

Lesson 8—April 19, 2020

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 19:11-26
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Esther 3; 5; 7
PRINT PASSAGE: Esther 7:1-10

Key Verse—They hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified. (Esther 7:10, KJV)

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They impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided. (Esther 7:10, NIV)

Justice Prevails



Teacher’s Resource Kit

- Townsend Press Commentary: Teacher’s Edition
- Townsend Press Flashlight Commentary
- Bible Studies for Adults
- Bible Studies for Young Adults
- (Optional: Adults/ Young Adults Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, the participants should be able to do these things:

- Explicate the story of Esther as a triumph of justice.
- Sense that treachery will not win.
- Commit to acting justly in every situation with the assurance that good triumphs over evil.



*Key Terms

Eunuchs (verse 9)—Hebrew: *saris* (saw-reece’): “chamberlains” (KJV); court officers.

Gallows (verse 9)—Hebrew: *’ets* (āts): planks; sticks; wood; it is a structure on which to hang a criminal; “pole” (NIV).

Petition (verse 2)—Hebrew: *sheelah* or *shelah* (sheh-ay-law’): request; a thing asked for.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 4)

Preparing the Lesson

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!).
- This guide offers two options for leading your class.

- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- See page 7 for how to plan each week's lesson.
- See page 6 for a student *Personal Growth Plan*.
- See page 113 for the *Faith in 3-D* as it explains how to live out their faith in the world.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Ignoble people often seem to attain great power and wealth. What evidence is there that people will receive the recompense their evil deeds deserve? The story of Esther's triumph over Haman provides assurance that evil does not prevail.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

The law of reciprocity or the law of sowing and reaping is clearly taught in the Word of God. Simply summarized, it means that we will receive as a result of what we give or do. The Scripture makes it clear that we might receive the same thing that was given or what we need in exchange for prioritizing God's will in our lives. One of the most explicit examples of reciprocity in the New Testament is Galatians 6:7-10. There, Paul makes it clear that we will receive (reap) in kind what we have sown without respect of person. This is both encouraging and a divine warning at the same time. Giving or sowing done selflessly to please God positions us to be blessed with even more to use for His glory and for the good of others (see Luke 6:38). On the other hand, we are warned that sowing seeds of injustice and wickedness results in receiving His judgment and condemnation. We may struggle with remaining focused on this principle when it appears that the perpetrators of evil and injustice appear to prosper and continue unchecked. God's Word and His faithfulness to it are the source of encouragement and motivation needed to remain confident that justice will prevail. His Word contains multiple passages that teach the futility of the wicked to entrap and/or destroy God's people and the wicked's ultimate demise by the same means they plotted for others. Perhaps one of the most familiar of these is the example of Haman in the book of Esther.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Two of the unique features of the book of Esther is that the name of God is not mentioned in it and that it is one of the only two books in the Bible named for women. Although God's name is not mentioned, His divine presence and providence are evident. The book is named for its principal character, Esther. Its authorship has been attributed to Mordecai, Esther's adoptive guardian, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The book was probably written between 485 and 435 BC during the reign of Ahasuerus or Xerxes II of Persia. The events in this book reveal the danger that Jewish exiles who remained in Persia faced even though they had been granted permission to return to Palestine and Jerusalem. The particular incident in this lesson's printed text involving the scheming Haman—a descendent of Agag, king of the Amalekites—was shaped by a centuries-old feud between the Agagites and the tribe of Benjamin (see 1 Samuel 15). King Saul, a Benjamite, disobeyed Samuel's command to annihilate the Amalekites and their king, Agag. Samuel finally hacked Agag to pieces, and it is believed that this was the source of Haman's insatiable hostility toward the Jews. The Amalekites were eventually destroyed as God had prophesied, and His promise to preserve the Jews prevailed. In Esther, we see this covenant promise vividly illustrated as the wicked fall victim to their devices against the people of God.

