

# The Treasure Principle

## The Treasure of Influence

Esther 1:1-10:3

**Intro:** Today's message will be quite different than any I've preached before. Normally, we grab a few verses of the bible & work through them in an outline format. However, today, I am going to cover an entire book of the Bible (don't leave), making observations & applications. If you'd like to join me in this journey, you can take your Bible (seatback or online) & find the Old Testament book of Esther.

**Setting:** 2,500 years ago (486 BC) in the Persian Empire, the son of King Darius, the grandson of Cyrus the Great was preparing to invade Greece to settle an old score for his deceased father. Most of history remembers this man as King Xerxes, but he is referred to in the Bible by his Hebrew name, *Ahasuerus (uh-HAZ-er-rus)*. He is the sovereign king over the Persian Empire which is the largest empire in ancient history. They inherited, after conquering the Babylonians, millions of displaced & exiled Jews. Cyrus (Ahasuerus' grandpa) had decreed that displaced Jews could return to their homeland, & many did, but some remained scattered around the empire.

**Chapter 1:** Back to Ahasuerus, he was preparing to invade Greece by hosting a 6-month military planning summit with his military teams. He ended this summit with a 7-day party.

*"And drinking was according to this edict: 'There is no compulsion.' For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired."*

### **Esther 1:8**

Basically this was a 7-day drunken bash where anything went. On the final day, the king wanted to show off his extremely attractive wife to all his friends. He called for her to put on her royal regalia and come allow his friends to "enjoy" her beauty.

*"But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him."*

### **Esther 1:12**

Possibly concerned for her dignity, she refuses to appear before a mostly drunk crowd of mostly men. Some think she may have been pregnant with a son (Artaxerxes). But, she refused to come and this made Ahasuerus very angry (historic, legendary anger: military bridges fail due to weather = behead the engineers, soldiers "whip" the water & stab the waves with hot irons). He then met with his advisors to discuss her insubordination & they advised him to do something drastic. They were concerned that her example would lead to an empire-wide women's liberation movement of rebellion where wives will be disobeying their husbands. The logic would be, *"If the queen doesn't have to listen to the king, then I certainly don't have to listen to YOU."*

So the king demoted Vashti, the queen, and send out an edict reminding the women of the kingdom that they must obey their husbands...or else. But, now the king had no queen. He had plenty of concubines (women in the ancient world who were, basically, prostitutes on retainer), but no queen.

**Ch 2:** Ahasuerus approves a plan to find a new queen by searching the empire (25 mill women) for the most graceful & stunning woman. Narrow the search down to 400 (Josephus), & give those women 1 year at the spa, becoming as gorgeous as possible before the king makes his final pick.

Among the Jews still living near the palace, we find a man named **Mordecai**.

*"He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter."* **Esther 2:7**

Esther was chosen as one of the 400 young women who would receive a year of spa treatments in preparation to meet the king as a potential queen. Out of concern for her, Mordecai would hang out everyday by the gate of the Palace to try to keep up with her well being. After her year of beauty treatments, it was her turn to appear before Ahasuerus.

*"the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."* **Esther 2:17**

So, this is like an R-rated version of Cinderella, due to all the drunkenness and sexual immorality (accuracy of the Bible based on the honesty of the Bible). But Esther stole the king's heart and became his queen. Now, Mordecai continued to hang around the palace when he could, just to keep up with his cousin. One day, he overheard a plot against King Ahasuerus being hatched by two of his closest servants, Bigthan and Teresh. Possibly due to a loyalty to Vashit, these two planned to kill the king very soon.

*"And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was **recorded** in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king."* **Esther 2:22-23**

**Ch 3:** There was a fast-rising star named Haman the Agagite (*ah-g-uh-jight*). He was a very proud man, & as he became more famous people began to bow down & pay homage. Mordecai didn't. This angered Haman, especially because there was history between them (550 years ago, Mordecai's ancestors conquered Haman's -1 Sam). It infuriated Haman that everyone was bowing to him, but Mordecai refused. Because of the feud, Haman knew that if he killed Mordecai, then Mordecai's people would just come kill him. So, he began to formulate a plan to rid the world of the Jews. All of them!

