

GOD'S STORY IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Note: Archeology photos throughout the book are artifacts from Persia around the time of Esther.

1. HIDDEN

God is at work calling out a people for His Name – *His people*, whom He will dwell with forever.

His people are those who KNOW, and LOVE, and LIVE LIKE God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Although God's creation can point us to the existence of a Creator, there is only ONE way to learn about God and His plan and purpose – His Word, the Bible.

In book after book, chapter after chapter of God's Word, He tells us everything we need to know about Him – His character, His purpose, what He loves, and what He hates. Each story reveals to us more, or different, details so that we can have a complete picture of who He is.

Until we get to the book of Esther.

Suddenly we come to a book that does not mention God at all! Not even ONCE.

How can this book – inspired by God - teach us more about Him, if He is not even mentioned?

When we look a little closer, we can see that God **is** there, but *hidden*. *Hidden* - just beneath the surface of the story, God reveals that He is working all along.

Look up **Proverbs 25:2**. It is the glory of God to conceal (the Hebrew word is “hide”) a matter. What is the glory of kings? _____

If we want to be future Kings and Priests in the kingdom, we will search out what God has hidden for us to find!

The name “Esther” is a Persian name that likely would have been chosen by Mordecai and Esther (Hadassah) to hide her Hebrew identity. In Hebrew, the word “Esther” means “hidden” (related to the word “conceal” in Proverbs 25:2). So even the title of the book – “Esther” or “Hidden” - tells us that we are going to need to search for treasures that God has hidden for us to find.

There are the two different ways that God is “*hidden*” in the book of Esther that we are hoping to search out over the next couple of weeks.

- 1) The Story of Redemption. Many times in Scripture, God uses symbols to teach us about other things. For instance, in the Feast of Passover the Lamb was a symbol that pointed forward to Christ.

The story of Esther is like a real, live parable that tells us the Story of the Bible – of God, and Israel, and sin, and Jesus, and even us! Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to put on our detective hats and look for symbols and clues, and discover the Story that is hidden in the story of Esther.

- 2) The Ways of Providence. Secondly, we can watch for clues about God working in the story of Esther by watching for the ways of Providence. Uncle John Martin says, "Though the name of God is not in the book of Esther, the power of God is stamped all over that book. There's a wonderful principle in this (which is why God does not record His name there, so that the principle might even become more emphatic in our mind): PROVIDENCE is there. We can't see God today, we can't see His angel today, there are no prophets to come and say, "Thus saith the LORD." But everywhere in our lives, God is stamped – because Divine Providence follows us. And be it in safety or in danger, be it in prosperity or in adversity, God is there. God is a reality to them by the eye of faith, in which they can see Him."

Background – “For Good”

Before we begin the Story of Esther, we need to take a look at the context. Number the following nine events to put them in the correct order:

THE TEMPLE IS BUILT BY SOLOMON — A PLACE FOR GOD TO DWELL

JUDAH DISOBEYS GOD, IS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY BY BABYLON (GOD HIDES HIS FACE)

ADAM AND EVE SIN, AND ARE CAST FROM THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

MOSES AND ISRAEL BUILD THE TABERNACLE — A PLACE FOR GOD TO DWELL.

GOD BRINGS ISRAEL INTO THE PROMISED LAND UNDER JOSHUA.

ISRAEL DISOBEYS GOD, AND IS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY BY ASSYRIA (GOD HIDES HIS FACE)

BABYLON IS OVERTHROWN BY THE MEDES AND PERSIANS.

SOLOMON DIES, AND ISRAEL BECOMES TWO KINGDOMS — ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

ADAM AND EVE DWELL IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN EDEN

God wanted to dwell with His people, but over and over man sinned and forsook God. Adam and Eve sinned, and God drove them from His presence. God established His presence in the nation of Israel, first in the tabernacle and then Solomon’s temple – a place of meeting. But despite all of God’s care, forsook Him and disobeyed Him. Finally, Israel was taken by the Assyrians, and later Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians.

Read **Deuteronomy 31:16-18**. What three things did God say He would do

when the children of Israel turned to idols and other gods? 1) My _____

_____ against them, 2) I will _____

_____, 3) I will _____

Because Israel turned away to false gods, God said He would “hide” Himself from them. He would not save them from the enemy any longer, but would give them over into captivity and allow their lands to be destroyed.

In **Esther 2:5-6**, we find out that Mordecai (and Esther) were descendants of captives of Judah that were taken away from Jerusalem by _____, king of Babylon along with _____, the king of Judah. Look at the nine events listed above, and put a star next to the event on the list that describes when Esther and Mordecai's parents or grandparents would have been taken captive.

Look up **Jeremiah 24:1**.

- 1) What did God show Jeremiah? _____
- 2) God showed this to Jeremiah right after what had happened? _____

Now read **Jeremiah 24:2-3**.

- 1) What two kinds of figs were there? _____

Now read **Jeremiah 24:4-7**.

- 1) The good figs were a symbol of whom?

- 2) In **verse 5**, God said He sent them out of this place (the land of Israel), into captivity in Babylon for their _____.



- 3) In **verse 7**, what kind of heart does God say He will give to those good figs who were carried captive? _____
- 4) Instead of Nebuchadnezzar's captives, whose people would they be once they recognize the LORD as their God (**verse 7**)? _____
- 5) Imagine you are one of these Israelites. You have been taken by soldiers as captives - ripped away from your city, your home, your family, and everything that you know. But you hear from Jeremiah that God is doing all this for your own good, and that He will set His eyes on you for good to bring you back to Him. In the thought bubble below write down what you are thinking when you hear that.