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below)

1. How do we know the king wanted to honor Esther's petition and request? (verse 2)
2. What was Esther's petition and request? (verse 3)
3. What is revealed about Esther's character?
4. How does Esther's attack on Haman's character place him in jeopardy with the king? (verse 6)

INSIGHTS

The drama recorded in the book of Esther mirrors our world and nation. Racial hatred then and now led to scheming ways to discredit and annihilate others because of their ethnicity. As King Ahasuerus

was cunningly deceived, there are those in places of authority who are devoid of a true sense of justice and will bend the law in favor of those who can reward them or deceive them. This has caused despair among those who are deeply concerned about social-justice issues in their communities. The book of Esther, however, is a reputable source of encouragement and reassurance of the principle that the wicked and the unjust will be punished. Elsewhere in God's Word it is taught and illustrated that those who dig pits of intended evil for others will fall victim to them themselves (see Proverbs 28:10; Psalm 7:15-16; Ecclesiastes 10:8). Too, in the context of this lesson, it is proven that God will continue to preserve the Jews despite circumstances because of His covenant promise to Abraham. He will do the same for those who are His children by the new birth through Jesus Christ. As we survey the landscape of society, it may seem impossible that justice will one day prevail, but it will. What God's people must do is continue to build and maintain an intimate and obedient relationship with our God and trust His faithfulness to one day establish an eternal and just kingdom (see Revelation 21).

EXPLORATION

This lesson can be used to encourage and provide assurance to those in your class who are deeply concerned over the widespread occurrence of social injustice and the fact that those who perpetuate it seem to prosper unpunished. Esther is an excellent example of appropriate ways to challenge and successfully help justice prevail for those to whom justice has been denied. As you study the lesson's content, assist your students to identify these principles: (1) undergird your plans with fasting and prayer (implied in Esther 4:16, 17); (2) do your homework; (3) follow the established protocol of the system; and (4) respect those in authority. The lesson is an excellent illustration of various passages that teach "you reap what you sow." You might also choose to engage your students in a Scripture search to identify specific passages that directly or indirectly teach this principle.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on Esther 7:1-4

KJV

SO THE king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy *petition*, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

NIV

SO THE king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet,

2 and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your *petition*? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

3 Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request.

4 "For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

When we get to the events in Esther 7, several foundational events have occurred: Esther becomes

queen of Persia (2:1-18); Mordecai her uncle saves the king's life (2:21-23); Haman is promoted by the king and he subsequently plots to destroy the Jews (3:1-15); Mordecai discovers the plot and informs Esther, and she plans to intercede (4:1-17); Esther sets her plan in motion (5:1-8); Haman plots to kill Mordecai (5:9-14); the king discovers Mordecai's loyalty and honors him (6:1-4). Haman is warned of his impending doom by his wife and his wise friends and is hastily brought to the feast planned by Esther to expose his treachery. It is the second day after finishing the meal and while relaxing over wine, the king repeats his request that she reveals what has been troubling her (verses 1-2). Notably, he addresses her as Queen Esther, a hint that he officially recognizes her station in this situation. As we should when making requests before those in authority, Esther returns the appropriate deferential address (verse 3a). Her request and petition were that her life and the lives of her people be spared (verse 3b). It is obvious that the king was unaware of her nationality before this revelation. She reveals that she and her people have been sold to be killed, annihilated, and destroyed (verse 4a). These were the exact words used in the decree induced by Haman. Apparently, Esther had strategically planned her plea beforehand and had built a solid case against Haman's scheme. She balanced emotion with reason, a necessary element when seeking to correct issues dealing with social injustice. Esther made it clear that Haman had not just passed an edict to enslave her and her people, but to destroy them. She claimed that if that were the case, she would not have brought the issue before him (verse 4b). Esther's courage, respect for protocol, and authority are commendable and worthy of emulation when attempts are being made to bring about change for the better. She literally put her life in her own hands not knowing if the king would grant her request or dispose of her as he had her predecessor, Vashti (1:12). There is no explicit mention of Jewish religious rites; her call for three days of fasting prior to going before the king suggests faith and dependence on God's providential care for His people.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

How could Esther's intervention strategy be used to address an unjust situation in your local environment?

