Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

Esther Bible Study

The Thirteenth of Never
That’s the Day God Will Allow His People to Be Destroyed

Bible Studies
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Esther Bible Study
The Thirteenth of Never
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This booklet has been put together for you to use either

• in your own personal Bible Study time,
  or…
• to help you lead a Bible Study discussion group.

It is divided into several lessons, usually covering one Bible chapter.

Each lesson has two (2) parts:

  1. **Questions** for you to use as you read and think through the scripture.

  2. **Answers** to those questions with my comments and thoughts.

If you are leading a discussion group, I suggest making sure each member of your group has a copy of the next week’s questions in advance so they can prepare if they want to. Preparation for a Bible Study is one way to establish the habit of getting into the Word every day.

An online version of this study is available for free download at:

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Esther Bible Study
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Introduction to Esther

1. Setting the Stage
2. The Small Things Count
3. Anti-Semitism
4. What is My Purpose?
5. Esther is Willing...God is Able
6. Come to Jesus
7. The Thirteenth of Adar

Megillot Esther
An outline for a play

A Suggestion for Your Next Bible Study

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)
The Jewish people were lovingly chosen by God for a purpose. They were to show the rest of the world what God was like.

But, fifteen hundred years after Abraham (the first Jew) began to follow the One, True God; the Jewish people had utterly failed in their job.

They were worshipping idols. They were sacrificing their children in fiery ovens. They were sexually filthy. They were cheating and stealing and lying. It seemed there was no difference between the Jews and the rest of the world. The ones who supposedly knew God lived in the depths of sin, just like everyone else.

So God removed Himself from their temple. He left their Holy city. And He allowed a cruel gentile nation, the Babylonians, to conquer and nearly annihilate them. Most of the surviving Jews were taken as slaves to Babylon. Somehow, many of them lived through it.

After 70 years in Babylon the Lord God miraculously allowed the Jews to return to Israel. But not all of them went. Some of them stayed in Babylon. During the next 70 years, Babylon became Persia, and the ones who had stayed behind had children in Persia and lived fairly comfortable lives…but, unbeknownst to them, a very evil man, high up in the government of Persia, had a consuming desire to finish a job started by his ancestors 500 years before this. This man’s name was Haman…and he set things in motion to totally wipe the Jews off the face of the earth.
And then...enter Esther...our reluctant heroine.

Now...before we begin this study, let’s back up a little and ask ourselves a couple of questions:

1. **First Question:** At Esther’s time in history, after all the sin and failure of the Jewish people, how did God feel about the Jews...especially those who did not have the courage to make that first return to Jerusalem after 70 years in Babylon? Why didn't God just forget about them?

   - **Deuteronomy 7:7-9**
     God didn’t choose the Jews in the first place because they were great and successful and numerous. He chose them because He loved them. He simply loved them. He made promises to them because He loved them, and God is faithful. He doesn’t break His promises. His promises to Abraham, made fifteen hundred years before the Babylonian captivity, would be kept because God is God. He loves the people He has chosen and He is faithful.

     You might say, “Well, yes, OK, God is faithful. But even verse 9 here in Deuteronomy 7 says He might some day run out of patience, doesn’t it? It says He keeps His covenant of love to a thousand generations. So doesn’t that say that after a thousand generations He might give up on the Jews?”

     Keep reading.

   - **Deuteronomy 32:8-10**
     When God created the earth, He planned that there would be many nations to live in it. He planned ahead of time how many nations there would be, and where they would live. He made boundaries and dividing
lines between those nations…rivers, mountains, hills & oceans. He made those choices based on the number of the future children of Israel.

However many future Jews there would be…that determined the numbers and the boundaries of the rest of the world.

Why? Because the Jews were God's portion. They were going to be the light to the rest of the nations so that all people everywhere would be able to see and know the One, True God.

Even though the Jews would not even exist until two thousand years after the creation of the earth, the entire future population of the earth was determined by the number of the future children of Israel.

The world was created so that its people would know God. The Jews were God’s chosen people to spread that message.

The Jewish nation began with one man who had faith in God – Abraham. God found him, chose him, spoke to him, shielded him, cared for him, and guarded him and his descendants as closely as we humans guard “the apple of our eye”. Why? Because God loved every human being who would ever live…and His chosen people were His way to reach them with the truth of who He was, how much He loved us, and what price He would pay to rescue us from our sin.

By the time the world had reached this “Esther” point in history, the Jewish people had disappointed and even angered God many, many times. But they still had a job to do – have faith in God. Some of the Jewish people had traveled back to Jerusalem, going by faith. But some were still in Babylon (now Persia), and God expected them, also, to still have faith in Him and be spreading the news of Him far and wide.

- **Psalms 78:5-7**
  The laws and the traditions the LORD gave to the Jews on Mt. Sinai were not just for them. Those laws and traditions would also introduce future generations to Him. The story of God would be passed down from grandparents to grandchildren over and over again, giving each generation the truth it would need to have faith in God, anew.

In Esther’s time, the seed of the coming Messiah was buried deeply in a Jewish man who had already traveled back to Jerusalem (Zerubbabel), but that didn’t mean the Jews who stayed behind in Babylon were not
important to God. There were in fact many Jews in Babylon who believed in the One, True God, and from those Jews of Babylon many in the generations yet to come were still to become not just Jews with Jewish history and Jewish blood, but also genuine believers in the One True God.

If God had only cared about the coming Messiah, He could have forgotten about the Jews who stayed behind in Babylon. But He didn't. God cared then and still cares now about all the Jewish people. His plan is to give every one of them a chance to believe in Him. Esther is proof of that.

- **Jeremiah 31:35-37**
  Only if the sun, moon & stars would disappear would the nation of Israel cease to exist. Only when and if the galaxies and the depths of the earth could be measured would the nation of Israel be rejected by God as His chosen people.

In other words, never! God would never give up on the nation of Israel. Not after countless failures. Not after exile to Babylon. Not after rejection of God’s protection to return to Jerusalem. Not after rejecting His Son when He finally did come. Not ever.

The Lord God loved and chose the Jews, and would not give up on them as a nation because one day, finally, as a nation, they will come to Him in faith – in Jesus, their Messiah.

Have there been individual Jews who have not put their trust in the One, True God over the years, and who were condemned to Hell because of that? Yes. But the Lord God will keep His promises to the nation, His promises that every Jewish man and woman would get their chance in their lifetimes to believe in Him, and His promise that the whole nation, at the very end of time, would have the privilege of believing in their Messiah, showing the world what the One, True God is all about. That final day of belief for the Jews will be just before Jesus Christ returns to earth— and that moment of faith will impact the world as never before! *(Romans 11:12, Zechariah 8:20-23, Isaiah 24:14-16, Ezekiel 39:7, Isaiah 66:18).*

- **Jeremiah 29:10-14**
  In Esther’s day, God still had a specific promise to fulfill for His people. That promise was not only to bring them back to the land, but also to bring them back to faith in Him. The prophet Isaiah knew this promise, too. *(Isaiah 44:21-23)* God still has that specific promise to keep, sometime in our future.
Introduction

- *Isaiah 48:4-5*
  Why did God give Israel all those prophets for all those years? Why did He, through those prophets, give them so many promises of things yet to happen?

