

The Book of Esther

This book was constantly received for a part of the canon of the Scripture by the people of the Jews, whose authority herein is the more considerable, because to them were committed the oracles of God, [Ro 3:2](#), to keep them safely, and transmit them carefully to posterity. And it is a very strong presumption that they were true to their trust, that our blessed Lord, and his holy apostles, who taxed the Jews with many faults, both greater and less, never charged them with unfaithfulness herein; which, if the Jews had been guilty, they would certainly have done, and by their office were obliged to do it, for the instruction and caution of the Christian church, whose faith was built no less upon the writings of the prophets than upon the doctrine of the apostles. The penman of it is both by Jewish and Christian interpreters, ancient and modern, thought to be Mordecai; who was both a holy man of God, and a principal actor in this history; and therefore who so fit and proper for it as himself?

Chapter 1

Ahasuerus and Vashti make a royal banquet, [Es 1:1-9](#). He sends for Vashti, [Es 1:10](#), [1](#). She refuseth to come, [Es 1:12](#). He consulteth his wise men about it, [Es 1:13-15](#). Their judgment and advice to put her away, [Es 1:16-20](#). He maketh the decree of men's sovereignty in their own houses, [Es 1:21-22](#).

[Es 1:1](#)

Quest. Who was this king?

Ans. It is confessed and manifest that this was one of the kings of Persia; but which of them it was is not yet agreed, nor is it of any necessity for us now to know. But it is sufficiently evident that this was either, 1. Darius Hystaspes, as divers both Jewish and Christian writers affirm; for his kingdom was thus vast, and he subdued India, as Herodotus reports; and one of his wives was called *Atossa*, which differs little from *Hadassah*, which is Esther's other name, [Es 2:7](#). Or, 2. Xerxes, whose wife, as Herodotus notes, was called *Amestris*, which is not much differing from Esther; by whom all these things were transacted whilst he was potent and prosperous, before his unhappy expedition against the Grecians. Or, 3. Artaxerxes Longimanus, to whom the characters of Ahasuerus represented in this book do not disagree. And whereas it is objected, that by this account Mordecai must be a man of about a hundred and forty years, and consequently Esther, who is called his *uncle's daughter*, [Es 2:7](#), must be too old to make a wife for the king; as for Mordecai, it may be granted, there being divers instances of persons of greater age than that in sacred and profane historians; and for Esther, it may be said that she was his *uncle's granddaughter*, nothing being more frequent than for the names of sons or daughters to be given to more remote posterity.

An hundred and seven and twenty provinces; so seven new provinces were added to those hundred and twenty mentioned [Da 6:1](#).

[Es 1:2](#)

Sat on the throne of his kingdom, i.e. either was lately advanced to it, or rather was settled in the peaceable possession of it.

The palace; or, the castle; or, the chief or royal city, as both, Jewish and Christian interpreters render it. Shushan might be the proper name of the palace, which thence was given to the whole city. Here the kings of Persia used to keep their courts chiefly in winter, as ordinarily they were in Ecbatana in summer.

[Es 1:3](#)

The power of Persia, i.e. the mighty men; the chief officers of state, and commanders of all his forces; whom by this splendid entertainment he endeavoured to oblige and assure to himself.

[Es 1:4](#)

Making every day a magnificent feast, either for all his princes, or for some of them, who might come to the feast successively, as the king ordered them to do. The Persian feasts are much celebrated in authors for their length and luxury.

[Es 1:5](#)

All the people that were present; both such as constantly resided there, and such as were come thither upon their occasions, of whatsoever condition or quality.

In the court of the garden: the Persian gardens were exceeding large and pleasant.

[Es 1:6](#)

The beds; for in those eastern countries and ancient times they did not sit at tables, as we do, but rested or leaned upon beds; of which we have many testimonies, both in Scripture, as [Es 7:8](#); [Am 2:8](#); [6:4](#); [Joh 13:23](#), and in all other authors.

[Es 1:7-8](#)

*According to the law, none did compel, i.e. according to this law which the king had now made, that none should compel another to drink more than he pleased; which the Persians and other loose and heathenish nations used to do, though that practice was condemned by the wise and sober heathens, and among others by this great prince. Or, *no man did compel* another to drink, according to the law, i.e. as by the laws or orders of the Persians prescribed and used in their feasts they might have done, if not restrained by this law.*

[Es 1:9](#)

Whilst the king entertained the men; for this was the common custom of the Persians, that men and women did not feast together, but in several places.

[Es 1:10](#)

Chamberlains, or eunuchs; which were much in use and in favour in the eastern courts, and particularly with the Persian emperors, as ancient histories inform us.

[Es 1:11-12](#)

Vashti refused to come; being favoured in this refusal by the laws and customs of Persia, which was to keep men's wives, and especially queens, as much as might be from the view of other men.

[Es 1:13](#)

Which knew the times; either, 1. The histories of former times, what princes have done in such cases as this was. Or, 2. Things done or to be done in time; what was just and fit to be done, or what was the *law and judgment* in these cases, as the following words explain it, and how and when things were to be done. [See Comment on 1Ch 12:32](#). Times are oft put in Scripture and other authors for the things done in them, by a common figure called a metonymy of the adjunct.