- **Young Adult Question:**

As believers, we must take a bold stand for justice when we see injustice taking place in our community. How should we respond to someone who is a nonbeliever that is committing an act of injustice in our communities?

Commentary on Esther 7:5-8

KJV

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

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

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

NIV

5 King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

6 Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7 The king got up in a rage, left his wine and

went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

8 Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.

Rather than becoming furious and dismissing her, the moment of truth arrived and Esther was asked to reveal who was responsible for doing such a thing to her and her people (verse 5). Esther exposed Haman not only as the wicked person behind this plot, but also as an enemy and a foe (verse 6). Pulling the mask off Haman revealed his true character to the king and terrified him. Where he once stood as a trusted servant of the most powerful man on earth at that time, Esther now stood. The king, filled with rage, left the banquet hall and went into the palace garden (verse 7), leaving Esther and Haman together there, though not alone. Haman seizes this as an opportunity to plead for mercy from Esther in a futile attempt to save his life. The arrogant, boastful bully is now a fearful coward. In his terrified state, he fell on the couch where Esther was reclining just as the king returned to the banquet hall (verse 8). Haman’s action was interpreted by the king as an attempt to molest his queen and he accused him of doing so. This in itself was a capital crime and further sealed his impending death sentence. Haman’s face was covered by the guards present in the banquet hall—an inferred ritual for condemned criminals. Haman’s fall is an excellent example of what can happen when attempts are made to trample others on the way up the ladder to fame, fortune, and prestige. Some of the same ones misused on the way up may be the same ones needed to help when circumstances are reversed. God will defend the righteous, though His protection is not a supernatural force field shielding them from danger. He has promised that nothing and no

one can separate His people from His love (see Romans 8:31-39; Deuteronomy 31:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Isaiah 41:10). God hates injustice (see Proverbs 6:16-19; 17:15) and He will punish it (see Jeremiah 22:13; Proverbs 22:8). He will avenge all wrongs someday as seen in Haman’s fate.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

What examples have you witnessed of schemers becoming victims of their schemes?

- **Young Adult Question:**

Consider a time when you prayed about a circumstance. Did you wait on God to use you and speak out, not wait on God and move on your own time, or just remain silent about the situation?

Commentary on Esther 7:9-10

KJV

9 And Harbonah, one of the *chamberlains*, said before the king, Behold also, the *gallows* fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

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

NIV

9 Then Harbona, one of the *eunuchs* attending the king, said, “A *pole* reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.” The king said, “Impale him on it!”

10 So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7, NIV). Haman reaped exactly what he sowed. His attitude

toward Mordecai and the Jews and his desire to annihilate them became the source of his ultimate downfall. His boasting of killing Mordecai on a seventy-five-foot gallows was apparently common knowledge among the king's servants in the palace. Harbona, one of the palace eunuchs, informed the king of this structure and its intended victim—Mordecai—whom the king had recently honored. Without hesitation, the king commanded that Haman be impaled on it (verse 9). The command was obeyed and Haman's execution was carried out, abating the king's anger (verse 10). Delays in immediate judgment and punishment of those guilty of promoting social injustices against the culturally and ethnically diverse, the poor, and the oppressed may be discouraging, but it should not cause a loss or weakening of faith in the promises of God. His longsuffering in this area may embolden the hearts of the wicked (see Ecclesiastes 8:11), but He has promised that they will not go unpunished (see Proverbs 16:5). No deed, good or evil, goes unnoticed by our omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God. Justice will prevail because He said it will. The responsibility of His people is to continue to trust and sow to the Spirit so that they will reap everlasting life in His just kingdom (Galatians 6:8).



DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

How does Psalm 9:15-16 illustrate the principle of “sowing and reaping” taught in this lesson?

- **Young Adult Question:**

As Christians, we know that justice will always prevail. How is God's wrath different from human judgment?

LIFE APPLICATION

- **Refer to Adult Book**

(See student lesson's “Your Life” section.)