  Why? So that someday the Jews, and the entire world, would be absolutely sure that it was God, and only God, who accomplished the salvation of the Jews, and the salvation of the world.

- *Isaiah 60:21&22*
  The Jews, with their failures, their tragedies, and their future time of faith...all of that has existed so that the glory of God will be revealed.

2. **Second Question:** – How did the displaced Jews of Babylon feel about God? And how did they feel about the land God had given them...the land of Israel...the home they had not returned to when they had the chance?

  - *Psalms 137:1-4*
    Even when the Jews strayed from God, they always grieved unbearably at any separation from the land and the city He had given them. To live in Jerusalem was to know the hand of God in their life! It was as if their hearts were tied to that land and that city.

    I’m imagining that the Jews who stayed behind in Babylon, the “unable to return” Jews, knew they were incomplete and not quite safe away from Jerusalem.

    How did the Jews in Babylon feel about God? They loved Him and missed Him and were probably feeling a little lost because they did not know Him the way He always intended. Maybe they were not at all sure how to get back to Him. Maybe He seemed pretty far away at times.

    How did God feel about the Jews in Babylon? He was crazy about them! Wild with love for them. It would be the Thirteenth of NEVER before He ever would allow them to be destroyed!
Lesson 1
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 1 “Setting the Stage”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

This Chapter introduces us to our main characters. Here’s an exercise to plug us into the story:

Read through Esther 1, and then in each section below:

- Name the characters involved, and
- Summarize what happens

1. (1:1-4)
2. (1:5-8)
3. (1:9)
4. (1:10-15)
5. (1:16-22)
Lesson 1
“Setting the Stage”
Esther 1

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

Read through Esther 1, and then in each section below:

• Name the characters involved, and
• Summarize what happens

1. (:1-4)
Summarize this section: King Xerxes (also called King Ahasuerus), ruler of Persia, is giving a huge, six-month celebration to show off all of his glory. (FYI: Persia is now the reigning power over what used to be called Babylon).

Characters in this section:
• King Xerxes.
• Nobles, officials, and military leaders of Persia.

2. (:5-8)
Summarize this section: At the culmination of this six-month-party, King Xerxes gives a huge banquet lasting a week, specifically for all the people who are living in or visiting Susa (also called Shushan), the capital. It is unbelievably lavish.

Characters in this section:
• King Xerxes.
• Nobles, officials, and military leaders.
• All the inhabitants of Susa.
3. (v:9)  
**Summarize this Section:** At the same time, Queen Vashti gives a banquet for the women.

**Characters in this section:**
- Queen Vashti.
- All the women of Susa.

4. (v:10-15)  
**Summarize this Section:** King Xerxes decides to call the Queen to his banquet to show off her beauty and glory. The King’s eunuchs deliver the request. The Queen refuses to respond to the order to appear. The King consults his advisors about what to do.

**Characters in this Section:**
- King Xerxes.
- Seven of the Kings’ closest servants, all eunuchs.
- Queen Vashti.
- The highest men in the kingdom – seven advisors.

5. (v:16-22)  
**Summarize this Section:** Memucan, one of the seven advisors, tells the King he should banish Vashti from his presence forever and choose another Queen. There was fear the women of the entire kingdom would begin to show disrespect to their husbands because of this rebellion of the Queen. The King takes his advice. Dispatchers to the entire kingdom are sent out.

**Characters in this Section:**
- King Xerxes.
- The seven advisors, specifically Memucan.
- Dispatchers.

The stage is set. We will meet Esther in Chapter 2.
Lesson 2
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 2 “The Small Things Count”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. Review Chapter 1 and ask yourself: What did King Xerxes think was the most important thing happening in his kingdom at this time?

2. (:1,2) What is King Xerxes’ problem? Is King Xerxes sorry for his actions?

3. (:3-4) What did the King’s advisors suggest the King should do in order to solve his problem?

4. (:5-7) Why were Mordecai and Esther in Persia?

5. (:8-9) What kind of care did Esther get when she was chosen to be part of the competition for Queen? Why?

6. (:10,11) What was the nationality and background of Esther? Why would Mordecai have told her to keep this a secret?
7. (:12-14) What kind of preparation did these girls go through before coming before the King?

8. (:15-18) Why did Esther win the royal crown?

9. (:19-20) Even though Esther was now the Queen, where did her first loyalty lie?

10. Fill in the rest of the story - in verses 21 & 22:
   a. Two of the King’s officers did what?
   b. Mordecai did what?
   c. Esther did what?
   d. What happened to the two officers?
   e. What did someone do?

11. What two things have happened in this chapter? One seems to be hugely important, one seems to be small and unnoticed.
Lesson 2
“The Small Things Count”
Esther 2

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. Review Chapter 1 and ask yourself: What did King Xerxes think was the most important thing happening in his kingdom at this time?

To him, and the rest of his advisors, the most important thing was to make sure the rest of the women in the kingdom did not begin to disobey their husbands. But that wasn’t anywhere near the most important thing that was happening. We’ll see, in Chapter 2, what was really happening. We’ll see why God allowed all of Chapter 1 to take place.

2. (:1,2) What is King Xerxes’ problem? Is King Xerxes sorry for his actions?

Sorry, yes – because now he is lonely. But not repentant. So…what’s the difference between “sorry”, and “repentant”?

1st John 1:9 tells us. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When someone is repentant, they know they need forgiveness. They know they’ve done something wrong. They grieve that they have hurt others or offended God.

When someone is sorry they are sad that something bad has happened, but are not blaming themselves.

Was King Xerxes repentant? No. Just sorry. Sorry he was not as comfortable or as happy as he used to be.
3. (:3-4) What did the King’s advisors suggest the King should do in order to solve his problem?

The solution? A Beauty Contest! It would probably have been an indescribable honor for a young girl in Persia to be even chosen for the beauty contest, but then to win that contest would have meant a life of luxury and spoiling for the rest of her life. Such an honor…unless you were a young Jewish girl.

There were still Jews in Persia who remembered the Prophets of old and the Law of God. There were still some who knew of the promises of a Messiah yet to come. If Esther had heard these Jews talking and praying, she would have known, too, that the Messiah was coming someday to take care of the sin problem of the world. She would have known that the Messiah would someday be born of a young Jewish virgin (Isaiah 7:14). And if she knew that, there’s every chance she would have hoped that someday that girl might be her. A young Jewish girl who loved the Lord God would never consider marrying a Gentile (a non-Jew)…and certainly would not want to marry a pagan King.