So was the king's manner, to wit, to consult with them in all matters of moment.

[Es 1:14](#)

Which saw the king's face; which had constant freedom of access to the king, and familiar converse with him; which is thus expressed, because the Persian kings were very seldom seen by their subjects.

Which sat the first in the kingdom; which were his chief counsellors and officers, and had the precedence from all others.

[Es 1:15-16](#)

Memucan, though last named, spake first, either because the king first asked him; or because he was the chief of them all, either in dignity or in reputation; or because it then was, as now it is in many places, the custom for the youngest counsellors or judges to deliver their opinion first.

To all the people; by giving them an example and encouragement to contemn and disobey their husbands. It is a crime of a high nature, and therefore deserves an exemplary punishment.

[Es 1:17-18](#)

Contempt in the wives, and thereupon wrath in the husbands; and consequently strife in families; which may produce great and general mischiefs.

[Es 1:19](#)

If it please the king, which this cunning politician knew it would do.

That it be not altered; which caution was necessary for his own security; for if the queen should recover her state and the king's favour, he was most likely to fall into his displeasure.

[Es 1:20-21](#)

The saying pleased the king and the princes; partly because their own authority and interest was concerned in it; and especially by the singular providence of God, who designed to bring about his own great work by this small occasion.

[Es 1:22](#)

That all sorts of persons, not men only, (who by study or travel many times understand divers languages,) but the women also, might understand it, and therefore be inexcusable if they did not comply with it; for which end it was not only written in each language, for that writing might come but to few hands, but moreover it was published in the several cities and towns by such persons as used to publish the king's edicts. Others, *that he should speak in the language of his own people*, i.e. that men should not, in compliance with their wives, who were oft of other nations and languages, inure themselves to it, and bring their wives' language into the family; but that men should use their own proper language, and cause their wives and children to use it; this being one sign of dominion, and therefore frequent after this time among the Greeks and Romans, who, together with their victorious arms, brought in their language into other countries, and in a great measure imposed it upon them.

Chapter 2

The virgins of the kingdom being gathered together, a queen is to be chosen, [Es 2:1-4](#). Esther, nursed by Mordecai, is chosen to be one of the virgins, [Es 2:5-8](#); and preferred before the rest, [Es 2:9-11](#). The manner of her purification, [Es 2:12-14](#). She pleaseth the king, and is made queen, [Es 2:15-17](#). The king makes a feast for his princes and servants, [Es 2:18-20](#). Mordecai discovereth a treason against the king, [Es 2:21-22](#); which is recorded in their chronicles, [Es 2:23](#).

[Es 2:1](#)

He remembered Vashti with grief and shame, that in his wine and rage he had so severely punished, and so irrevocably rejected, so beautiful and desirable a person, and that for so small a provocation, to which she was easily led by the modesty of her sex, and by the laws and customs of Persia.

[Es 2:2](#)

The king's servants, for their own interests, were obliged to quiet the king's mind, and procure him another amiable consort.

[Es 2:3](#)

Keeper of the women; either, 1. Of the virgins, who are oft called women, as here, [Es 2:11-12](#), and elsewhere. So it is a synecdoche. Or, 2. Of all the women, both virgins and concubines; only the virgins he himself took care of, as requiring more care and caution, and the concubines he committed to Shaashgaz, [Es 2:14](#), his deputy.

For purification, i.e. to cleanse them from all impurities and indecencies, to anoint, and perfume, and adorn, and every way prepare them for the king's presence and service; for the legal purifications of the Jews he never regarded.

[Es 2:4-6](#)

Who had been carried away: this may be referred either, 1. To Kish, Mordecai's grandfather last mentioned; Or, 2. To Mordecai, who was then carried away, either, 1. In the loins of his parents, in which sense Levi is said *to be tithed in Abraham*, [Heb 7:1-28](#); and as those persons named [Ezr 2:1-70](#) are said to have been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, [Ezr 2:1](#), which is not true of the most of them in their own persons, but only as in their fathers' loins. Or, 2. In his own person; and then indeed he was a man of more than ordinary years. But of that [See Comment on Es 1:1](#).

[Es 2:7](#)

That is, Esther; Hadassah was her Hebrew name before her marriage, and she was called Esther by the king after it.

[Es 2:8](#)

Esther was brought, or taken, and that by force, as that word oft signifies. So great was the power and tyranny of the Persian kings, that they could and did take what persons they liked to their own use.

[Es 2:9](#)

The maiden pleased him; partly because she was very beautiful, and therefore he supposed she would be very acceptable to the king, which would be his advantage; and partly by the Divine Power, which moveth the hearts of men which way he pleaseth.

[Es 2:10](#)

Lest the knowledge hereof should either make her contemptible or odious, or bring some inconvenience to the whole nation, as things might happen. But there was also a hand of God in causing this to be concealed, for the better accomplishment of that which he designed, though Mordecai was ignorant of it.