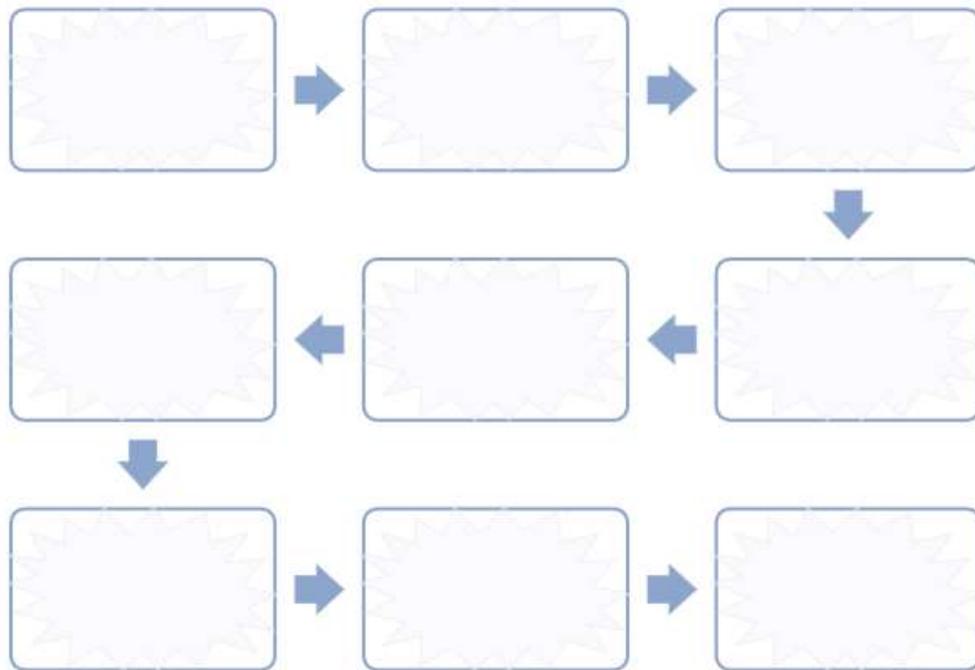
Mordecai and Esther were descendants of these "good fig" Israelites, who had been taken captive to Babylon. Babylon (the head of _____ in Daniel's image) had been overthrown by the Medes and the Persians (the chest and arms of _____). Mordecai and Esther lived as subjects of Ahasuerus, who was king of Persia.

As we'll see in the book of Esther, even though both Mordecai and Esther faced some terrible, horrifying events, God continued to care for His "good figs" and **Providentially** worked for "their own good," to redeem them and to prepare them for the time that He would dwell with them as His very own special people.

Write out **Romans 8:28** below.

Talk about what this verse means to you with your class, or your parents, or a friend.

Use this sequence chart to write or draw a summary of the story of Esther.



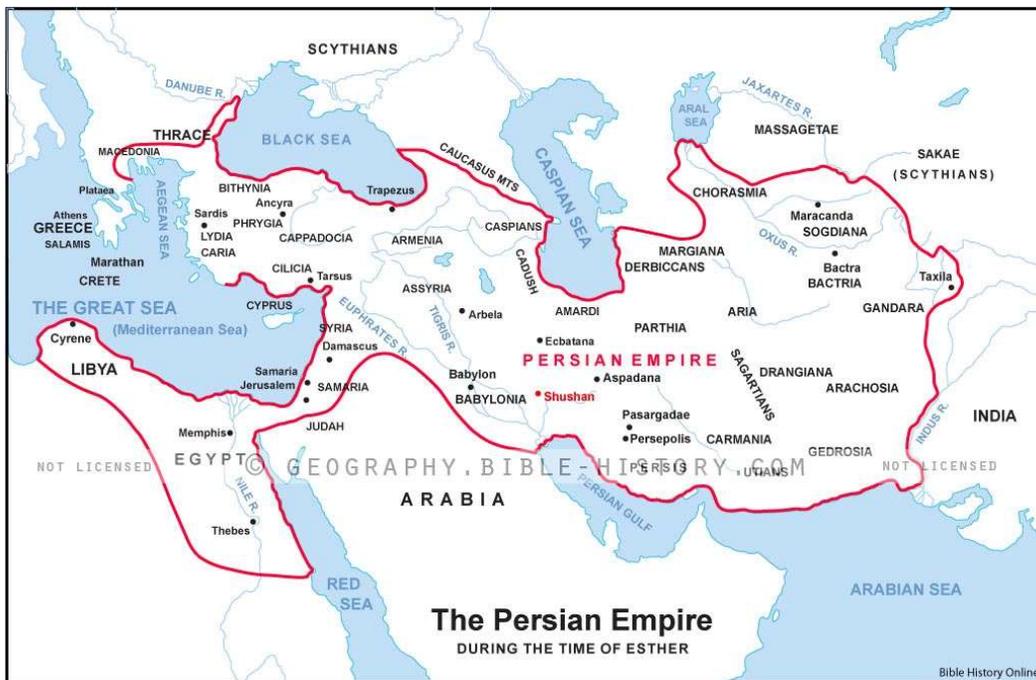
2. INTRODUCING... THE GLORIOUS KING OF ALL

The book of Esther begins by introducing character number one - King Ahasuerus. Let's look closely to see who Ahasuerus is a symbol of in the "hidden" story of Esther.

SPLENDOUR AND MAJESTY

Read Esther 1:1-4.

On the map below, shade in the area ruled by Ahasuerus, king of the Persian kingdom. Find and mark Shushan (Susa), the capital.