No, a young Jewish girl would not want to be a part of this contest!

4. (:5-7) Why were Mordecai and Esther in Persia?

The whole Jewish nation was taken captive to Babylon in 586 BC. They stayed in Babylon as captives for seventy years, even after Babylon became Persia. The first group of Jews to be allowed to return to Jerusalem was in 539 BC, but, for one reason or another, not all Jews in Babylon returned. The story of Esther takes place in 490 BC, about seventy years after the first group of Jews had returned to Israel, and about thirty years before the second group of Jews would go back home to Israel.
So, although we don’t have a specific history of Mordecai (we don’t even know whether or not he was even alive when the first group of Jews returned in 539 BC), we can probably assume he was either a young child in 539 BC, or that he was simply not born yet. His parents must not have returned with the first group – they stayed behind. Esther’s parents, or maybe her grandparents, must have stayed behind, too. Mordecai, who was Esther’s uncle, at some point in that seventy years after 539 BC, took over the responsibility of raising her and looking out for her future.

Now, don’t miss this: this is how important the Esther story is: the future return of the rest of the Jews to Israel (2 more returns: Ezra and Nehemiah both led groups of people back) would hinge on the survival of Esther and Mordecai and their fellow Jews in Babylon/Persia in 490 BC. The return of thousands of Jews to their homeland in 458 BC and 445 BC depended on the obedience and faith of a young, frightened, secretly Jewish Queen of a Gentile nation. Ha! I think God is quite dramatic with a fantastic sense of humor!

5. (8-9) What kind of care did Esther get when she was chosen to be part of the competition for Queen? Why?

The man in charge of Esther’s preparation was Hegai. For some reason (the hand of God, of course) Hegai took a great liking to Esther. He not only protected her, but made sure she received the best of treatment: food, perfumes, training.

Isn’t this a strange thing? That a child of God would be protected and cared for by someone who does not know God at all? Perhaps Hegai did come to know the One, True God as he watched the gracious and beautiful Esther trust in the One, True God, but we have no record in scripture to tell us one way or the other.

This we do know: sometimes this is exactly the way God works. Scripture tells of other believers in dire circumstances who were protected by God in the same way: by having the protection of powerful people who did not necessarily have faith in God: Genesis 39:21 – Joseph. And Daniel 1:9 – Daniel & friends.

From that what can we conclude? God cares for His own in many different ways. He always gets done what He wants done.

6. (10, 11) What was the nationality and background of Esther? Why would Mordecai have told her to keep it secret?

Esther was too innocent to know what Mordecai knew. Because she was a Jew, Esther was going to have powerful enemies in the palace. There were those who simply hated the Jews because Jews loved the Lord God.
Mordecai asks Esther to show discretion for her own protection. He is not asking her to lie – but to be very choosy about when to tell everything she knew.

God definitely does not want anyone to lie (Leviticus 19:11, Ephesians. 4:25). But He also tells us sometimes to protect the truth (Matthew 7:6). Esther was being advised to protect the truth and protect herself.

7. (%12-14) What kind of preparation did these girls go through before coming before the King?

It was extensive. Twelve months of oil, myrrh, spices and cosmetics. They were to be soft and beautiful and incredibly feminine. Why? Because they were going to be in the presence of the King. His position required important preparation by anyone who wanted to approach him.

8. (%15-18) Why did Esther win the royal crown?

She was more than beautiful. She had character and wisdom. She was willing to be simple and to follow the lead of someone she trusted.

9. (%19-20) Even though Esther was now the Queen, where did her first loyalty lie?

To Mordecai. The one she trusted. The one who knew the most important thing about her. The one who could connect her with God. The biggest indication of the wisdom Esther possessed was that instinctively she knew to trust the most the one who loved the One, True God.

10. Fill in the rest of the story - in verses 21 & 22:
   a. Two of the King's officers planned to kill the King.
   b. but…Mordecai found out and told Esther.
   c. then…Esther told the King.
   d. consequently…The two officers were hanged.
   e. and….someone recorded it.
11. What two things have happened in this chapter? One seems to be hugely important, one seems to be small and unnoticed.

1. Esther is chosen Queen
2. Mordecai saves the King’s life, and *it is recorded*.

Of course it seems that Esther becoming Queen is more important than anything else right now. But life is funny sometimes. Things aren’t always what they seem.

A small notation made in a notebook by a lowly servant in this powerful King’s household would prove to be singularly life-changing for the Jews of Persia.
Lesson 3
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 3  “Anti-Semitism”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

Read Esther Chapter 3, and summarize the chapter in your own words.

Then…answer the following questions:

1. Who was really behind Haman’s plot to kill the Jews?

2. How do we know God will never allow the Jews to be totally destroyed? (Jeremiah 31:31-37)

3. Before we read the rest of Esther, what do we know for sure about the outcome of this story?
4. (:15) Do you see anything in this verse which indicates that not all the people of Persia wanted the destruction of the Jews?

5. What does that tell you about Satan’s ways?
Lesson 3
“Anti-Semitism”
Esther 3

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

What is anti-Semitism?

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an·ti·Sem·i·tism
NOUN: 1. Hostility toward or prejudice against Jews or Judaism. 2. Discrimination against Jews.

How is it anti-Semitism different than prejudice against or persecution of any other people group?

Anti-Semitism is not only an evil attempt to demean or kill a people group, as horrible as that is.

Anti-Semitism is that and more. It is also Satan’s attempt to stop God’s Plan. Although hatred and cruelty to any people group is evil, anti-Semitism is the ultimate evil because it begins with hatred of God and intent to stop God from doing what He has said He will do.

Here’s a snapshot of what God has said He will do:

Originally, God created everything perfect, good, beautiful and sinless. Then…

Adam and Eve sinned. Genesis 3:15
God created man to have fellowship with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, they forever changed the spiritual DNA which they would pass on to every person who would come from their union. From that point on, every person on
earth would be born with a desire to sin, a love for sin, and an inability to avoid sinning.

God promised Adam and Eve that someday One who would come from their own descendants would overcome sin and make it possible for all men to once again have that sweet fellowship with God which Adam and Eve had thrown away.

The evil one, Satan, tried to immediately destroy that promise of God by inspiring Cain to kill Abel (for, after all, Abel was a worshipper of God, so he might be the Promised One) But Abel wasn’t the one and the plan of God went forward.

**Then Noah & the Flood, then Babel. Genesis 6-11**

As people multiplied on the earth, they forgot or ignored the promise of God and decided to live their own way, not trusting in the future Promised One, but trusting in themselves.

When Noah was born the earth was so full of evil the Lord decided He must destroy all who did not have a heart to follow Him. The evil one, Satan, had managed to tempt almost the whole world to turn away from God, but there was one family who still loved God - Noah and his family. In them the seed of the future Messiah safely rested, and the plan of God went forward.