[Es 2:11-12](#)

According to the manner of the women; who were kept so long, partly, for their better purification, as it here follows; partly, out of state, as that which became so great a king; and partly, that being so long in safe custody, the king might be sure that the child begotten upon any of them was his own.

With oil of myrrh; which is useful both for making the skin exactly clean, and smooth, and solid, and for giving strength and rigour to the body.

With sweet odours; which was the more necessary, because the bodies of men and women in those hot countries did of themselves yield very ill scents, if not corrected and qualified by art.

[Es 2:13](#)

Then thus; thus purified and prepared; and thus as it follows.

Whatsoever she desired, for ornament, or by way of attendance.

[Es 2:14](#)

Darius Nothus is reckoned to have had three hundred and sixty *concubines*.

[Es 2:15](#)

She required nothing, to show that she was not desirous to please the king, and that she was brought to the king without and against her own inclination and choice.

Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her, i.e. was admired by them for her beauty.

[Es 2:16](#)

Into his house royal; and into his bed, as is implied; to which it is not strange if she, though a virtuous person, did in those circumstances yield, considering the infirmity of human nature, and of that sex, and the state of those times, when plurality of wives was permitted, and concubines were owned as wives; and these virgins were by this action made his wives or concubines. Besides, it is not known to us whether Mordecai and Esther had not direction or a dispensation from God in this matter; it being certain that God can dispense with his own positive laws.

[Es 2:17-18](#)

He made a release to the provinces, i.e. he took off a good part of those heavy taxes which the Persian kings laid upon their people.

[Es 2:19](#)

The second time; either, 1. When Esther, with others, were brought to the king's house, as it was decreed above, [Es 2:2-3](#), which is called *the second time*, because they had taken this course once before, when Vashti was chosen queen. But there is no mention of any such former use; and by the manner of proposing it seems to have been a new project. Or, 2. Since Esther was declared queen; for though that point was determined, the king's lust was not yet satisfied; and therefore being pleased with the former experiment, he desired another collection of virgins, whom he might make his concubines. And this seems best to agree with the following words. For it is not probable that Mordecai sat at the king's gate till Esther was queen; for till then he only walked before the court of the women's house, as is expressed, [Es 2:11](#).

Mordecai sat in the king's gate; either, 1. Voluntarily, to learn the progress of affairs. Or rather, 2. By office, as one of the king's guard or ministers; being advanced to this place by Esther's favour, though without any discovery of her relation to him.

[Es 2:20-21](#)

Which kept the door; either, 1. Of the king's chamber. Or, 2. Of his court; and so they sat in the gate, as Mordecai did, who by that means contracting some familiar acquaintance with them, might make some discovery of their minds and design.

Sought to lay hand, i.e. violent hand; to kill him, as this phrase is used, [Es 3:6](#), and elsewhere.

[Es 2:22-23](#)

This may be referred, either, 1. To the writing, to note that this was written in the king's presence by scribes, who were continually present with the king to write all remarkable passages happening in the court from time to time. Or, 2. To the book, which was laid up before the king, that he might more easily and frequently peruse it for his own delight or direction.

Chapter 3

Haman is advanced by the king, [Es 3:1-2](#). Being despised by Mordecai, he seeketh to destroy all the Jews, [Es 3:2-6](#). He casteth lots, [Es 2:7](#); and accusing the Jews to the king, obtaineth a decree to put them to death, [Es 2:8-11](#). Letters issued out to destroy all the Jews, [Es 3:12-15](#).

[Es 3:1](#)

The Agagite, i. e. an Amalekite of the royal seed of that nation, whose kings were commonly and successively called Agag, as hath been observed before. It is true, he is called a Macedonian in the apocryphal additions to this book; and so he might be by his birth or habitation in that place, though by his original he was of another people.

Set his seat above all the princes that were with him; gave him the first place and seat, which was next to the king. Compare [2Ki 25:28](#).

[Es 3:2](#)

The reason of which obstinate refusal was, either, 1. The quality of the person; that he was not only an infamously wicked man, and a heathen, but of that nation which God had obliged the Israelites to abhor and oppose from generation to generation; and therefore he durst not show outward respect to a man whom he did and ought inwardly to contemn. Or rather, 2. The nature of the thing; for the worship required was not only civil, but Divine; which as the kings of Persia did undoubtedly arrogate to themselves, and expect and receive from their subjects and others who came into their presence, as is affirmed by divers authors; so they did sometimes impart this honour to some of their chief favourites, that they should be adored in like manner. And that it was so here seems more than probable, because it was wholly superfluous, and almost ridiculous, to give an express and particular command to all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, as here it was, to pay a civil respect to so great a prince, which of course they used and were ever obliged to do; and therefore a Divine honour must be here intended. And that a Jew should deny this honour, or the outward expressions of it, to such a person, is not strange, seeing the wise and sober Grecians did positively refuse to give this honour to the kings of Persia themselves, even when they were to make their

addresses to them; and one Timocrates was put to death by the Athenians for worshipping Darius in that manner.