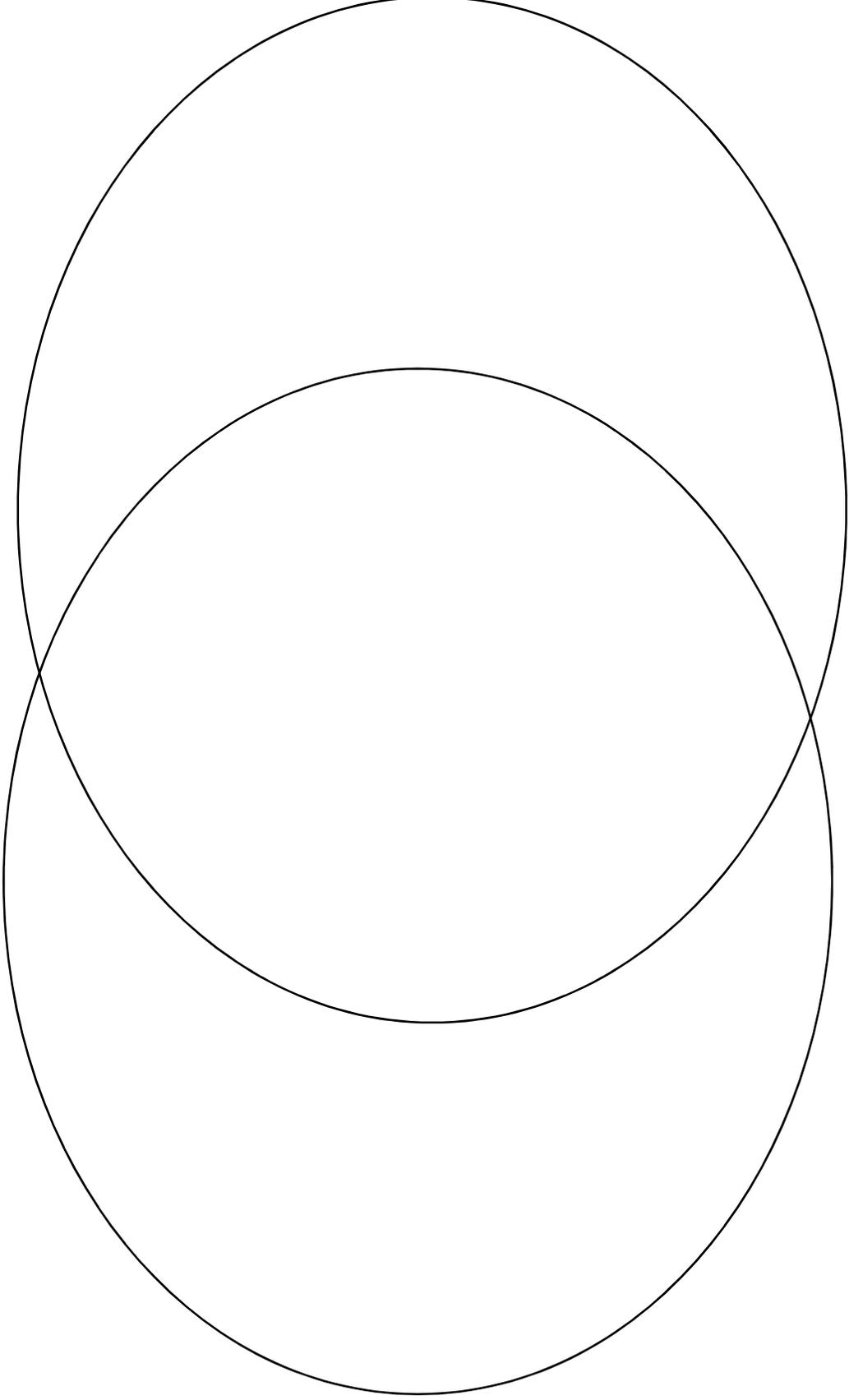


King Ahasuerus was great and powerful, ruling the largest empire of the then known world.

Look at these verses and notice similarities in the way that God's ruling power is described, and the way that Ahasuerus is described from Esther 1:1-4. Then use the Venn diagram on the following page to show the similarities between the description of Ahasuerus, and the description of God as King. You can write the similarities in the overlapping middle, and also show any notable differences on the sides.

- Psalm 103:19
- Psalm 145:5-6, 10-12
- 1 Chronicles 29:11-12
- 1 Timothy 1:17

Venn Diagram



THE GOOD HAND



Now read Esther 1:5-8. Find the word “state” in **verse 7** (KJV). Since it isn’t clear what this word means in the context of this verse, let’s investigate it. First, check how the word is translated in another translation, and jot that down. _____

Secondly, let’s look at other uses of the word, since it is only used seven times in Scripture. Read and summarize each of the verses in your own words.

- **1 Kings 10:13** (translated “bounty”).

Summary: _____

- **Ezra 7:6** (translated “according to the hand”)

Summary: _____

- **Ezra 7:9** (translated “hand”)

Summary: _____

- **Ezra 7:28** (translated “as the hand”)

Summary: _____

- **Ezra 8:18** (translated “hand”)

Summary: _____

- **Nehemiah 2:8** (translated “hand”)

Summary: _____

- **Esther 2:18** (translated “according to the state”)

Summary: _____

After looking at the other translations of the word "state" in another version and other parts of Scripture, summarize **Esther 1:7** in your own words.

Look back over the verses from Ezra and Nehemiah above. In those verses this word "state" was used to describe whose "good hand" that provided for their every need? _____ (This is another clue to show us who Ahasuerus symbolizes!)

THE KING'S PRESENCE

For our final Ahasuerus clue, read **Esther 1:14**, and **Esther 4:11**.

What was the special thing that only these particular ministers to the King could see? _____ (These seven princes represent the angels who are in the presence of God and minister on His behalf.)

What would happen if any man or woman went into the inner court of the King without being called? _____

Read **Exodus 33:20** and **1 Timothy 6:16**, and write down what these verses tell us about God that is similar to what we've been told of King Ahasuerus in Esther 1:14 and Esther 4:11.