As Noah and his family re-populated the world they still kept passing on the bad gene, too, the one given to them by Adam and Eve – the inescapable desire to sin. Soon the world filled again with people headstrong for their own way, refusing to do things God’s way, and not longing for a relationship to God.

Those people got together to build a tower. It was to be a symbol of their intention to be bigger and better that God. God stopped their efforts by confusing their language. They drifted away from each other into separate people groups (nations), and the plan of God continued to go forward.

Somewhere in one of those people groups was a seed of the Messiah…still safely hidden from the destruction of Satan.

**God Chose the Jews. Genesis 12-50**

Now God chose one of those nations to be the one to whom He would reveal Himself, so that they could respond in faith and go out and tell the rest of the nations about Him: what He was like, and what He required for fellowship with Him.

The seed of the coming Savior was in the Jews. Beginning with Abraham, continuing down through his descendants.
Here are the promises God made to the Abraham – and thus to all the Jews - so they could be the people of faith He needed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where?</th>
<th>Promises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Genesis 12:1-3 | 1. I will make you a great nation.  
2. I will bless you (do good things for you).  
3. I will make your name great.  
4. You will be a blessing to the other nations.  
5. I will do good to those who do good to you.  
6. I will curse the one who curses you.  
7. All families in the earth will be blessed because of you. |
| Genesis 13: 14-17 | 8. I will give the land of Israel to you.  
9. I will make your descendants so numerous you will not be able to count them. |
| Genesis 15:1-5 | 10. I will give you a son, (the first of your descendants) who will come from your own body. |
| Genesis 17:1-22 | 11. I will establish a covenant between you and Me.  
12. I will multiply you greatly.  
13. You will be the father of many nations.  
14. Kings will come from you.  
15. My covenant is not only with you, but also with your descendants.  
16. My covenant is an everlasting covenant…it cannot end.  
17. I will be your God and the God of your descendants.  
18. You and your descendants will inherit the land I have given you.  
19. I promise all these things…your part is to believe.  
20. The evidence of your belief will be circumcision.  
21. Sarah will be your partner in this promise.  
22. The son of promise will be named Isaac. |
Now, because the evil one, Satan, also heard what God was promising (a Savior who would be a descendant of Adam and Eve, and a descendant of Abraham), he (the devil) constantly searched for ways to separate the Jews from the land God had given them, or outright kill the Jews, in order to stop the promises of God from coming to pass. Examples:

- When a famine hits Canaan, Abraham left his land for Egypt in order to survive.
- Lot tried to steal Abraham’s land.
- Sarah was barren, thus, they doubted that God would produce descendants for Abraham.
- Sarah & Abraham decided to produce a son through Hagar, instead of trusting God to fulfill His promise in His way in His time.
- Finally the son of promise, Isaac, was born of Abraham and Sarah. Then he had two sons. One of his sons, Esau, did not choose to believe in God.
- Twelve sons were then born to Jacob – all twelve of them fought and hated each other.
- There was another famine. The whole family moved to Egypt where they became slaves and perhaps would soon lose their existence.
- Moses set them free, but they refused to believe God’s promises.
- After 40 years wandering in the wilderness, they re-entered the Promised Land only to have the idol-worshipping inhabitants of the land try to destroy them.
- Then their own sinfulness threatened to destroy them.
- Then they choose a King, Saul, who was not committed to God.
- Finally they had a good King, David, but then he sinned with Bathsheba, and the whole kingdom of Israel suffered for this sin.
- Then Solomon, son of David, built the temple, but his heart was swayed away from God by his many pagan wives.
- Then the kingdom was divided into North and South, as they killed and hated each other.
- Then the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria and taken away captive, never to return.
- Then the Southern Kingdom was conquered by Babylon and taken away captive.
- After 70 years, some returned from Babylon (now Persia) to utter discouragement because of internal enemies, a broken-down land and a destroyed temple.
- Then Haman tried to kill all Jews left in Babylon (now Persia), including Esther and Mordecai.

After Esther, there’s more:
• Jesus was born about five hundred years later – and Herod immediately tried to kill him as an infant.
• Satan planted one of his own followers in the middle of Jesus’ disciples, Judas.
• Jesus was finally murdered by Satan at age 33 – but He came back to life!

**After the Resurrection, there’s still more:**
• You’d think Satan would have given up by now, but he knows God’s promises as well as we do. He doesn’t believe in them, but he is very aware of them. The promise is that Jesus will return someday to a believing nation of Israel. So, ever since Jesus’ resurrection Satan has focused his efforts even more on the total destruction of every Jewish person. Satan does not want God to be able to fulfill His promise.
• 70AD – The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, dealing Judaism a near death-blow, but Jewish and Gentile Christians carried Christ to the world.
• Again and again through the last two thousand years, Satan has tried to wipe out the Jews through hatred and violent persecution, but has failed every time to totally destroy them. (Example: Hitler in the 1940’s)
• And finally, sometime yet to come, in the Last Seven Years, Satan will have one last chance to destroy the Jews and all believers in Jesus (Revelation 12:13-17). And he will fail again (Revelation 17:14).
• There will be a faithful nation of Jews, believing in Jesus and joyously waiting for His glorious return (Zechariah 12:10-13:1, Revelation 11:13, Revelation 19:11-21).

Whew! Do you see the evil arm of Satan reaching into history again and again, trying to destroy God’s plan? That’s anti-Semitism!

Let’s look now at the answers for this lesson:

Here’s the Esther 3 summary:

An evil man named Haman is put in a position of great power in King Xerxes’ kingdom. All people in the kingdom are told to bow down to Haman. Mordecai would not. Haman knows Mordecai is a Jew, and Haman has an intense hatred for the Jews. So Haman comes up with a plan to kill all the Jews in Persia. He takes his idea to the King, and the King, not knowing that his own Queen is a Jew, agrees. It is decided that the wholesale slaughter of Jews in Persia, and the confiscation of all their worldly goods, will take place twelve months later, on the 13th of Adar.
1. Who was really behind Haman’s plot to kill the Jews?

It was Satan. It was anti-Semitism.

There is an interesting history here which helps us see how Satan was working. Haman, called the “Agagite”, was most likely a descendant of an Amalekite King named Agag. This King lived five hundred years before the time of Esther (Exodus 17:16). The Amalekites were fiercely hateful against the Jews and even had tried to slaughter them all as they had left Egypt. The LORD declared then that He would “have war against Amalek from generation to generation”. Probably that reason alone was enough to encourage Mordecai to refuse to bow down before Haman. And there’s reason to think that Haman’s hatred of the Jews was passed on to him from generations of Amalekites who hated Jews.

2. How do we know God will never allow the Jews to be totally destroyed?  
   (Jeremiah 31:31-37)

Because the sun, moon and stars still shine.