*"Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them.'" **Esther 3:8***

So, on the basis of Haman's request, the King signed a death warrant for all Jews living in the Persian Empire. He sealed it with his signet ring, which

validated the documents of the decree. The ancient version of the pony express took these decrees to every corner of the Persian Empire...

*“Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.” Esther 3:13*

**Ch 4:** When Mordecai, the Queen’s cousin, heard about the genocide, he tore his clothes, he dressed in rags, he put ashes on his head, he mourned openly. He informs Queen Esther, begging her to go to the king to plead for the lives of her people. Simple enough, right? No, it was much more complicated than that. Esther explained to her cousin, Mordecai...

*“All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law – to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come into the king these thirty days.” Esther 4:11*

Not even the queen was permitted to enter the king’s presence uninvited. And, the penalty was immediate death unless the king (the guy who had his soldiers go spank the river and stab the waves) decided to pardon the intruder by lifting their head with a golden scepter. Mordecai responds to her fear by explaining that the fate of the Jews is her fate as well. If this plan gets carried out, she will be killed as well. Mordecai says...

*“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ‘Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” Esther 4:14b-16*

**Ch 5:** Imagine the anxiety as Esther got dressed that morning. The king had not called for her in over 30 days, was he angry with her and, if so, how will this uninvited intrusion be received? It didn’t matter, she would do whatever she had to do to protect her people! She would use the influence she had been given. She slowly approached with her head bowed low but, when the king saw her, he had favor on her and extended his instrument of grace...the scepter. He offered her anything she wanted, up to half of his entire kingdom.

*“And Esther said, ‘If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king.’ Then the king said, ‘Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked.’ So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.” Esther 5:4-5*

The guest of honor (the king) and dishonor (Haman) were there. But, for some unknown reason. Esther couldn’t confront them. The king knew that something was on her mind, so he asked again...

*“What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.’ Then Esther answered, ‘My wish and my request is: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it*

*please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.” Esther 5:6b-8 // Not a typo, it really is the same request.*

Did she get scared? We don’t know. But, there is one person who was very happy...Haman, the enemy of Mordecai and architect of the genocide against the Jews. He got to leave the Palace bragging about his private dinner with the King & Queen, while telling everybody that he had been asked to return for another banquet tomorrow. On his way home, he was filled with pride and confident in his plan to exterminate the Jews so, after seeing Mordecai (the Queen’s cousin) he decided to go ahead and order his execution. That very night, he had gallows especially made to hang Mordecai the next day.

**Ch 6:** While Haman is sleeping soundly in his arrogance at home, King Ahasuerus is laying awake in the palace. He can’t seem to fall asleep, so he asks his servants to bring the royal records (this would have been a series of scrolls dating back to his own grandfather’s reign) and read to him. Well, the section of the royal records that they bring describes the plot to assassinate King Ahasuerus that was discovered and reported by Mordecai.

*“And the king said, ‘What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?’ The king’s young men who attended him said, ‘Nothing has been done for him.” Esther 6:3*

One of the ways ancient kings would secure loyalty from people is to severely punish disloyalty, but also to generously reward loyalty. When he discovered that nothing had been done for Mordecai in appreciation for his loyalty, he needed some ideas. He asked his servants if any of his staff were close by. They said that Haman was in the building, so the king sent for him. In fact he was, because he was looking for the king’s permission to execute Mordecai in the gallows that he had already made for that specific purpose. When Haman arrived, the king asked, *“What should I do for someone I want to honor?”* Haman was already full of pride about the banquet he would be attending later with the King and Queen. He wondered silently to himself who in the world King Ahasuerus would want to honor more than him?

*“And Haman said to the king, ‘For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.’” Esther 6:7-9*

He LOVED the idea & commanded Haman to do everything he just said for Mordecai. The robes, horse, joyride, proclamation, all of it! *Personally see to it that Mordecai gets rewarded for his loyalty to the king.* Haman was humiliated. His feud with Mordecai was public knowledge & now he was leading him around on a horse declaring the king’s love for the man. He ran home and pouted until the palace servants came to get him for dinner.

**Ch 7:** After a 2nd wonderful feast in as many days, the king wanted to know what Queen Esther desired...

*“Then Queen Esther answered, ‘If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.’”* **Esther 7:3-4a**

The king could not believe his ears, who would dare threaten the life of the queen? This was the height of treason! The king was furious...Who was he? Queen Esther pointed to the other side of the table at Haman.