CONCLUSION

Ahasuerus was the powerful King of the then known world, and is a symbol of THE Mighty King of all - to whom belongs all greatness and power and glory and majesty. Psalm 145:5,10-12 says, "I will meditate on the glorious splendour of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works. Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom."

Write down some of the "mighty acts" that God has done and ways that He shows His power. _____

Challenge. Our King wants us to meditate (think about) and talk about His glory and tell others about His mighty acts and kingdom. Listen closely to your Bible readings and devotions for one thing that describes God's impressive glory, power or mighty acts. Remember it, think about it, and talk about it tomorrow during lunch or recess with one of your friends.

3. INTRODUCING... THE DISOBEDIENT WIFE

Read Esther 1.

The powerful, majestic King has generously made a feast, sharing his abundance with all the people – small and great. It was an incredibly long feast, lasting 180 days. We are told of the tapestries – the blue, purple and fine linen - of the pavement of marble, and vessels of gold.

The details are impressive, but they are also clues to another King who loved His people, and provided abundantly for them... many, many years ago in a wilderness.



IN HIS PRESENCE

Over one hundred and eighty days, the tabernacle was erected – a sanctuary of blue, purple, fine linen and gold. There were pillars, cords, and silver rings – all the exact elements that were included in Ahasuerus' feast!

Read Psalm 96:6. What words used to describe the sanctuary (or tabernacle) are similar to the way King Ahasuerus' feast is described? _____

Read Exodus 25:8. What was the purpose of the tabernacle? _____

God wanted to *dwell* with His people. Although Adam and Eve had been driven out from the presence of God in the garden because of their sin, God was still at work to call a special people for His name, a people who wanted to *dwell in His presence* again.

Read Psalm 27:4. What was the “one thing” that faithful David desired and was seeking after? _____

God says that He took Israel by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. He entered into a covenant with Israel. **Read Jeremiah 31:32.** In the covenant God made with Israel, God was a _____ to them.

The law was the terms of the covenant. What does Jesus say was the first and great commandment of this law? **Matthew 22:35-38.** _____

God loved His people, and He wanted His people to love Him with ALL their heart, soul, strength and mind. He wanted them to cling to Him and to obey Him as they had promised to do. Would they love Him? Would they obey Him?

PERFECT BEAUTY THAT I BESTOWED UPON YOU

Read Esther 1:10-11. King Ahasuerus has spread the feast, he has prepared the sanctuary, and he now calls his royal wife to his presence. For what reason does the king call Vashti? _____

Read Ezekiel 16:10-14.

Why was this bride, who represents Israel, famous among the nations?

Who gave the clothing, jewels, ornaments, crown, splendour and beauty to Israel? _____

List the clothing, jewels, and ornaments that God adorned His bride, Israel, with.

Vashti was intended to reflect the majesty and royalty of Ahasuerus, just like Israel was intended to reflect the glorious majesty of her King.

REFUSED TO COME AT THE KING'S COMMAND

Read Esther 1:12, Psalm 81:10-11, Jeremiah 2:13. How is the way Vashti treated Ahasuerus similar to the way that the children of Israel treated God, their husband? _____

CAST FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

King Ahasuerus was furious at Vashti's refusal and disobedience. What was the King's response? (**Esther 1:19-21**). _____

What was God's response when Israel refused to dwell with Him and forsook Him in disobedience? (**2 Chronicles 36:14-20**). _____

CONCLUSION

And now, just like Vashti was sent away from the presence of the king... no longer the queen, no crown, no inheritance, Israel had been sent away from the presence of her King and Husband. She had forsaken and disobeyed her Husband, and now He had forsaken her.

But the story doesn't end there.

Soon the King would begin the search for a new bride. This bride would be faithful and obedient. She would have the King's law written on her mind and heart (**Jeremiah 31:33, Jeremiah 24:7**).

Challenge. Our King wants our loving obedience – He wants a people who love Him with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. Today think about your actions. Are your actions reflecting love and obedience to your King? Are there any actions you can change to better love and obey Him?

4. INTRODUCING... A FAITHFUL BRIDE

Read Esther 2.

The queen failed to reflect her Husband's glory. She did not love Him with all of her heart, mind, soul, and strength despite all of the bounty that He had generously lavished upon her. He wanted to dwell with her, but she forsook Him, refused Him, and disobeyed Him.

Read Isaiah 50:1. Why did God give Israel a bill of divorce and put her away?

How is this similar to Ahasuerus and Vashti? _____

Read Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast in **Matthew 22:1-14.** Write down the similarities in this parable to the book of Esther in the first column (including verses), and write how the parable applies to Israel – and us - in the last column.

Clues from Esther (Esther 1-2) Include verse.	The Wedding Feast - Matthew 22	Meaning of Parable for Israel and Us
	A King has prepared a dinner feast for the wedding of His Son (v2,4)	
	The King calls for those who were invited (v3)	
	Those who were called refused to come (v3-6)	
	The King is furious (v 7)	
	The King decides those who were called were not worthy, and sends invitations to "as many as you find" (v9)	
	Not all who were invited made the proper preparations (v11-13)	
	Only those called who made proper preparations are chosen (v13-14)	

PREPARATIONS

Just like in the Parable of the Wedding Feast, Ahasuerus sends a call to ALL the beautiful young virgins of Shushan to choose a bride to take the “royal position” (**Esther 2:1-4**).



Many were called, but only one would be _____.

In the Wedding Feast parable, only those who had prepared to be in the presence of the King were welcome to the Feast. In the story of Esther, what preparation was required of the women before they were welcome in the presence of the King (**Esther 2:12**)? _____

There is only ONE other time that the Hebrew words oil of “myrrh” and “sweet smelling perfume” have been used together up until now – Exodus 30:23-24. **Read Exodus 30:22-28.** List everything that this special anointing oil was to be put on. _____

Like the young maidens of Shushan, we have been called to the presence of our King. Like those maidens, we also must prepare DAILY with oil of myrrh, sweet smelling perfume, and purify ourselves so that He can dwell with us.