3. Before we read the rest of Esther, what do we know for sure about the outcome of this story?

The Jews will survive. God will do what He wants to do no matter who or what gets in the way. Although the actions of Haman might have brought fear to the ones who knew what he was up to, the bigger picture, which we have the privilege of seeing now, tells us that God was completely able to protect the ones He loved.

4. (:15) Do you see anything in this verse which indicates that not all the people of Persia wanted the destruction of the Jews?

“…the city of Shushan was perplexed”. The people living in the capital city were wondering why in the world the King would want all the Jews killed. Not all the Persians wanted their neighbors, the Jews, to be annihilated.

It’s the way of the world, isn’t it? Whether a country is run by a cruel dictator, a benevolent King, or elected officials, very often the every-day, ordinary people who aren’t in the know, are unaware of the deep evil which is motivating their government leaders.
5. What does that tell you about Satan’s ways?

Satan can, when He works hard at it, get things done through one evil man.

It doesn't take a consensus or a committee or even a government. Just one evil man can pour his energy into evil, and sometimes it will happen. Just because most people are religious, or Christians, or moral, doesn’t mean Satan is always stopped from doing his evil work.
Lesson 4
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 4  “What is My Purpose?”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side.  I will not fear.  What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. Mordecai & Esther both fasted in response to their crises, but for different reasons. What were their different reasons?

2. What are some purposes for fasting according to the following examples:

   • Exodus 34:28
   • Judges 20:26-28
   • 1st Samuel 7:3-6
   • 2nd Chronicles 20:3-4
   • Ezra 8:21-23
   • Luke 2:36-37
   • Acts 13:2-3
3. (v.1&2) Mordecai was wailing as he went through the city. Or, in other words, he was praying with agonized crying to God. When we pray, does it matter if we know exactly the right words to use? (Look up Romans 8:26 How is this verse an encouragement to you?)

4. (v.4-5) Why do you think Esther initially responded to Mordecai’s distress the way she did? How do you tend to respond to problems or difficult circumstances?

5. What changes do you see in Esther from the beginning to the end of the chapter?

6. How would you have responded to Mordecai’s challenge if you were Esther? Would you have risked your life? Would you have chosen to intervene to save lives if doing so would not risk your own life? Why?

7. Since we serve the “King of Kings”, can we learn something about coming to Him in prayer from this chapter? What are some differences between Esther’s access to the king (v.11) and our access to the King of Kings (Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16)?

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8. Interestingly, one of the few passages in Scripture addressed specifically to women concerns fasting (pictured in the wearing of sackcloth). Read Isaiah 32:9-18. Why do you think God gave this challenge to women? What does the Lord say will be the outcome of such intense fasting and prayer by women?

9. What agonizing situation is especially on your heart right now?

10. What is your purpose?
Lesson 4
“What is My Purpose?”
Esther 4

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

Just to get the ball rolling – when you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? If you are leading a group in this Bible study, you’ll want to not only ask that question, but also to ask, “Did you become that?” And if they didn’t, then ask, “Do you still want to do that?”

Most of us have an inner desire to know what our value in life is, or, what is the reason we exist? Esther chapter 4 gives us a chance to wonder out loud.

1. Mordecai & Esther both fasted in response to their crises, but for different reasons. What were their different reasons?
   • Mordecai was grieving over the news he had just heard. Check back to chapter 3:8-15 to see what the bad news was.
   • Esther was afraid, asking for direction from God, seeking courage

2. What are some purposes for fasting according to the following examples:
   • Exodus 34:28
     The experience of communicating with God is so great that sustenance is the farthest thing from your needs or thoughts.
   • Judges 20:26-28
     In order to hear an answer from God.
   • 1st Samuel 7:3-6
     To confess sin, ask for sin to be revealed (also 2nd Samuel 12:13-17).
Lesson 4  Esther Chapter 4  Answers

- 2nd Chronicles 20:3-4
To seek God in a time of great need.

- Ezra 8:21-23
To ask for a safe journey.

- Luke 2:36&37
As a regular part of a life of worship.

- Acts 13:2-3
To commission someone to do a work for God.

3. (:1&2) Mordecai was wailing as he went through the city. Or, in other words, he was praying with agonized crying to God. When we pray, does it matter if we know exactly the right words to use? (Look up Romans 8:26  How is this verse an encouragement to you?)

Actually, it doesn’t matter. We may not even know the exact thing to pray about, but still we want to pray for some specific individual. The Holy Spirit is the One who takes our words of prayer and interprets them to God. He communicates our faith and need to God. He even groans, knowing how much we are groaning. Sometimes if I have no way to know what to say I just praise or sing, or cry, asking the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

How is this verse an encouragement to you?

4. (:4-5) Why do you think Esther initially responded to Mordecai’s distress the way she did?

What was Mordecai’s response to bad news? Fasting, grieving and praying.

What was Esther’s response? Make it go away! (like taking Tylenol for a fever…if the discomfort goes away we don’t have to look for the source.)

Why did Esther respond in that way? Probably because she was immature. Immature in life and immature in faith. Immaturity makes you want to run and hide. Maturity (or completeness) actually makes you want to dive in and find the answer….solve the problem….seek the mind of God. (James 1:2-4)

How do you tend to respond to problems or difficult circumstances?
5. What changes do you see in Esther from the beginning to the end of the chapter?

She starts out a Queen with many people pampering and taking care of her…and ends up a Queen who feels the weight of her position, and takes her inability to God (1st Peter 5:6&7). Esther has grown up.

6. How would you have responded to Mordecai’s challenge if you were Esther? Would you have risked your life? Would you have chosen to intervene to save lives if doing so would not risk your own life? Why?

7. Since we serve the “King of Kings”, can we learn something about coming to Him in prayer from this chapter? What are some differences between Esther’s access to the king (:11) and our access to the King of Kings (Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16)?

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<td>She fasted first, acknowledging his power and majesty.</td>
<td>Most of the time I am very casual as I approach Him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She was fearful for her life.</td>
<td>I need have no fear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She asked for support from others as she went to the King.</td>
<td>I don’t have to ask for support from other, but I can have it if I want it or feel like I need it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She placed her faith in the King who was higher than Xerxes.</td>
<td>There is no King higher than Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She had to be talked into it. Pressured.</td>
<td>Sometimes I have to be pressured, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She only went because something was hugely wrong.</td>
<td>Sometimes that’s what I do, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She didn’t know whether Xerxes would hear her request or not.</td>
<td>I always know God will hear my request.</td>
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8. Interestingly, one of the few passages in Scripture addressed specifically to women concerns fasting (pictured in the wearing of sackcloth). Read Isaiah 32:9-18. Why do you think God directed this challenge to women? What does the Lord say will be the outcome of such intense fasting and prayer by women?
The context of this Isaiah passage is interesting. The women of his time were being urged to repent and fast because the very end of the age was approaching. Why did God direct this challenge to women? I don’t know – but it has gotten my attention, especially since it does seem that the end of the age is fast approaching even more for us.