Haman’s stomach was in his throat by now, because he knew it was over. The queen was Jewish? How was he supposed to know that? The king, in rage and fury, walked out to the garden to get some fresh air. As soon as the king left, Haman hit his knees and begged Queen Esther to spare his life. He was weeping at her feet when King Ahasuerus returned, but it appeared to him that Haman was trying to assault the queen. Instantly he called for his guards and had them take him away to be hanged.

*“Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, ‘Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman’s house, fifty cubits high. And the king said, ‘Hang him on that.’ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.”* **Esther 7:9-10a**

**Ch 8-10:** Haman was gone, but his plot was alive and well. Because the king had given his ring to Haman to make the decree, it could not simply be rescinded. So, Queen Esther approached King Ahasuerus as before...

*“Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king...Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, ‘Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king’s ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king’s ring cannot be revoked.’”* **Esther 8:3-4, 7-8**

So, Queen Esther wrote a decree that warned all Jews about the coming attacks and gave them permission to defend themselves against anyone who would try to harm them. So, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 473 B.C. the Jews successfully defended themselves against their assailants. This monumental day in the history of Judaism is commemorated in the “Feast of Purim (Puor-em). Mordecai was promoted to the second in command over all Persia.

*“For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all of his people.”* **Esther 10:3**

#### **Observations & Applications:**

**Everybody has Influence, Use it Well:** This message is in our “*Treasure Principle Series*” because all the major characters in this story are using the treasure of their influence: **King Ahasuerus** (selfishly), **Haman** (vindictively), **Queen Esther** (generously), **Mordecai** (urgently). Each person had a measure of influence and each one wielded it in various ways for various reasons. And, just as our time comes from God and our money comes from God, we must realize that whatever influence we have comes from God as well.

*“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,”* **Psalm 24:1**

God has given us the influence we enjoy for a specific reason...

*“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* **Matthew 5:16**

**This story has a Hero, He Just Isn’t Mentioned:** We know Haman isn’t the hero, but we may be tempted to think it’s King Ahasuerus (wrathful, easily manipulated, sexually deviant) or Esther (hid her faith for most of the story, self-preserving, sexually immoral) or Mordecai (sends his cousin into the bedroom of the king, self-preserving). But, the hero of the story is someone that is never mentioned. That’s right, Esther is one of two books in the Bible that never mention God and no one ever prays (it’s implied with fasting). But, God’s providence is apparent throughout the book. He strategically ordered the people and events of the book of Esther to preserve the Jewish people and maintain the lineage of the Messiah. God is the hero of this story, even though he is never mentioned.

**No Miracles Happen in this story, but a really Big One is Predicted!** No sea’s parting, no resurrections, no water flowing from rocks...Esther would seem to be completely devoid of miracles. Although you could say that God’s providence was working in the fact that 25 million women were reduced to 1 Jewish girl who would use her influence to preserve the people of God. You could see God’s providence in Mordecai hearing about the plot to assassinate the king & the specific scroll being read that mentioned Mordecai’s loyalty.

But, there’s a HUGE miracle predicted in this story. It’s when Esther approached the throne room, a place where she didn’t belong & had no right to be. But, the king extended his scepter & lifted her head, receiving her, accepting her, loving her, blessing her & validating her place with him!

*“But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”* **Psalm 3:3 // Years ago Ashley wrote a song that describes this...**

#### **Ashley Sings - You are Welcome Here:**

**Invitation:** Just like Esther with king, we are not worthy to enter the presence, love and acceptance of God. But, he has chosen to accept us by extending, not a golden scepter, but the cross of His Son Jesus Christ. He miraculously accepts us into his presence, covered by the sacrifice of Jesus.

*“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called Children of God;”* **1 John 3:1a**

**Invitation:** God is the hero of this story because he is the lifter of our heads. Will you let him be yours? Will you turn from sin & trust Jesus? If you know Jesus, will you manage the treasure of influence according to His will?

**Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:**

- *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (2007)
- *The Gospel According to Esther* – Hershael York
- *For Such a Time As This* – John MacArthur (2012)