The oil of myrrh and sweet smelling perfume were provided to the maidens by the King. What has our King provided for us to prepare with DAILY so that we can be welcomed in His presence? _____

In **Exodus 30:29-30**, all the parts of the Tabernacle of Meeting and the priests who ministered in the presence of God were consecrated with the oil of myrrh (like the Shushan maidens) so that they would be most _____. What does “holy” mean? _____

The maidens were to purify or cleanse themselves daily. This is a symbol of how we are to purify or cleanse ourselves daily. Look up **Psalms 119:9**. How are we to purify and cleanse ourselves? _____

The women were to prepare carefully so that they might please their king. This is a clue that makes us think about carefully preparing to please our King. What pleases our King (**Hebrews 11:6, Romans 8:6-8**)? _____

GRACE AND FAVOUR

Now we are introduced to a pair of captives who lived in Shushan - the young woman Esther, and her cousin Mordecai who had adopted her. Although her Hebrew name was Hadassah, she did not use her Hebrew name. Mordecai had told Esther not to _____ her identity – her people or her family (**Esther 2:10**), so she used a Persian name instead. In Persian, Esther means “star,” but the word “Esther” sounds just like the Hebrew word for “hidden”, and that is exactly what Mordecai had asked her to do!

After twelve months of purification and preparation, Esther went in to the presence of the king. What was the response of the king (**Esther 2:17**)?

- 1) The king _____ Esther
- 2) She obtained _____ and _____ in his sight (literally “before his face”).

Read Ephesians 1:3-12. Esther is a symbol of the faithful, spiritual bride – God willing, us! Fill in the clues from Esther 1-2 that correspond with the spiritual bride of the heavenly King.

Esther 1-2	Ephesians 1
Esther 1:19 – What position would the new bride of Ahasuerus fill?	We are blessed with the highest position – heavenly places in Christ (v3)
Esther 2:17	God has “chosen us” (v4)
Hint: look back at your notes about the women’s preparations.	“we should be holy and without blame” (v4)
Esther 2:17	We are “before Him in love” (v4)

Esther 2:7	We are adopted as children by Jesus Christ himself (v5)
Esther 2:4	“according to the good <u>pleasure</u> of His will” (v5), “according to his good <u>pleasure</u> ” (v9)
Esther 2:17	“we have redemption... according to the riches of his <u>grace</u> ” (v7)
Hint: the word “state” in Esther 2:18.	“riches...wherein he has abounded toward us” (v8)
Unlike Vashti!	“we should be to the praise of his glory” (v12)

CONCLUSION

The beauty that our King is looking for in His spiritual bride is the incorruptible beauty of the “hidden man of the heart” – Christ in us, the hope of glory. He is looking for a bride who reflects His character in her thinking and her actions.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre...All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia...

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 king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

- Psalm 45:6,8,10-11,13

Challenge. Our King has provided us with all that we need through His Holy Word so that we can be purified and consecrated as Holy, and He can dwell with us. Are you daily purifying yourself with God's provided oil? Find a time EVERY SINGLE day to anoint yourself with the oil that God has provided so that you can find grace and favour in the face of your King, like Esther!

5. A PROUD MAN AND A SMALL MAN

The King has chosen His beautiful bride whom He loves and favours. Perhaps it would seem fitting to finish the book of Esther here with – “and they lived happily ever after.” But this is no fairy tale, and the story has only just begun.

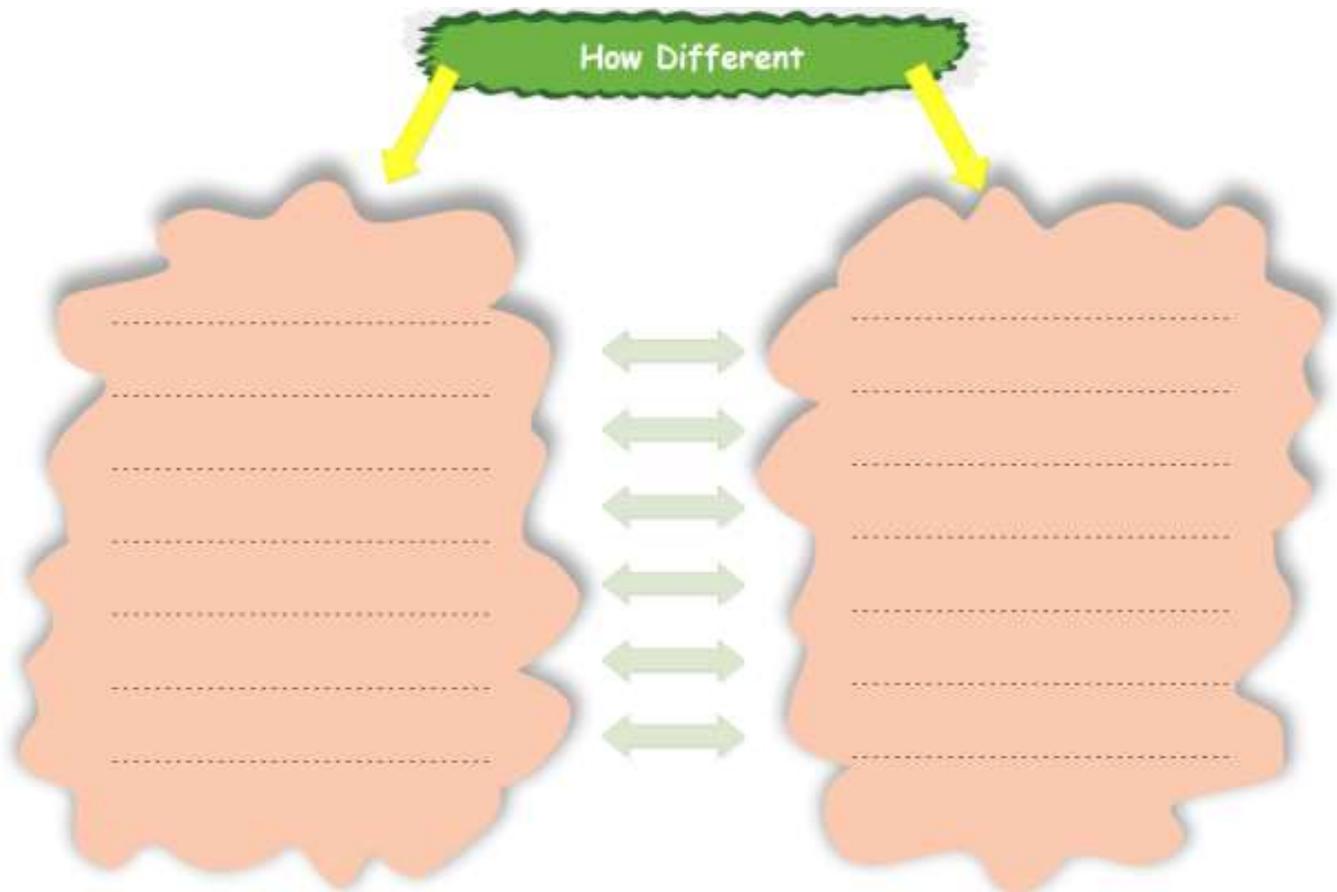
Read Esther 3-4.