The ultimate outcome of their prayer was going to be the ushering in of the Kingdom of God, the coming and then return of Jesus Christ, the beginning of the Millennium. Wow! This Isaiah challenge to women is in the Old Testament, yes, but it surely is one for today, too, because the return of Jesus is sooner than it was then. The challenge is for women, today!

9. What agonizing situation is especially on your heart right now?

- Have you thought about fasting? Have you tried it – even for a half-day?
- Are you praying consistently? Do you find yourself crying out to God at all times of the day or night?
- Are you willing to engage the help of others in fasting and praying?
- If asked to, could you take a risk like Esther did? Could you be a heroine if you were asked to, even if you are afraid?

10. What is your purpose?

You know it has to be more than pleasure, or making a living, or running your children to events, or entertainment, or sports, or eating great food, or keeping your household running, or staying healthy, or even loving on your family. All those things are good, not evil, but you know there has to be more.
Lesson 5
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 5&6  “Esther is Willing….God is Able”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

First, what have we learned so far about:

The Jews.

God.

Satan.

Esther.

Mordecai.

1. (5:1,2) How do you imagine Esther felt when she stood in the King’s court, waiting?

2. (5:3-8) Why didn’t Esther just give her request? Why a second banquet?
3. (5:9-14) What sin did Haman have in his life, which opened the door for calamity?

4. Compare Esther’s day and Haman’s day.

5. (6:1-9) What seemingly “unplanned” events turned out to be the handiwork of God, working behind the scenes?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

6. (6:10-14) What did Haman begin to realize?

7. Can you name three major lessons in these chapters?:
   a. 
   b. 
   c.
Lesson 5
“Esther is Willing…God is Able”
Esther 5&6

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

First, what have we learned so far about:

The Jews – They were chosen by God to have faith in Him and spread the news about Him to the whole world. They will be there at His return someday, believing in Him and welcoming Him home. They have been horribly persecuted throughout history because they were chosen by God.

God – Is totally in control, always. He loves the Jews, and loves the whole world.

Satan – Is the sworn enemy of God. He desires to destroy all who believe in God, all who might believe in God, and even to destroy God Himself.

Esther – Was a Jewish girl chosen by God to help deliver some of His people from destruction. She was reluctant and afraid, but obedient.

Mordecai – Was Esther’s uncle, her protector. She looked to him for wisdom. He looked to God.

1. (5:1,2) How do you imagine Esther felt when she stood in the King’s court, waiting?

Scared to death. If she was anything like me, her legs were shaking.
2. (5:3-8) Why didn’t Esther just give her request? Why a second banquet?

You’ll have to guess at the answer to this. There isn’t any indication in scripture of why she did it this way. My guess is that she was so afraid she couldn’t get up the nerve to address the real need the first time around. No matter what the reason….God used the timing perfectly.

3. (5:9-14) What sin did Haman have in his life which opened the door for calamity?

Pride. His pride turned into hatred and revenge because others wouldn’t support him in his pride. Through pride, the door was open for Satan to inspire him to want to kill all Jews. The devil didn’t care about Haman’s pride; and he wasn’t interested in making sure Haman got praise. What the devil wanted was the destruction of the Jews.

This is a good time to just note that our small, insignificant sins – the ones no one knows about – can easily lead to greater and greater sins, until we are sliding right into Satan’s hands as he seeks to bring about his plan in the world. One sin usually opens the door for another. As Paul describes it in Romans 1:28-32, sin becomes a downward spiral.

4. Compare Esther’s day and Haman’s day.

Esther’s day started out bad….she was terrified and probably wondering if she would end up dead that day. Haman’s day started out fantastic. Everything was going his way.

This just goes to show that doing things God’s way may not look the best at first, but that can be a fooler.

5. (6:1-9) What seemingly “unplanned” events turned out to be the handiwork of God, working behind the scenes?

a. The King can’t sleep.
   b. He orders the books to be read to him.
   c. Haman enters the room at precisely the right moment.
6. (6:10-14) What did Haman begin to realize?

This is not going well.

7. Can you name three major lessons in these chapters?

   a. God is able – we simply have to be willing.
   b. Humility before the Lord is way better than pride before men.
   c. Not every “bad day” ends up bad. Not every “good day” ends up good.

If any of us attempts to obey God…to trust God…but we are still afraid…what should we do?

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)
Lesson 6
Questions for You to Answer
Esther 7&8 “Choose Life”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. (7:1-4) What was Esther’s request?

2. (7:5-6) What did Esther wait to say next?

3. (7:7-9) How did the King respond? How did Haman respond? How did Harbona respond? (What does Harbona’s response tell you about Haman’s popularity amongst the people of Susa?)

4. (7:10 – 8:6) What took place after Esther finally told the King what she wanted?
   •
   •
   •
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5. (8:7,8) What was the hindrance to the King granting Esther’s request?
6. (8:9-14) How did Mordecai solve the problem?

7. (8:15-17) What was one unexpected result of this tragedy turned into celebration?

8. How does this situation help you better understand your own salvation?

9. God made sure Mordecai was in a position of influence for a reason…What position of influence are you in? Why?

10. The truth of Psalm 37:7-15 is so evident here. What is the greatest encouragement to you from these verses?
Lesson 6
“Choose Life”
Esther 7&8

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

As I teach this lesson, I like to begin with a drawing of two mountains, side-by-side, on a whiteboard, and then have everyone read together Deuteronomy 30:19.

Then I explain the background of this verse. The Jewish nation is about to enter the Promised Land. The Lord has Moses gather the Jewish people into two groups – the first group ascended Mt. Ebal, and the second group ascended Mt. Gerizim. These mountains were close enough together that one group could hear what the other group was yelling.

The group on Mt Gerizim was commissioned by God to shout out the blessings which would be theirs if they followed the Lord. The group on Mt Ebal also shouted out – but they were proclaiming the curses of God if they did not follow the Lord.

In Deuteronomy 30:19 the Lord brings the whole exercise to its rightful conclusion when He says: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursing: therefore…..CHOOSE LIFE! (caps and exclamation point are mine), that both you and your descendants may live;”

“Choose Life!” In other words, when you are at the point where you must decide whether to believe God or not, whether to trust Him or not…you are actually at the point where you are deciding whether to live or not.

At this point, if we have time, I have my group read through Deuteronomy 28 and count and list the blessings in 28:3-14.

And then we’ll read and count and list the curses in 28:15 - 29:29.
What does this have to do with Esther? Well…just like in Deuteronomy 30, all of history hangs in the balance as Esther approaches her second banquet.

Esther’s ancestors chose to believe God and enter the land of promise even when they were afraid. Would this one Jewish woman trust God? Would she “choose life” even when it appears she could probably be choosing death?

