, the call went out to Gentile nations to make up the body of Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel" until the full number of Gentiles is found to complete the Bride class (Rom. 11:25).

The generations of Mordecai help to identify when the events of the Book of Esther happened; namely, it was now the third generation removed from the Babylonian captivity, the third generation from 536 BC. Mordecai was (1) the son of Jair, Jair was (2) the son of Shimei, and Shimei was (3) the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Although we do not know his age at the time, Kish was taken into Babylonian captivity. Thus Mordecai was the great grandson of Kish, and the time setting was in the days of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes. Scriptures in this book indicate that Esther was ultimately the wife of both kings.

Verses 8-11 continue the narrative. "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. 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. [Meanwhile] Esther had not shown her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her."

"The king's commandment and his decree was heard." In the antitype at the First Advent, King Jesus' decree was heard, "Go ye out to all nations and preach the gospel message."

"When many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of

Hegai, ... Esther was brought also.” Esther was among the many potential candidates for queen who came to the capital. Notice that *immediately* Hegai was pleased with her, so he kindly and speedily gave her things for her purification. A weeding-out process takes place in the Gospel Age, for many are called, few are chosen, and even fewer are faithful (Rev. 17:14). Of all the candidates who came to Shushan, Hegai preferred Esther and her seven maidens, the latter being a picture of the Great Company.

An appropriate illustration is in the Pentateuch. The sons of Aaron obtained the priesthood, so the Levites were a secondary class. Both the priests and the Levites had an official dedication. The Levites were presented to Aaron and his sons (the priesthood) as a gift (Num. 8:19). In the antitype, this relationship proves to be true in two ways in the present life, but it will not be discernible until after the priesthood is fully selected and honored. The Great Company will be presented to the Church at the marriage supper; they are called “virgins her [the Bride’s] companions that follow [after] her” (Psa. 45:14). The Great Company’s being companions in the present life is shown in the relationship of the little sister to the big sister in the Song of Solomon. Also, Elisha accompanied Elijah, and Rebekah’s damsels followed her on camels (Gen. 24:61).

**Q:** Does Esther’s pleasing Hegai picture acceptance and Spirit begetting?

**A:** Yes, that was the start. Esther received prejudicial treatment in the beginning. Although God does have preferences, He is no respecter of persons in matters of judgment, for all who attain to the Little Flock must be conformed to the image, or likeness, of His Son (Rom. 8:29). This favored class is called “the elect of God” even in the present life, yet not all who are called and addressed this way will make their calling and election sure (Col. 3:12).

Moreover, Hegai preferred the seven maidens who were given to Esther, for they are given by the Holy Spirit in the antitype. All of the consecrated are Spirit-begotten.

The “king’s house” pertains to the present life. As God’s people, the consecrated live in the “banqueting house,” and the “banner” over them is His love, care, and interest (Song 2:4). They hope to be successful in obtaining the “prize of the high calling” (Phil. 3:14). The Holy of the Tabernacle shows this close relationship in the present life, whereas the Most Holy is the desired place beyond the veil.

**Comment:** The seven maidens go into the same house, but they do not attain the Most Holy.

**Reply:** They are the companions of Esther in the present life; they are a by-product.

What special request did Mordecai make? He charged Esther not to disclose her identity as a Jew. In the antitype, the world does not recognize the true Church, the “*little flock*,” in the present age (Luke 12:32). Nor did the world know Jesus. Thus the mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory”—the secretiveness—is a real factor (Col. 1:27). Even though Jesus sent out the gospel call through his apostles and, generally speaking, the world is familiar with that call, true Christians are not recognized.