[Es 3:3-4](#)

Whether Mordecai's matters would stand, i.e. whether he would persist in his refusal, and what the event of it would be.

He had told them that he was a Jew; and therefore did not deny this reverence to Haman out of pride, or any personal grudge against him, much less out of a rebellious mind and contempt of the king's authority and command; but merely out of conscience, because he was a Jew, who was obliged to give this honour to none but to God only.

[Es 3:5-6](#)

He thought scorn; he thought that particular vengeance was unsuitable to his quality, and to the greatness of the injury.

Haman sought to destroy all the Jews; which he attempted, partly, from that implacable hatred which, as an Amalekite, he had against them; partly, from his rage against Mordecai; and partly, from Mordecai's reason of this contempt, because he was a Jew, which, as he truly judged, extended itself to all the Jews, and would equally engage them all in the same neglect and hatred of his person.

[Es 3:7](#)

The diviners cast lots, according to the custom of those ancient and eastern people, what day and what month would be most lucky, not for his success with the king, (of whose compliance with his request he made no doubt,) but for the most effectual and universal extirpation of the Jews; wherein appears both his implacable malice, and unwearied diligence in seeking vengeance of them with so much and so long trouble to himself; and God's singular providence in disposing the lot to that time, that so the Jews might have sufficient space of time to get the decree reversed, as they did.

[Es 3:8](#)

There is a certain people, mean and contemptible, not worthy to be named.

Dispersed among the people; who therefore, if tolerated, may poison all thy subjects with their pernicious principles; and whom thou mayst easily crush without any great noise or difficulty.

In all the provinces of thy kingdom; for though many of their brethren were returned to their own land, yet great numbers of them staid behind, either because they preferred their ease and worldly commodities before their spiritual advantages, or because they wanted conveniency or opportunity for a remove, which might happen from divers causes.

Their laws are diverse from all people; they have peculiar and fantastical rites, and customs, and religion; and therefore are justly offensive to all thy people, and may either infect them with their conceits, or occasion great dissensions and distractions among them.

Neither keep they the kings laws; as is manifest by Mordecai's bold contempt of thy late edict concerning me, which being done by him as a Jew, the whole nation are involved in his crime, and are prepared to do so when they have occasion.

It is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live in his kingdom. I do not seek herein so much my own revenge as thy service.

[Es 3:9](#)

Let it be written; let there be a written edict from the king.

Ten thousand talents of silver; whether these were Hebrew, or Babylonish, or Grecian talents we cannot certainly know; but whichsoever they were, it was a vast sum to be paid out of his own estate, which he was willing to sacrifice to his revenge. The charge of the business; either, 1. Of this business, to wit, of destroying the Jews; which as soon as they have procured to be done, I will pay the money into their hands, that by them it may be paid into the king's exchequer. Or rather, 2. Of the king's business, or of the treasures, as is implied in the following words. I will pay it to the king's receivers, that they may put it into the king's treasures.

[Es 3:10](#)

Gave it unto Haman; that he might keep it as a badge of his supreme authority under the king, and that he might use it for the sealing of this decree which now he desired, or of any other, as hereafter he should see fit. Compare [Es 8:2, 8](#); [Ge 41:42](#).

The Jews' enemy; so he was, both by inclination, as he was an Amalekite, and especially by this malicious and destructive design and resolution.

[Es 3:11](#)

The silver is given to thee; keep it to thy own use, I do not desire it, I accept thy offer for the deed.

[Es 3:12](#)

Then were the king's scribes called: this he did so speedily, though it was a year before the intended execution, lest the king should change his mind, either by his own clemency, or by the persuasion of others.

[Es 3:13](#)

Which was to oblige them to the greater severity and readiness, to execute this edict for their own advantage.

[Es 3:14-15](#)

By the king's commandment; either by this decree made in the king's name, or by some particular and succeeding command, which Haman could easily obtain from the king.

The city Shushan was perplexed; not only the Jews, but a great number of the citizens, either because they were related to them, or engaged with them in worldly concerns; or out of humanity and compassion towards so vast a number of innocent people, now appointed as sheep for the slaughter; or out of a fear either of some sedition and disturbance which might arise by this means; or of some damage which might accrue to themselves or friends, who haply under this pretence might be exposed to rapine or slaughter; or of a public judgment of God upon them all for so bloody a decree.

Chapter 4

The great mourning of Mordecai and the Jews, [Es 4:1-3](#). He showeth Esther the cause of it, and adviseth her to petition the king for her people, [Es 4:4-9](#). She, excusing herself, is threatened by Mordecai, [Es 4:10-14](#). She appoints a general fast, and resolves to go in to the king, [Es 4:15-17](#).

[Es 4:1](#)

Partly, to express his deep sense of the mischief coming upon his people; partly, to move the pity of others to do what they could to prevent it; and partly, that by this means it might come to the queen's ear.

[Es 4:2](#)

None might enter into the king's gate; and therefore he might not sit there, as he had hitherto done.

Clothed with sackcloth, lest it should give the king any occasion of grief or trouble.