History hangs in the balance today, too. If we are as near to the Lord’s return as many think we are, then there will be Jewish men and women who soon will be faced with this same decision. Will they trust the One, True God and choose life even when it looks like they are probably choosing death?

At the end of this lesson, my class will re-read the Deuteronomy 30:19 passage, listen to the Chris Rice song: “Come to Jesus”, and then pray for the Jewish nation.

1. (7:1-4) What was Esther’s request?

Please, spare my life. She was putting the whole awful situation in the most personal of terms. She was hoping the King valued her enough to be enraged at Haman’s manipulation.

I’m reminded of wrestling here. Sometimes when a wrestler seems to be at his weakest, nearly pinned, he finds a weakness in his opponent, and FLIP! He’s on top!

Esther is showing great maturity and wisdom, which, of course, was an answer to prayer and fasting.

2. (7:5-6) What did Esther wait to say next?

This is the most dramatic moment of the whole book. Can’t you just picture Haman cringing, trying to get smaller and smaller, and edging toward the exit while she builds to this moment?
3. (7:7-9) How did the King respond? How did Haman respond? How did Harbona respond? (What does Harbona’s response tell you about Haman’s popularity amongst the people of Susa?)

- The King is furious. (Hooray!!!).
- Haman is desperate. (Boo….Hiss).
- Harbona is quite happy to point out the gallows to the King.

Perhaps Haman wasn’t as popular as he had thought! Perhaps our own opinion of ourselves is not worth much.

4. (7:10 – 8:6) What took place after Esther finally told the King what she wanted (order of events)?

- Haman is hanged.
- The King gives estate to Esther.
- The King finds out Mordecai’s relation to Esther.
- The King gives his signet ring/authority to Mordecai.
- Mordecai is made ruler over Haman’s estate.
- Queen Esther has another request – change the edict!

5. (8:7,8) What was the hindrance to the King granting Esther’s request?

The law could not be changed. An edict had gone out that all the Jews could be killed on a certain day. That edict could not be changed.

If you haven’t read the rest of the chapter yet, stop a minute here and ask yourself: “What could be done to solve this seemingly unsolvable situation?”

6. (8:9-14) How did Mordecai solve the problem?

The edict could not be changed. On Adar 13th the day of slaughter of Jews was still going to happen. But, to counteract that edict, a second one was sent out. Now the Jews were given the authority to fight back, in fact, they were given the right to fight against anyone who tried to kill them, and to take their property, too. That instantly gave them the upper hand. They had the backing of the King.
7. (8:15-17) What was one unexpected result of this tragedy turned into celebration?

Many Persian people became believers in the One, True God!

Here’s a thought: Maybe that’s why, in God’s plan, some Jews (like Esther’s parents and Mordecai’s parents) were allowed by God to stay in Babylon and not go home to Jerusalem in that first return. They were still needed in the land of their captivity to lead non-Jews to a saving knowledge of the One, True God. Maybe that was their purpose in life. Simply by being alive and trying to trust God, they had unwittingly succeeded in their original assignment from God (show the world what God was all about.)

And here’s another fun thought: Maybe the Three Wise Men who came from the east to worship the baby Jesus, five hundred years later, came from Persia. Maybe they knew of the Jewish Savior who was to come because their ancestors had come to believe in the God of the Jews during the day of Esther!

8. How does this situation help you better understand your own salvation?

The story of Esther, Xerxes, Haman and Mordecai is so much a picture of our salvation, isn’t it?

We are the captives, slaves to sin. We are helpless as an evil being seeks our destruction. But just at the last minute the decree to destroy us (which cannot be revoked) is overcome by another decree which allows SomeOne to fight for us...SomeOne to die in our place...and that flips the battle. The evil being is destroyed and we end up with an inheritance greater than any we ever could have imagined.

Jesus is that Some One. Trust in Jesus. Choose Life.

9. God made sure Mordecai was in a position of influence for a reason...What position of influence are you in? Why?
10. The truth of Psalm 37:7-15 is so evident here. What is the greatest encouragement to you from these verses?

Jews today stand in a dangerous position. It seems there is no escape for them from the edict of men just like Haman.

But a second edict has been sent out. Jesus has earned the right to fight for them, to buy them back from slavery. They have only to trust in Him, to choose life. Their enemies will not triumph! (Zechariah 12 & 13, Rev. 11:11-13).
Lesson 7

Questions for You to Answer

Esther 9&10  “The Thirteenth of Adar”

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. (9:1-4) From this passage, name two reasons the Jews were victorious over their enemies:

2. (9:5-10) Compare what the Jews ended up doing, with what they were told they could do. (8:11) Similarities? Differences? (see: 9:15&16, too)

3. (9:11-12) Why does the King again ask Esther what she desires?

4. (9:13-15) How did things look for the Jews in the city of Susa compared to the Jews in the surrounding areas?

5. (9:18-28) The Jewish celebration of Purim exists yet today.
   a. Why is it called “Purim”?
   b. Why is it celebrated for two days?
   c. Put into your own words the reason Jews celebrate Purim.
6. (10:1-3) Why did Mordecai rise to a place of such high esteem in this foreign land? (*John 15: 12,13*)

7. In what way would you like to be more like Esther?
Lesson 7
“The Thirteenth of Adar”
Esther 9&10

Memory verse for this study:
“The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

1. (9:1-4) From this passage, name two reasons the Jews were victorious over their enemies:
   1. They were willing to fight to save themselves.
   2. God had caused their enemies to fear them.

Think about it. These are the same two reasons Esther was victorious in what she did for God. She was willing to step out…to take a risk…to fight back against evil. And God was able to turn things around behind the scenes.

God is always able to take care of every situation….with or without our obedience. (Esther 4:11 “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place…”)

God asks for and wants our trust and obedience, and unceasingly works on our behalf.

He puts every one of us in places where we must decide whether or not to trust Him and be courageous for Him, just like He did for the Jews of Persia at the time of Esther. Then it is in our hands whether or not we want to be the person He asks us to be. ”…for such a time as this”. (Esther 4:13)

2. (9:5-10) Compare what the Jews ended up doing, with what they were told they could do .(8:11) Similarities? Differences? (see: 9:15&16, too.)

They were told they could assemble and defend their lives. They could destroy, kill or annihilate anyone who might attack them, including women and children, and they were allowed to take the worldly possessions of those enemies for themselves. They could do all this on Adar 13.
They did assemble and defend their lives. They did destroy, kill and annihilate their enemies. But they did not gather the plunder...they did not take for themselves the worldly possessions which had belonged to their enemies.

Why not? I'm guessing here, but I think they knew they had gained the respect and support of many non-Jews in Persia, and did not want to lose it. They wanted to live at peace with their neighbors, not be feared or hated by them. And some of those non-Jews were now also believers in the One, True God. There was no way they were going to destroy them.