Every day Mordecai walked before the court of the women’s house, wanting to know how Esther was doing. As he looked up, she signaled him in some way. And so the consecrated are under the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant, for the Sarah (or Grace) Covenant pertains to the calling of the Esther class of the Gospel Age. That covenant is a “motherly” arrangement, for the “Jerusalem which is above ... is the *mother* of us all”; it follows through and exists contemporaneously with the calling of the Church (Gal. 4:26). The custodianship, or watch-care, will terminate when the Church is complete. When Rebekah arrived in the field,

Isaac's coming and taking her into his mother's tent indicated the death of the Sarah Covenant (Gen. 24:67).

The implication is that Sarah had deceased a little earlier. That will be true in the antitype as well, for the call will cease sometime before the actual termination of the career of the Church. The ceasing of the Sarah Covenant, the call, to go out to find and mother this class comes down to the end of the Gospel Age when the door is closed, but the door will close in two ways. One way will take place before the last members go beyond the veil for the marriage; that is, it will occur when the crystallization of their characters takes place. This closing was illustrated when Jehovah asked, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Gen. 18:17,18). Thus a period of time will come when the number 144,000 will *actually* be complete, and not just theoretically as in 1881 when the general call ceased, for not all who were consecrated at that time made their calling and election sure. Subsequently replacements have been called, but the time is coming when those who *will complete* the number will all be here, waiting for their change as feet members. When that happens at "X" date in the future, there will be no more extensions of the call. Therefore, the decease of the call will be contemporaneous with the crystallization of character of the remaining members of the true Church. The mothering of the Sarah Covenant will stop when a sufficient number of her children are all ready.

In the picture here in the Book of Esther, we see the continuity of Mordecai, but it does not follow through perfectly like a type, for he lived quite a while after Esther became the queen. Once chapter 2 ends, there will be other pictures of Mordecai and Esther on this side of the veil.

Verses 12-14 read, "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."

The account tells of the procedure for selecting a replacement for Queen Vashti. A 12-month period of purification occurred before the king had a special audience with any of the candidates. What do the 12 months (a year) represent? To answer that question, we will consider Enoch, who lived for 365 years, and then "God took him" (Gen. 5:23,24). Enoch's translation is another picture of the call of the Church, and the 365 years represent the Gospel Age. At the end of that period of time, the Church will be translated from earth into a new arrangement with God. Enoch was translated so that he would "not see death" (Heb. 11:5). Of course Enoch did not actually die, but from a practical standpoint, we know that he sacrificed because he was translated "by faith"; that is, *by faith*, he willingly complied with God's wish. To be translated, he had to give up everything pertaining to family—his wife, children, friends, etc. Not only did it take *courage* to be faithful under this circumstance, but the inference is that God gave Enoch a choice. Likewise Abraham was given a choice about leaving Ur of the Chaldees. When he entered the land of Canaan, the promise was secured to him, but first, he had to *act* on faith. And so by faith, Enoch was translated. His consent *cost* him something.

The number 365 is universally recognized as a symbol of the entire life of an individual. Figuratively speaking, one's whole "life" is 365 days. Just as the earth completes its orbit around the sun in 365 days, so that cycle is the symbol of a lifetime.

The 12 months of purification were broken down into two six-month periods: “six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours.” The myrrh pictures *bitter and hard experiences*, whereas the sweet odors and fragrances are the *joys of the truth*. God balances these opposite experiences so that the Christian does not have all sorrow. “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”; that is, God adds no *unnecessary* sorrow (Prov. 10:22). Thus the Christian has a checkered life of summer and winter, of light and darkness experiences. Opposition, persecution, and ostracism—disciplinary experiences—are mixed with joy. God used these two methods in the development and purification of the Church. The *Manna* comment for June 4 reads as follows: “In the calmer days, when the sun[shine] of [God’s] favor shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved.” In other words, there comes a time for change, namely, the onset of hard experiences with a dark cloud and a chill. In Song 4:16, the Bride class says, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” The true Christian realizes that to win the contest, he must have both experiences. Therefore, he asks God for this development. “Send sorrow, send pain; sweet are thy messengers, sweet their refrain” are the sentiments of a hymn. The Christian is willing to suffer for Christ, but he wants uplifting experiences too. Thus the Lord blesses His children with measured and balanced experiences. The work of the Holy Spirit is involved with this overruling process, manifesting special interest and care so that it is done properly.