[Es 4:3-4](#)

She sent raiment to clothe Mordecai; that so he might be capable of returning to his former place, if not of coming to her to acquaint her with the cause of that unusual sorrow.

[Es 4:5-8](#)

To charge her; not only in his own name, to whom she manifested a singular respect, though his relation to her was yet unknown, but also in the name of the great God.

[Es 4:9-11](#)

The king's servants and the people do know, by common fame, of this received custom and law.

Into the inner court, within which the king's residence and throne was.

There is one law of his to put him to death: this was decreed, partly to maintain both the majesty and the safety of the king's person; and partly by the contrivance of the greater officers of state, that few or none might have access to the king but themselves and their friends. And many such severe laws there were in the Persian court, which profane historians relate, as that if any person looked upon one of the king's concubines, or wore any of his own

clothes, or drink of that water which he had appropriated to himself; and other such-like things, he was punished with death.

I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days; which gives me just cause to suspect and fear that the king's affections are alienated from me, and therefore that neither my person nor petition will be acceptable to him.

[Es 4:12-13](#)

i.e. Being, or because thou art, in the king's house, and an eminent member of his family.

[Es 4:14](#)

From another place; from another hand, and by another means; which God can, and I am fully persuaded will, raise up.

Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed, by the righteous and dreadful judgment of God, punishing thy cowardice and self-seeking, and thy want of love to God, and to his and thy own people.

Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? It is probable God hath raised thee to this honour for this very season; and therefore go on courageously, and doubt not of the success.

[Es 4:15-17](#)

Fast ye, and pray; which was the main business, to which fasting was only a help and a handmaid.

Neither eat nor drink, to wit, so as you use to do, either deliciously or plentifully. Leave off your common meals, dinners by day, and suppers at night, and eat and drink no more than mere necessity requires; that so you may give yourselves to constant and fervent prayers, for which your ordinary repasts will unfit you. For it is not likely that she would impose the burden of absolute fasting so long upon all the Jews, which very few of them were able to endure. And so the like phrase is taken [Ac 27:33](#), where he saith, *This is the fourteenth day that ye have continued fasting, having taking nothing.*

I also and my maidens; which she had chosen to attend upon her person, and were doubtless either of the Jewish nation, or proselyted by hers or others' means to that religion.

Will fast likewise; which may belong, either, 1. To the thing only, that as they did first, so she would. Or rather, 2. To the time of three days and three nights; for so she might do, though she went to the king on the third day. For the fast began at evening; and so she might continue her fast three whole nights, and two, whole days, and the greatest part of the third; a part of a day being reputed a day in the account of Scripture, and other authors; of which [See Comment on Mt 12:40](#). Yea, she might fast all that day too; for it is probable she went not to the king till he had dined, when she supposed she might find him in the most mild and pleasant humour, and then returned to her apartment, where she fasted till the evening.

Which is not according to the law; which is against the law now mentioned.

If I perish, I perish: although my danger be great and evident, considering the expressness of that law, and the uncertainty of the king's mind, and that severity which he showed to my predecessor Vashti; yet rather than neglect my duty to God, and to his people, I will go to the king, and cast myself cheerfully and resolutely upon God's providence for my safety and success.

Chapter 5

Esther, venturing on the king's favour, hath the golden sceptre held out to her, [Es 5:1-3](#). She inviteth the king and Haman to a banquet, [Es 5:4-5](#); and being encouraged by the king in her petition, [Es 5:6](#), invites them to another banquet, [Es 5:7-8](#). Haman's joy, but angry with Mordecai for contemning him, [Es 5:9-13](#). By the counsel of his wife he builds a gallows for him, [Es 5:14](#).

[Es 5:1](#)

On the third day; of which [See Comment on Es 4:16](#).

Esther put on her royal apparel; that she might render herself as amiable in the king's eyes as she could, and so obtain her request.

[Es 5:2](#)

The king held out the golden sceptre, in testimony that he pardoned her presumption, and accepted her person, and was ready to grant her petition.

Esther touched the top of his sceptre, in token of her thankful acceptance of the king's great favour, and of her reverence and submission to his majesty, whereof that might possibly be a usual token, and it may be, at the king's call and invitation to her to come near to him.

[Es 5:3-4](#)

She invited *Haman*; partly that by showing such respect to the king's great favourite she might insinuate herself into the king's good opinion and affection; and partly that, if she saw fit, she might then present her request to the king.

[Es 5:5-6](#)

At the banquet of wine; either, 1. At the latter end of the feast, when they used to drink wine more freely, whereas in the former part most of their drink was water. Or, 2. At her banquet; which is so called, because it consisted not of meals, which probably the king had plentifully eaten before at his own table, but of fruits and wines; which banquets were very frequent among the Persians.

[Es 5:7-8](#)

I will acquaint thee with my humble request. She did not present her petition at this time, but delayed it till the next meeting; either through modesty, or because she was a little daunted with the king's presence, and had not yet good courage to propose her request; or in policy, because she would further engage the king's affection to her by a second entertainment, and would also intimate to him that her petition was of a more than ordinary nature; and

principally by direction and disposition of the Divine Providence, which took away her courage or utterance for this time, that she might have a better opportunity for it the next time, by that great accident which happened before it.