A wise decision, in my opinion. It’s very smart to do what you must, but not go too far in greed. Remember, five hundred years before this, greedily seizing the plunder in the battle against Amalek (1st Samuel 15:17-19) had been the downfall of King Saul.

In Esther’s day, the Jewish people got a “second chance” against their old enemy – they got a chance to defeat the Agagites of the world and do it right - bringing honor and power to not only Mordecai (Esther 10:3), but also to all the Jews of Persia.

King Solomon, many years before the time of Esther, spoke words which these Jews might well have remembered and taken to heart: “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.” (Proverbs 24:17&18)

3. (9:11-12) Why does the King again ask Esther what she desires?

I’m not sure why he asked her...but it’s obvious there was something else she wanted. She wanted one more day for the Jews in the capital city of Susa to fight against their enemies. Perhaps she knew of the enemy’s plans to continue to harm the Jews.

4. (9:13-15) How did things look for the Jews in the city of Susa compared to the Jews in the surrounding areas?

Not only did they get one more day to fight back, but also the ten dead sons of Haman were hung on the gallows he had built for Mordecai – the very gallows Haman had been hung on, too. This was a show of power and of the King’s absolute support for the Jewish cause – which perhaps lets us assume that the Jews in Susa were facing far greater anti-Semitism than the rest of the Jews throughout Persia.
5. (9:18-28) The Jewish celebration of Purim exists yet today.

a. Why is it called “Purim”?

The word “pur” means “lot”, as in “casting the lot”, which is exactly how Haman decided which month the Jews would be destroyed. Calling this celebration “Purim” is almost making a joke out of the thought that one could simply “cast a lot” and determine the destruction of God’s Chosen People.

b. Why is it celebrated for two days even today?

Because the Jews of Esther's day fought back on two days and celebrated on two days.

c. Put into your own words the reason Jews celebrate Purim.

They celebrate Purim to remember God wins their battles for them. No matter how bleak or humiliating things might look…the LORD God fights for them, and none can defeat Him.

6. (10: 1-3) Why did Mordecai rise to a place of such high esteem in this foreign land? (John 15: 12,13)

Because he was the man God had chosen to look out after the Jews of Persia. Mordecai was, in a sense, a picture of the coming Messiah of Israel, who was willing to give up his own life in order to assure the protection of and future for His people.

7. In what way would you like to be more like Esther?

Answer this individually, if you have time in your group study. Each person may have learned something different. For me, I am struck by the fact that Esther wasn’t constantly trying and working and fretting. She simply obeyed when it was obvious it was time to obey. She was a leader because she did what was best for many people. But she wasn’t a leader at her own decision. It was God’s. She just did what she had to do when it came time to trust the One, True God.
In her simple obedience, she opened the way for a whole generation of Jews to take the next step of faith and return with Ezra in the second return to the land of Israel.

What lessons do we learn from the book of Esther?

- Who knows what the LORD will accomplish through our small acts of obedience?
- No person anywhere, or at any time, will ever bring about the total annihilation of the Jews, God’s chosen people. They will still exist on planet earth when their Messiah, Jesus, comes back again to their open arms of faith.
- Our enemy, Satan, may desire our destruction, but He has been stopped again and again by the power of Jesus, and will always be stopped. We have been given the freedom to protect ourselves as Jesus fights these battles for us...check it out in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Psalm 118:6 “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear; What can man do to me?”

It will be the Thirteenth of Never before God will ever allow His people to be destroyed!!!
Here's a short outline for a play you could do as a group:

**The Thirteenth of Never**  
*That’s The Day God Will Allow His People to be Destroyed*

A Megillot (play) Esther

**Main Characters:**
- Esther (Grows from afraid and young to mature and trusting in the LORD.)
- King Xerxes (Moves from selfish and unaware of the One, True God to a leader who submits to the greater authority of the Lord.)
- Haman (Evil and proud, influenced by Satan to strike out at God.)
- Mordecai (Humble and faithful, focused on the survival of the people of God, willing to sacrifice his own life.)

**Supporting Characters:**
- Hegai (A Persian in the royal circle who helps Esther get the throne.)
- Bigthana (A man who conspired against the King.)
- Teresh (A man who conspired against the King.)
- Hathach (A Persian in the royal circle who helps Esther communicate with Mordecai.)
- Zeresh (Haman’s wife, who seals her own doom by supporting Haman’s evil pride.)
- Harbona (A Persian in the royal circle who gladly points Haman to the gallows.)

**Non-Speaking parts:**  
Jews  
Persians  
Ten Sons of Haman

**Acts**

1. First Act – **Esther becomes Queen of Persia**
   - Party/Xerxes wants to show off his queen/Vashti is banished.
   - Beauty Pageant/Mordecai tells Esther to keep a secret/Hegai befriends Esther/Esther wins.
   - Conspiracy uncovered by Mordecai.
2. Second Act – **Haman devises an evil plan**
   - Haman honored/Mordecai will not kneel/Haman knows Mordecai is a Jew/Haman plots to kill all Jews.
   - Mordecai persuades Esther to help/Hathach conveys her messages to him.
   - First banquet/Haman’s pride/Gallows is built/Haman’s family encourages him.

3. Third Act – **Flip! God was always in control**
   - King can’t sleep/Book is read/ Haman’s life is flipped upside down.
   - Second banquet/Truth revealed/Harbona glad to tell of gallows.
   - Survival plan is concocted by Mordecai.
   - Proclamation of a future holiday.

**Themes:**
- Picture of Christ’s redemption of us on the cross.
- Picture of Israel’s future redemption at the return of Jesus.
- Picture of our ability to fight back in God’s way.
- Picture of God’s ever-present, all-powerful hand in our lives.
- Lesson to rejoice and celebrate when we are delivered.
- Begins with a banquet celebrating something which didn’t matter (even though it sure looked like it did), and ends with a banquet celebrating something which matters more than anything in the world (even though it isn’t always apparent that it does.)
- The *Thirteenth of Never* – that’s when God will allow His people to be destroyed.
Need a suggestion for your next Bible Study? How about Ephesians?

In Esther you’ve seen God’s powerful protection for Israel, the people He had chosen to introduce Himself to the world. Even though Israel as a nation is now in unbelief, He’s not done with her yet. Some day she will come to faith in her Messiah, Jesus.

In the meantime, Ephesians is all about the amazing, wonderful, church which Jesus left behind to continue to do His work in the world.

The sky is the limit for what the world can learn from the church, for what the church can accomplish, for what lives the church can touch, for the places the church can go. It’s the best thing happening in the world today. The church is a mismatched collection of once hopeless, dysfunctional people, both Jews and Gentiles, who “love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.” (Ephesians 6:24)

The church is God’s strange way of saving the world! And It’s working!

Read about the church in the Ephesians Bible Study “Strange Way to Save the World”.
Additional copies of this Bible Study can be ordered online,
at www.lulu.com,
or www.amazon.com

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