**Q:** Why was “oil of myrrh” used and not just myrrh? Does the oil pertain to the Holy Spirit?

**A:** Psalm 45:7 reads, “[Because] Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness [iniquity]: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the *oil of gladness* above thy fellows.” The calling in the present life is a privilege, and Jesus endured the Cross for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2). He had the joy, but he also had the Cross. And when he had the Cross, he had moments of doubt and anxiety, but in the overall picture, there was much joy. Jesus *delighted* to do God’s will; he *always* did the things that pleased the Father (Psa. 40:8; John 8:29). Jesus had many assurances that the Father always heard him (John 11:42).

Yes, the “oil” is the Holy Spirit, but in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as having several other ingredients, showing that there are different facets. The “oil of myrrh” brings out only one facet. Loving righteousness and hating iniquity are much deeper than mere words, phrases, and statements; the Christian loves *God and His principles*. David said, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). He welcomed the chastisements of the Lord and asked that God would purge him with hyssop (Psa. 51:7). Realizing he had sinned and wanting to be forgiven for his wrongdoing, he called attention to the necessity for a bitter experience. The Lord’s people are not perfect, but those who especially please Him have a heart attitude that willingly responds to His leadings and earnestly desires to obey His Word.

The 12 months were a *purifying* process. The other candidates came before the king, but only Esther found favor in the final analysis. “In the evening,” a candidate came before the king, but the decision was made “on the morrow.” In a practical way, the “evening” was the beginning, and the “morrow” was the completion. Each Creative Day began with an evening and ended with a morning (Gen. 1:5,8,13, etc.). “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5). That statement is usually considered from the dispensational standpoint of 6,000 years of evil followed by 1,000 years of reclamation, but from another standpoint, the Gospel Age is a “nighttime,” as shown by the Passover picture. Joy will come in the morning with regard to not only restitution but also the Christian who makes his calling and election sure. The Apostle Peter said that we are to “take heed” to prophecy “as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star [Jesus] arise” in our heart (2 Pet.



1:19). If we properly follow the Lord, he will rise up in our heart and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

When we go down to a more particular sense, our “evening” time is *now*, for we consecrated unto death, darkness, and hard experiences. The way is narrow, and for each of us as individuals, “evening” is the entire Christian life. Stated another way, each individual down through the Gospel Age has had only the “evening” in which to please the King. At the end of our course, we die, and when the “morning” comes, a decision is made. Thus “evening” and “morning” apply from several standpoints. There is a resurrection “morning” for both the Church (the “first resurrection”) and the world (Rev. 20:6).

**Q:** Could the 12 months be viewed as follows? From the moment of consecration, the Lord gives us “X” amount of time to try to make our calling and election sure. At the end of that time, we are inspected. If we have not been faithful, we are automatically out of the Little Flock, but we will hopefully then be part of the Great Company. But we will not know what our destiny is until the resurrection.

**A:** To our understanding, we cannot follow any detailed picture accurately except measured ones like the mathematical symbolisms of the Tabernacle. There are variances with the types. For instance, Moses’ life included many kinds of experiences, and a continuity of interpretation cannot be read into all of them. Therefore, the 12 months here in the Book of Esther represent the selection period of the individual. We are told, “Be thou faithful unto death,” not “Be thou faithful until you prove to be unfaithful” (Rev. 2:10). We are to hold the hope firm (steadfast) unto the end (Heb. 3:6). For anyone to give up because of thinking he has failed results in disaster. The person may have a justifiable reason for thinking he has not made the highest grade, but he has to keep the hope to the end of his course lest he endanger the hope of life itself, let alone the high calling. Even Paul said, “I judge not mine own self” (1 Cor. 4:3). Yet in another place, he advised us to judge, or examine, ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28). Paul meant that he did not *condemn* himself, for God is the Judge. However, we are to judge our actions by inspecting them daily. Thus there are two ways to view the matter, and both are equally true—we judge ourselves, and we do not judge ourselves.