Es 5:9

Mordecai stood not up, nor moved for him; partly, lest he should seem or be interpreted to give him that adoration which he hitherto had justly denied; partly, because by his bloody and barbarous design and practice he had put off all humanity, and forfeited all respect; and partly, to show how little he feared him, and that he had a firm confidence in his God that he would deliver him and his people in this great exigence; which he was the more encouraged to hope, because God had inclined Esther's heart to that pious and valiant resolution of interceding with the king, which he doubted not would meet with good success.

Es 5:10

Haman refrained himself from taking present vengeance upon Mordecai, to which he was strongly inclined, and which he might easily have effected, either by his own or any of his servants' hands, without any expectation or fear of inconvenience to himself, who having obtained license to destroy a whole nation, could easily get a pardon for having killed one obscure and infamous member of it. Herein therefore God's wise and powerful providence appeared in disposing Haman's heart, contrary to his own inclination and interest, and making him, as it were, to put fetters upon his own hands.

Es 5:11

Haman told them of the glory of his riches; partly to gratify his own vain-glorious humour; and partly to aggravate Mordecai's impudence in denying him civil respect, and to alleviate his own vexation caused by it.

Es 5:12

Thus he makes that matter of glorying which was designed for and the occasion of his utter ruin. So ignorant are the wisest men, and subject to fatal mistakes; rejoicing when they have most cause of fear and grief, and sorrowing for those things which tend to joy and comfort.

Es 5:13

Avaieth me nothing, i.e. gives me no content. Such torment did his envy and malice bring upon him.

Sitting at the king's gate; enjoying that honour and privilege without disturbance, and denying me the worship due to me by my place, and by the king's command; though this last and the chief cause of his rage he was somewhat ashamed to express. Either Mordecai was come, having laid by his sackcloth for this time, that he might be in a capacity of coming thither, and so of understanding how matters proceeded. Besides, this was a private fast, and so he was not obliged always to wear his sackcloth in public, during the whole time of the fast, though he did once come abroad with it, that the cause of it might be publicly known, and so come to Esther's ears.

[Es 5:14](#)

Fifty cubits high; that it might be more conspicuous to all, and thereby be more disgraceful to Mordecai, and strike all Haman's enemies with the great dread of despising or opposing him.

Chapter 6

Ahasuerus's sleep being taken from him, he commands the chronicles to be read, [Es 6:1](#). And reading of Mordecai's discovery of the plot against his life, asks what honour had been done to him, [Es 6:2-3](#). Haman coming to the king to have Mordecai hanged, unawares gives counsel to honour him, [Es 6:4-11](#). Haman telling his friends what had befallen him, is foretold of his final ruin, [Es 6:12-13](#). He is called to Esther's banquet, [Es 6:14](#).

[Es 6:1](#)

How vain are all the contrivances and endeavours of this foolish, impotent man against the wise and omnipotent God, who hath the hearts and hands of kings and all men perfectly at his dispose, and can by such trivial accidents (as they are accounted) change their minds, and produce such momentous and terrible effects! The king's mind being troubled, He knew not how, nor why, *he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles*; he chooseth this for a divertisement, God putting this thought and inclination to him, for otherwise he might have diverted himself, as he used to do at other times, with his wives or concubines, or voices and instruments of music, which was far more agreeable to his temper.

And they were read before the king until the morning, when he intended to rise out of his bed.

[Es 6:2-3](#)

He hath had no recompence for this great and good service; which might happen, either through the king's forgetfulness, or through the envy of the courtiers, or because he was a Jew, and therefore odious and contemptible.

[Es 6:4](#)

Haman was come early in the morning, because his malice probably would not suffer him to sleep; and he was impatient till he had executed his desired revenge; and he was resolved to watch for the very first opportunity of speaking to the king, before he was engaged in other matters.

Into the outward court of the king's house; where he waited, because it was dangerous to come into the inner court without special license, [Es 4:11](#).

[Es 6:5-6](#)

The king names none, because he would have the more impartial answer. And probably he knew nothing of the difference between Haman and Mordecai.

Haman thought in his heart; as indeed he had great reason to presume, because he had not yet forfeited that favour which the king had showed to him above all others.

[Es 6:7-8](#)

The royal apparel; his outward garment, which was made of purple, interwoven with gold, as Justin and Curtius relate. The horse that the king rideth upon usually; which was well known, both by his excellency, and especially by his peculiar trappings and ornaments: compare [1Ki 1:33](#).

Upon his head; either, 1. Upon the king's head; Or, 2. Upon the horse's head; which seems best to agree, 1. With that ancient Chaldee interpreter, and other Jews, who take it thus. 2. With the signification and order of the Hebrew words. 3. With the following verses, in which there is no further mention of this crown, but only of the apparel, and of the horse, to which the crown belonged, as one of his ornaments. 4. With the custom of the Persians, which some affirm to have been this, to put the crown upon the head of that horse upon which the king rode.

