

Act 3

Esther Chapters 6-7

If Esther is viewed as a play then we have reached the act where all the action occurs. In this act the villain, Haman, comes unstuck and the heroine, Esther, and her advisor, Mordecai, are rewarded. As a story line it has been repeated over and over. But if you and your group consider this in the light of what you know about God, which is what any Jew who heard this story would do, another deeper longer story appears. Do you know what it is?

What's going on in this section?

- Pretend you are the director or producer of a play called "Esther". Where are the scene changes in this act? Think or talk about how you might direct the various scenes.
- Can you list the apparent coincidences in these chapters? Eg, it just so happened that the king couldn't sleep.
- How is a seemingly unconnected episode at the end of Act 1 (2:21-23) critical to the unfolding drama in this act?
- What could you say about a king who, instead of, say, counting sheep, listens to the records of his own exploits? What does this do to the image of the king that we already have?
- At what point do Haman's "fortunes" begin to change? What do you think of the idea that Haman's destiny was sealed as soon as he chose genocide for the Jews?
- From what events in the past might Haman's friends/advisors and his wife have got the idea expressed in 6:13? Hint: think further back in history than Daniel, to another king that attempted male infanticide. Can you think of any other international events that would have made protection of the Jews legendary?
- Can you find God's name mentioned anywhere in these two chapters? Does it have to be mentioned in order for the book to qualify as holy Scripture?

What about us here and now?

- It's difficult to make the transition from the events in this act to our own time. The history of missions is full of examples where good men and women didn't have circumstances come together to save them, like they did for Mordecai and Esther. So what can you say about God and his control of events?

- If you were Esther, would you have tried to explain to the king that Haman wasn't molesting you but seeking mercy (7:8, 9)? Does being a Christian always mean that you must be nice?
- Proverbs 16:18 says "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (NIV). Is this always true?

So what can I do?

- How often are you tempted to take the solution of problems into your own hands? What would it mean for you to "let go and let God"?
- Jesus says to his disciples on one occasion that they must "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16). What do you think he meant? Do you think Esther is both shrewd and innocent? How do you balance being both in the complex situations of life?