— The principle of “sowing and reaping” does not only apply to doing evil, but also to doing good (see Galatians 6:8). Determine to do a good deed or give a word of encouragement to someone experiencing difficulty this week for God's glory. You will reap a harvest of blessings. Nothing done for Him is ever forgotten or ever goes unnoticed.

(See student lesson's “Your World!” section.)

— Our world is filled with Hamans among humankind. The community of faith is challenged to gain strength from the example of Esther and Mordecai to stand against injustice perpetuated by these modern Hamans. We are assured by the outcome of Esther's story that justice will eventually prevail over injustice.

- **Refer to Young Adult Book**

(See student lesson's “Your Life” section.)

— It is always important to keep the faith of God in our hearts no matter the circumstance, even when He may not always be mentioned or seem present. However, we as believers know that He is always with us.

(See student lesson's “Your World!” section.)

— In our world today, we must remember always to speak up for what is right for us, our church, and our community. God will always be with us when we choose to take a stand for justice.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, April 26, 2020, is “What Goes Around Comes Around.” The Devotional Reading is Isaiah 42:1-9, the Background Scripture is Isaiah 61:8–62:12, and the Printed Text is Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a.



Closing Prayer

Dear God, we are encouraged by Your promise that evil will reap its own rewards and that Your justice will prevail. Help us live out this truth as examples of fairness and righteous living. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY , April 20	"Solomon Makes a Just Decision"	(1 Kings 3:16-28)
TUESDAY , April 21	"Jesus Issues His Platform for Justice"	(Luke 4:14-21)
WEDNESDAY , April 22	"The Year of Jubilee Established"	(Leviticus 25:8-17)
THURSDAY , April 23	"A Light to the Nations"	(Isaiah 49:1-7)
FRIDAY , April 24	"A New Vision for the People"	(Isaiah 61:1-7)
SATURDAY , April 25	"Zion Welcomes the Redeemed Home"	(Isaiah 62:5-12)
SUNDAY , April 26	"The Lord Brings the People Justice"	(Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a)

INTERACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH

YOUNG ADULT FOCUS

This lesson plan is designed to provide a more interactive approach to the teaching of today's lesson. The focus is on student-teacher involvement. It can be formulated to use with the *Bible Studies for Young Adults* quarterly.

Materials needed:

- The movie *Defiance*
- Computers/Speakers
- Wi-Fi

Interaction—Introducing the Lesson (10-15 minutes)

- Introduce today's topic: "Justice Prevails."
- Have someone read the "Life Happens" section on page 43 aloud and then, as a class, discuss the corresponding questions.
- Share the Unifying Principle: "Ignoble people often seem to attain great power and wealth. What evidence is there that people will receive the recompense their evil deeds deserve? The story of Esther's triumph over Haman provides assurance that evil does not prevail."

Exploring the Word (25-30 minutes)

- Show the clip "Like Human Beings" from the movie *Defiance*, directed by Edward Zwick. This can be found at www.wingclips.com. Share this: "As despair and violence threaten to disband the group, Tuvia inspires the people with powerful words of unity and hope for humanity." Discuss how God can use one person to assure us that evil will not prevail if we stay the course.

- Give a brief overview of the book of Esther up to chapter 7.
- Have someone read Esther 7:1-4.
- Research the significance of the queen's calling a banquet and the significance of her request. Discuss why Queen Esther's people needed to be spared.
- Have someone read Esther 7:5-10.
- Look at Haman in this chapter and show how his attitude has changed since Queen Esther's banquet.
- Debate whether this story satisfies one's sense of justice. What evidence is there that people will receive the recompense their evil deeds deserve?
- For a brief moment, debate capital punishment and whether or not it satisfies the requirements of justice.

Life Application (10 minutes)

- Read aloud the "Your Life" section on page 47.
- God's name is not mentioned in the Mordecai and Esther story. Discuss the religious nature of this story and where or how you see God at work.

Life Response (5 minutes)

- Read aloud the "Your World!" section on page 48.
- Close in prayer and remind the students to prepare for next week's lesson.