[Es 6:9](#)

Proclaim before him, i.e. cause this to be proclaimed, to wit, by some public officer appointed for that service. Compare [Ge 41:43](#).

[Es 6:10-12](#)

To the king's gate; to his former place and office; showing that as he was not overwhelmed by Haman's threats and malicious design, as appears by [Es 5:9](#); so now he was not puffed up with all this honour. Besides, he came thither to attend the issue of the main business, and to be at hand to assist or encourage the queen, if need were; which now he was more capable of doing than hitherto he had been.

Having his head covered, in token of his shame and grief for his unexpected and great disappointment of his hope and desire, and for the great honour done to his most despised and abhorred adversary, and this by his own hands, and with his own public disgrace; and for such further inconveniences as this unlucky omen seemed to presage to him.

[Es 6:13](#)

His wise men; the magicians, whom after the Persian manner he had called together to consult with upon this great and strange emergency.

If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews; which they were told, and was generally supposed; but they were not infallibly sure of it. Thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him: this they concluded, either, 1. By rules of policy, because Haman's reputation and interest was hereby sinking, and Mordecai (whom they understood to be a man of great wisdom, and courage, and government of himself) was now got into the king's favour, and thereby was likely to gain an opportunity of making his addresses to the king, who being of a mild disposition, might easily be moved to a dislike (if not revocation) of his own bloody decree, and consequently to a detestation of that person who had procured it. Or, 2. By former experience, and the observation of God's extraordinary actions on the behalf of the Jews, and against their enemies, in this very court and kingdom. Or, 3. By instinct and inspiration to their minds, either from God, who might suggest this to them, as he did other things to other wicked men, Balaam, Caiaphas, &c., for his own greater glory, and the good of his people; or

from the devil, who, by God's permission, might know this, and reveal it to them, who sought to him in their superstitious and idolatrous methods.

[Es 6:14](#)

He was now slack to go thither, by reason of the great dejection of his own mind, and the fear of a worse entertainment from the king and queen than he had formerly received.

Chapter 7

Esther maketh a petition for her own and her people's life, [Es 7:1-4](#). She accuseth Haman, who had determined to destroy the Jews, [Es 7:5-6](#). Haman is afraid, [Es 7:6](#). The king in his anger, [Es 7:7-8](#), being informed of the gallows which Haman had built for Mordecai, causeth him to be hanged thereon, [Es 7:9-10](#).

[Es 7:1-2](#)

The banquet of wine; so it is called, to note that it was not designed for a feast to fill their bellies, but rather for a banquet to delight and please their palates with wine and other delicacies: [See Comment on Es 5:8](#).

[Es 7:3](#)

It is my humble and only request, that thou wouldst not give me up to the malice of that man that designs to take away my life, and will certainly do it, if thou dost not prevent it.

And my people; and the lives (which is easily supplied out of the foregoing branch) of my people the Jews, of whom I am descended.

[Es 7:4](#)

We are sold by the craft and cruelty of that man, who offered a great sum of money to purchase our destruction.

I and my people; for we are all given up to his malice and rage, without any exception of my own person.

To be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: she useth variety of expressions to make the deeper impression upon the king's mind.

I had held my tongue, because that calamity had neither been irrecoverable, nor intolerable, nor yet unprofitable to the king, for whose honour and service I should willingly have submitted myself and people to any kind of bondage.

The enemy could not countervail the king's damage; his ten thousand talents, if paid into the king's treasury, would not repair the king's loss in the customs and tributes which the king receives from the Jews within his dominions.

[Es 7:5](#)

Who is he? and *where is he?* The expressions are short and doubled, as proceeding from a discomposed and enraged mind.

To do so, i.e. to circumvent me, and by subtlety to procure an irrevocable decree, whereby not only my estate should be so much impaired, and so many of my innocent subjects be destroyed without mercy, but my queen also should be involved in the same danger and destruction.

[Es 7:6](#)

The adversary and enemy of the king, and of my person and people.

[Es 7:7](#)

Went into the palace garden; partly, as disdainful of the company and sight of so ungrateful and audacious a person; partly, to cool and allay his troubled and inflamed spirits; and partly, to consider within himself the heinousness of Haman's crime, and the mischief which himself had done by his own rashness, and what punishment was fit to be inflicted upon so great a delinquent.

He saw, by the violent commotion of the king's mind and passions.

[Es 7:8](#)

Upon the bed; or, *by or beside the bed;* on which the queen sat at meat, after the manner; where he was fallen upon his knees, and upon the ground, at her feet, as humble suppliants used to do, and as the queen did at the king's feet, [Es 8:3](#).

Will he force the queen also? will he now attempt my queen's chastity, as he hath already attempted her life? His presumption and impudence I see will stick at nothing. He speaks not this out of a real jealousy, for which there was no cause in those circumstances; but from an exasperated mind, which takes all occasions to vent itself against the person who gave the provocation, and makes the worst construction of all His words and actions.