Within the king’s walls were two very different men. A man who loved, and a man who hated. A man “seeking the good” of others (Esther 10:3), and a man seeking only to elevate himself. A man who saved life (Esther 2:21-22), and a man who was intent on destroying life.

Write the names of these two men on the chart below, and use the instructions on the next page to list on the chart some of the contrasts between these two men.

Name _____

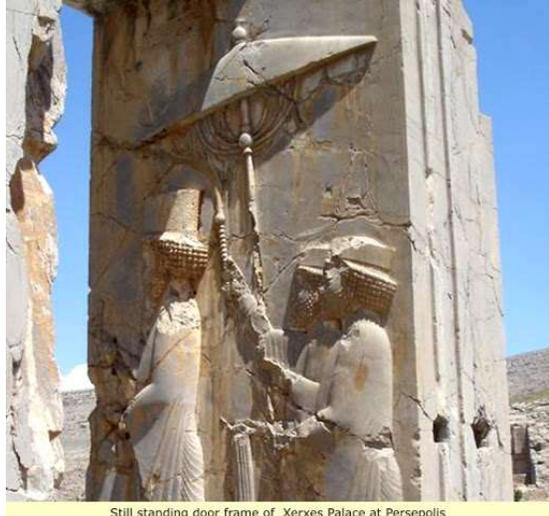
Name _____



1. **Meaning of Names.** Mordecai and Haman's name's mean almost EXACTLY the opposite. Mordecai's name means "little man," but Haman's name means "magnificent." On the first line, write down the contrast in meaning of Mordecai's and Haman's names.
2. **Ancestry.** Mordecai was a Benjamite. Write down the meaning of the name "Benjamin." Haman, on the other hand, was an Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekites who were children of Esau or Edom. In contrast, write down how God feels about Esau from Malachi 1:3.

3. **Character towards the vulnerable.**

Mordecai "brought up" the orphan, Esther. In Hebrew the word for "brought up" is the word "faithfulness" - and it is the same word used of God's faithfulness towards His people. The Amalekites like Haman, on the other hand, were known for attacking the weak, vulnerable, and weary (look up Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Write this contrast on the chart.



Still standing door frame of Xerxes Palace at Persepolis

4. **Life vs Death.** Mordecai saved the king's life (Esther 2:21-22) and he did everything within his power to save the life of his people. Haman was intent on destroying, killing, and causing to perish (he disdained the thought of killing just one man – he wanted ALL God's people dead - Esther 3:6). Write this contrast on your chart.
5. **Selfless vs Selfish.** When Mordecai was second to the king he was known for "seeking the good" of others (Esther 10:3). Haman attempted to use his position to promote himself (Esther 5:11; 6:6-9). Add this contrast to the chart.
6. **Book of Remembrance.** Mordecai's account and greatness were written in the book of the chronicles (Esther 10:2). The Amalekites were to be blotted out of the book of remembrance (Deut. 25:19). Write this contrast on your chart.

What do you think these two men symbolize in the "hidden" Story of Redemption?

JESUS - THE EXALTED "SMALL MAN"

1. **Meaning of Name.** Mordecai means "small man." **Read Philippians 2:8-11**. How was Jesus like the "small man" Mordecai? _____

2. **Ancestry.** **Read Psalm 80:17, Hebrews 12:2**. Who is the son of God's right hand? _____
3. **Character towards the vulnerable.** Mordecai faithfully nourished the orphan Esther. **Read 2 Thessalonians 3:3**. What does this verse tell us that the faithful Lord will do? _____. **Read Romans 5:6**. Christ died for us, when we were without _____.
4. **Life vs Death.** **Read John 6:40**. Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have _____.
5. **Selfless vs Selfish.** **Read Matthew 20:28**. Jesus says that he came not to be _____, but to _____, and to give _____ as a ransom for many.
6. **Book of Remembrance.** **Read Philippians 2:9-11**. Because Jesus humbled himself in obedience to the cross, and gave His life as a ransom for many – God has _____ Him and given Him _____ that is above _____.