With regard to the 12 months, we are called in the “*one* hope” of our calling (Eph. 4:4). We are not to reason, “If I do not make the Little Flock, there is always the Great Company,” for that attitude would greatly diminish our chances of making the Little Flock. In fact, if that attitude is pursued, we might not even get life in the Great Company. The point is to run the race until we reach the finish line. What God thinks in the meantime is *His* decision. Therefore, the 12-month period applies to the lifetime of each individual Christian in the high calling, even though we know, from a practical standpoint, that God can see if we are not of the top caliber, or grade.

Notice that there is a “second house” of concubines. “In the evening she went [in to the king], 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.” Who is Shaashgaz in the antitype, and what does the second house represent? Shaashgaz had custody of the candidates who had already seen the king. Hegai, the earlier chamberlain, represented the Holy Spirit, which progressively seals us unto a certain destiny. However, the second house is out of the custody of the active operation of the Holy Spirit, as personified by Hegai. Therefore, the second house, which is a place of waiting, seems to be the “house of death,” for there is no activity or knowledge in the grave for either the consecrated or the unconsecrated (Eccl. 9:10). Of course we have to give an *overall* interpretation and not consider the picture as applying from 1878 on, that is, from the raising of the sleeping saints onward. The type shows the overall dealing with the Church class down through the Gospel Age.

**Q:** Did Esther go to the second house?

**A:** We will reserve that question until later.

Verses 15 and 16 read, “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 royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.”

An important point was stated back in verse 13: “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.” When a candidate left the house of women under the custody of Hegai and was about to be presented to the king, she made herself as attractive as possible. She fixed her hair, wore a becoming dress, used a certain perfume, etc. In other words, each candidate was given the opportunity of her *own* choosing. But what about Esther—how did she handle this voluntary matter?

Verse 15 states that Esther “required nothing but what Hegai ... appointed.” She acquiesced fully to Hegai and left the choice with him. She did not exercise her own will in the matter but complied with his decision, trusting completely in God’s keeping power, instructions, and advice for ultimately attaining the throne. And so in the antitype, the consecrated are given instructions in the Bible as to what Jesus would like to see in us in the present life. Both God and Jesus instruct us as to what we should and should not do, but compliance is largely a voluntary matter. To be faithful, we have to acquiesce, submit, and be beheaded for the witness, or testimony, of Christ. The truly consecrated, those who attain the high calling, will render *total* submission and leave the choice with the “keeper.”

Now we come to the presentation of Esther to the king. When she went in, she found favor. In fact, she “obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her,” that is, in the sight of all the holy angels in the antitype. They did not make the decision of her acceptance, but they were very impressed, feeling she would be selected as the queen.

**Q:** Could the onlookers also be the 24 “elders” of Revelation 4:4,10?

**A:** The 24 elders, representing the 24 books of the Old Testament—and hence the whole Word of God—tell about the coming Messiah and the class God is looking for. Certainly Holy Writ would concur with the beauty of Esther, the Little Flock.

However, we would interpret the onlookers as the holy angels, particularly the guardian angels. Let us say that down through the Gospel Age, a Christian lived for 50 years and then died, going into the tomb. After the decease of that individual, his guardian angel was assigned to another individual, one who was still living. Therefore, over the 2,000-year period, some of the guardian angels have successively guarded perhaps 20 to 40 Christians. As they watch the individuals they are assigned to, they know everything about them. Although God makes the final decision, it would seem that the guardian angels could approximate the destiny of those individuals. Even the subsidiary angels—those who are underneath the stewardship of the guardian angels—would have a good idea of the degree of a particular Christian’s faithfulness and sincerity of devotion to the Lord.

Esther “was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal,” but when did this event take place? It was “in the tenth month” of “the *seventh* year of his reign,” which is still future in the

antitype. The Esther class comprises all 144,000 faithful saints, and they will not enter the King's royal house until the marriage. The risen saints are waiting with Jesus in earth's atmosphere for the arrival of the feet members. When complete, all 144,000 will be introduced to the Heavenly Father at the wedding. The "seventh year" suggests the seventh (and last) stage of the Church, the end of the Gospel Age. As a class, the feet members will be caught up in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—faster than one can blink the eye—to earth's atmosphere. Then the entire Little Flock will be formally introduced into the presence of God, into the "house royal," as it were. In that house, a spiritual mansion that is beautiful to behold, Emperor Jehovah will be seated on His throne, and Jesus will sit beside Him on His right hand. We believe the setting will be somewhat comparable to a magnificent scene down here of royalty in the highest sense of the word. Only then will the Church be ushered into the presence of Jehovah Himself and His Son Jesus, the King of the Bride class.

Verse 17 reads, "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." Notice that the account *does not say* Esther went into the "second house." The other candidates went into the house of concubines, but when Esther came into the king's presence, he was immediately pleased with her. In the antitype, the house of concubines is a picture of the Great Company, who will not be raised to spirit nature until after the completion of the Church and the marriage. The Great Company will follow *afterward* because only the Little Flock partake of the "first resurrection." In other words, the Great Company are still asleep in death, for the "dead in Christ" shall be raised first (1 Thess. 4:16). Therefore, when a Christian dies, we cannot say where he is. We hope he is with Jesus, and we are thankful for our memories of him, but that is as far as we can go. A lot of good people will be in the Great Company class, but to be of royalty is a different situation. The point is that we have to be careful with regard to the placement of those who have finished their earthly course. We can honestly say they have entered into their rest, for even sleep in death is a rest.

Verse 18 reads, "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." The king's "great feast," or "Esther's feast," would be the marriage supper in her honor. Not only will the King give gifts at this feast, but the Great Company will attend the antitypical marriage supper (Rev. 19:9).

The narrative continues with verses 19 and 20: "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet shown 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." Of course Mordecai represents the Ancient Worthies, but what is this second gathering in the antitype? The Great Company will be raised before the Ancient Worthies because the blood, the mortgage of the Ransom, has to be paid over to Justice before the resurrection of the latter.

Verse 21 reads, "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." The Ancient Worthies will be in Jerusalem initially. Historically, the city gates were places of judgment, and the Ancient Worthies are pictured by the 12 angels sitting at the 12 gates in the celestial city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-12). The Pastor said that the 12 angels who will administer to the people and conduct them into the Holy City in the Kingdom represent the Ancient Worthies. At that time, "the law" will go forth from Zion, and "the word of the LORD" from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3).

When the Ancient Worthies appear on the scene, the Great Company will already be complete. They will all be raised from death at the same time and go as a group to the marriage supper.

A short period of orientation will follow, and then will come the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies, which will also be as a whole. Finally, in due time, the general resurrection of Israel and mankind will begin.

Thus the Great Company will be in the chain of activity. With their raising, Jacob's ladder will be complete. "And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen. 28:12). Jesus also spoke of this ladder of communication: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon [that is, *before*] the Son of man" (John 1:51). In the Kingdom, Jesus and the Church will be at the top of the ladder. The Great Company, the "angels of God," will ascend and descend before Jesus, and the Ancient Worthies will be at the bottom of the ladder. After the marriage, Jesus, the Son of man, will again be in earth's atmosphere, and his Bride will be with him. As King of the earth, he will be down here most of the time during the Kingdom Age. As far as his own person is concerned, Jesus will be invisible to the human eye. However, the Great Company, as ministering angels, will communicate with the Ancient Worthies, who are pictured by Jacob at the bottom of the ladder.