KING SIN – THE ABASED "MAGNIFICENT MAN"

1. **Meaning of Name.** Haman's name means "magnificent." Haman is totally, overwhelmingly magnificent in his own eyes. **Read Proverbs 21:4**. What three things are described as sin in this verse? _____

2. **Ancestry.** Haman, was a descendant of Edom, which means "red", and represents the carnal thinking of the flesh. **Read Romans 8:6-7**. The carnal mind is _____ against God.
3. **Character towards the vulnerable.** Haman wanted to "destroy, kill, and cause to perish" ALL God's people - young and old, little children and women. This was just like his ancestors the Amalekites, who were notorious for attacking the weak, vulnerable, and weary. **Read Romans 5:12**. Sin is like a wicked king that brings death to _____ men, sparing no one.
4. **Life vs Death.** Haman was intent on destroying, killing, and causing to perish (he disdained the thought of killing just one man – he wanted ALL of them dead - Esther 3:6). **Read Romans 6:23**. What are the wages of sin?

5. **Selfless vs Selfish.** Haman attempted to use his position to promote himself (Esther 5:11, 6:6-9). **Read Isaiah 2:11-12.** What will God do to the haughtiness of men? _____
6. **Book of Remembrance.** The Amalekites were to be blotted out of the book of remembrance, all of the Amalekites were to be totally destroyed. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:26.** What is the last enemy that will be destroyed? _____

CONCLUSION

As the bride of the Great King, we, too, have two opposing men in our story. One loves us faithfully and seeks our salvation and life. The other, the Haman-like carnal mind, is our enemy who desires our death and destruction. Who will win in our life?

1 Corinthians 13 describes Christ-like love – the exact opposite of pride and sin... and Haman. List some of the descriptions of love that are exactly opposite of the way that Haman acted. _____

Challenge. It is easy to fall short of the Christ-like love described in 1 Corinthians 13, and to act Haman-like instead. Choose ONE item from the description of Christ-like love in 1 Corinthians 13 that you want to work on. Share with a teacher, parent or friend how you are going to work on it.

6. A DRAMATIC PASSOVER

Read Esther 5-6.

Look up the verses to find the similarities between the first Passover (when the children of Israel left Egypt), the Passover in Shushan (that Mordecai, Esther, and all the Shushan Jews spent fasting), and the Passover in Jerusalem when Christ died and was resurrected.

	Passover in Egypt	Passover in Shushan	Jesus' Last Passover in Jerusalem
Who was the Proud, Wicked Ruler Bringing Death?	Pharoah	Haman	King Sin
What was the Response to Oppression?	See Exodus 2:23	See Esther 4:1	See Hebrews 5:7
What/who was without blemish (or did not bow to sin)?	See Exodus 12:5	See Esther 3:2	See John 1:29
What was put on the Doorposts and the Tree?	See Exodus 12:7	See Esther 5:16 (look up the word "gallows")	See Acts 5:30
How many days transpired?		See Esther 4:16	See Matthew 12:40

BOLDLY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE

The Faithful, Humble Man would not bow - not once - to Sin and Pride. While all the others in the land bowed the knee to the tyranny of the proud Haman, Mordecai would not.

And now on the thirteenth of the first month, the decree was written. Death to the man who would not bow to Sin. Not death to Him only, but any related to Him. Mordecai tore his clothes, and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

The thirteenth of the first month was the time of Passover. Many years later at that very same time, there was a man who was the Lamb of God, without blemish – he had not bowed to sin. The decree was written, the money exchanged... He was destined to die. Alone in the garden, He “offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death.”

Outside the King's gate, Mordecai sat with his clothes rent. No one could enter the King's gate clothed in sackcloth. **Read Hebrews 13:12.** Where did Jesus suffer? _____

There was a tree prepared on which Mordecai was to hang. For three days and three nights, he fasted in sackcloth and ashes, along with Esther and all the Jews of Shushan.

Hanging on the tree, the Lamb of God breathed His last. “It is finished!” He cried. And with that the veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy, the dwelling place of God, was rent. Suddenly, there was access to the dwelling place of the Most High King...

No one could go into inner court, into the presence of the King, unless He had called them. But death had been decreed, and there was only one way to plead for deliverance from the Wicked Man. And so, Esther went. Dressed in royal robes, she entered the inner court. When the King saw her, he held out his golden scepter. She had found mercy and grace in his presence.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. *Because of the death and exaltation of Christ, to what can we come boldly, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need?*



When we pray to the Most High King in heaven, it is like going into the Most Holy of the temple, or the inner court of the throne room. Like Esther, we can go before our King (in prayer) to plead for deliverance from Sin and Death, and be confident that we will obtain the King's mercy and grace in our time of need because of our Great High Priest, Jesus.

ALL THIS AVAILS ME NOTHING

Esther requested the King and Haman's presence at a banquet she would prepare. But at the banquet her request is that the King and Haman would again come to yet another banquet on the following day.

Haman is joyful. Full of pride, he goes home to his wife and friends. List the things that Haman brags to his wife and friends about in **Esther 5:11**.

Do you think his wife may have already known how many children he had? And his great riches? _____

In Esther 5:12, what is Haman proud about? _____

Pride rejoices not so much in the inclusion of self, but in the exclusion of others. He is most happy that no one besides himself and the King were invited to the banquet. But all of the riches, children, and promotions were worth nothing to him, because of what (**Esther 5:13**)? _____

Our carnal minds, like Haman, naturally seek our own best interest, in pride. We want to make ourselves look good to others, and promote ourselves. Haman's boastfulness shows the ugliness of pride in a ridiculous, almost humorous way.

But even worse, the carnal mind rejoices in the destruction of others.

Totally opposite of sinful pride, the Christ-like mind unselfishly seeks the welfare of others, and is even prepared to lay down life itself.

PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION

All seems to be going in Haman's favour. Riches, children, promotions, and now Mordecai is as good as dead, with a tree waiting for him in Haman's yard. He

only needed to ask the king, and then Mordecai would die. Yes, he would go to the king first thing – early in the morning.

Haman, eager for permission to hang his enemy, rushed to the palace as the morning dawned. Ushered in by the king's servants, the King began to speak before Haman had even opened his mouth.

Esther 6:6. What does the king ask Haman? _____

Esther 6:7-9. What is Haman's response? _____

Think of the many possible things Haman could have asked for. Does what Haman suggest (thinking it for himself) seem ridiculous to you? Why? _____

But suddenly and unexpectedly, come the pivotal words, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate!"

Imagine the horror in Haman's mind. He had come to ask for the death of Mordecai, and now he is required by the king to exalt his enemy!

Mordecai's three days and nights of fasting had barely ended when his enemy, Haman, raises him to his feet. His sackcloth and ashes are replaced with a royal robe, and he is placed on a royal horse. Before the people of Shushan, Haman exalts Mordecai, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour."



Read Proverbs 16:18. What goes before destruction? _____
And what before a fall? _____

Haman hurries home in mourning with his head covered to tell his wife and friends all that had happened. But before they were finished speaking, the king's servants come to hurry him to the second banquet which Esther had prepared.

CONCLUSION

The portrait of Haman bragging to his wife and friends, and thinking there was none that the king would want to honour more than himself, shows the ridiculous foolishness of pride in an almost laughable way. And yet embarrassingly we ALL have the proud, selfish, mind that seeks our own welfare instead of looking for the good of others.

Challenge. Today, try to make a conscious effort to catch your Haman pride or selfishness in its tracks. Hang that Haman, and find a way to show selflessness and humility instead!

7. ONCE HIDDEN... NOW REVEALED!

Read Esther 7-8.

The three days of Mordecai's fasting in sackcloth and ashes had ended with exaltation and honour, as Haman paraded the royally-robed Mordecai on the king's horse through the city square.

And now as the day drew on, Esther's royal banquet began.

I, AND MY PEOPLE

Before the King sat two very different people. One was his beautiful queen, and the other Haman, his second in command.

What fact about Esther had she hidden from the King? (**Esther 2:20**) _____

Now that the second banquet had begun, what did the king ask Esther (again!) (**Esther 7:2**)? _____

The time had come for all that was hidden to be revealed to the King. What does Esther twice call her condemned Jewish relatives (**Esther 7:3-4**)? _____

Haman was self-promoting, and self-seeking. Mordecai's character was opposite to Haman's – Mordecai selflessly served others. Esther requested two things (**Esther 7:3**). What were they? "Let _____ be given me at my petition, and _____ at my request."

Did Esther reveal her character as one that acted like Haman or Mordecai in her request? How? _____

Esther has identified herself with Mordecai, not only by her family relation, but by her character.

Esther reveals to the King that she and her people "have been sold, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated." What is this a symbol of in our life (**Romans 7:14**)? _____

What is the King's response (**Esther 7:5**)? _____

THE ADVERSARY AND ENEMY

Esther has revealed her hidden identity. It is time to also reveal to the King the true identity of the deceptive enemy.

List the three words Esther used to describe the true identity of Haman to the king (**Esther 7:6**). _____

The King is furious, and Haman is terrified in his presence.

What does Harbonah tell the King is standing at the house of Haman (**Esther 7:9**)? _____

On the tree, prepared for Mordecai, Haman was hung.

What does the death of Haman on the tree that had been prepared for Mordecai symbolize? _____

After three days and nights, Mordecai lived! Mordecai was exalted! And Haman was destroyed.

Sin and Death had been swallowed up in victory!

JOY AND GLADNESS, A FEAST AND A HOLIDAY

Although Haman was dead, his decree was not. According to the laws of the Medes and Persians, it could not be canceled or changed.

What did the King tell Mordecai and Esther to do (**Esther 8:8**)? _____

Queen Esther and Mordecai wrote a new law, that all of their people could destroy, kill, and annihilate anyone who wanted to kill them.

What does the destruction of the Destroyers by all of Mordecai's people symbolize (**Romans 6:6, 12**)? _____



After the day of destruction of all the enemies on the 13th of Adar, what did the Jews do (**Esther 9:17**)? _____

What does a Day of Rest symbolize (**Hebrews 4:9-10**)? _____

What does a Day of Gladness symbolize (**Isaiah 35:10**)? _____

The resting, feasting, and gladness on the holiday of Purim is a glimpse of the Kingdom – when Sin and Death are finally destroyed and God's people dwell in the presence of their King!

And so we conclude the book of Esther. In it God has revealed to us His Plan of Redemption through the Son of His right hand. We have seen God reveal His purpose: to dwell with His own people, His bride, whom He loves. A people who have prepared for their husband, and reflect His glory and majesty.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

-Revelation 21:2-5

The book of Esther never mentions God's name, nor does it describe any visible ways that God was working. There were no prophets, or open miracles, visions or dreams. Yet God was just as real and active among His people as before or since. God's Providence was at work - *hidden* behind all the events so that all things "worked together for good."

Today, we too have no prophets, open miracles, visions or dreams. But God is working just as actively today as He was in all the stories of the Bible. Although God may seem *hidden*. When we have faith, we can see that God is everywhere, and His angels are encamped all around us. He is constantly working in our lives to prepare us for the kingdom.

Think about how you and your family have seen God working in your lives. Write down or share a story with your class of a time when you were reminded of God and the angels actively involved in your life.

Does remembering that God and His angels are always at work in your life change the way you think and act? How?

*Challenge. When you see your friends or siblings or parents, instead of asking "How are you doing?" or "How was your day?" try asking "**How did you see God working in your life today?**"*