Before me in the house; in my own presence and palace.

They, i.e. the king's and queen's chamberlains then attending upon them, covered Haman's face; partly that the king might not be offended or grieved with the sight of a person whom he now loathed; and partly because they looked upon him as a condemned person, for the faces of such used to be covered.

[Es 7:9](#)

Harbonah knew this either by his own observation, or by the information of some of his brethren, who were lately sent to Haman's house, [Es 6:14](#), where they might easily see it, or at least hear of it. And this he said, either out of a distaste which he had taken against Haman

for his great insolency and barbarous cruelty; or in compliance with the king's inclinations, and the queen's desires.

Had spoken good for the king, even to the saving of the king's life, [Es 2:21-23](#), and therefore deserved a better requital than this even from Haman, if he had not basely preferred the satisfaction of his own revenge before the preservation of the king's life.

[Es 7:10](#)

The gallows that he had prepared; which stood in his own house, as was now said, and made the punishment more grievous and ignominious.

Then was the king's wrath pacified; judgment being now most justly executed upon this abominable criminal.

Chapter 8

Mordecai is advanced over the house of Haman, [Es 8:1-2](#). Esther maketh a petition to the king to reverse Haman's letters, [Es 8:3-6](#). Ahasuerus granteth to Esther and Mordecai, [Es 8:7](#), to write to the Jews to defend themselves, [Es 8:8](#). Mordecai's letters in the king's name to defend themselves and destroy their assailants, [Es 8:9-14](#). Mordecai's honour, and the Jews' joy, [Es 8:15-17](#).

[Es 8:1](#)

The house of Haman, with all his goods and estate, which being justly forfeited to the king, he no less justly bestows it upon the queen, to compensate the danger to which Haman had exposed her.

Mordecai came before the king, i.e. was by the queen's desire admitted into the king's presence, and favour, and family, and, as it seems, made one of the seven princes.

What he was unto her, i.e. how nearly he was related to her; which till this time she had wisely concealed, this being the fit season to declare it.

[Es 8:2](#)

The king took off his ring; that ring which he had formerly given to Haman for that present or any further use, [Es 3:10](#), he now gives to Mordecai, and with it that power and authority whereof this ring was a sign, making him, as Haman had been, the keeper of his signet.

Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman; as her steward, to manage that great estate for her as he thought fittest.

[Es 8:3](#)

To put away the mischief of Haman; to repeal that cruel decree, of which see [Es 3:13](#).

[Es 8:4](#)

The king held out the golden sceptre; in token that he accepted her person and petition, and that she should stand upon her feet.

[Es 8:5](#)

She useth various expressions, that she might insinuate herself into the king's favour, by such a full and repeated resignation and submission of herself to the king's good pleasure.

To reverse the letters devised by Haman; she prudently takes off all the envy and hatefulness of the action from the king, and lays it upon Haman, who had for his own wicked and selfish ends contrived the whole business, and circumvented the king in it; which she allegeth as a reason why it should be repealed, because it was surreptitiously and craftily procured.

[Es 8:6](#)

My heart will sink under it, and I shall never be able to survive it.

[Es 8:7](#)

You see how ready I have been to grant your requests, and I do not repent of my favour to you, and am ready to grant your further desires, as far as the law will permit me to do.

[Es 8:8](#)

For the Jews; on their behalf, to the governors and commanders of the king's forces, or to whom you please.

Seal it with the king's ring; I offer you my authority and seal to confirm whatsoever you shall think fit to write.

For the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse: this reason may belong either, 1. To the writing of these present letters; and so the sense is, These letters will be most effectual, being no less irrevocable than the former, and coming last will repeal the former. Or, 2. To the former letters, as a reason why he could not grant their desires in recalling them, because they were irrevocable by the law of the Medes and Persians. And this sense, though rejected by many, seems to be the truest, because here is no mention of reversing Haman's letters, which Esther had desired, [Es 8:5](#), and the king denied for the reason here alleged; and because the following letter doth not contain one word about the reversing of the former, nor doth it take away that power which was given to all rulers to destroy all the Jews, [Es 3:12-13](#), but only gives the Jews power and authority to stand up in their own defence, [Es 8:11](#), which, all circumstances considered, was sufficient for their preservation.

[Es 8:9](#)

In the third month, on the three and twentieth day thereof; which was above two months after the former decree; all which time God suffered the Jews to lie under the terror of this dreadful

day partly, that they might be more thoroughly humbled for and purged from those many and great sins under which they lay; partly, and particularly, that they might be convinced of their great sin and folly in neglecting the many offers and opportunities they had of returning to their native country, and to the free and full exercise of the true religion, which could be had no where but in Jerusalem; by which means they being now dispersed in the several parts of this vast dominion, were like to be a very easy prey to their enemies, whereas their brethren in Judea were in a better capacity to preserve themselves; partly, that their most malicious and inveterate enemies might have an opportunity of discovering themselves to their ruin, as the event showed; and partly, for the greater illustration of God's glorious power, and wisdom, and goodness, in giving his people such an admirable and unexpected deliverance. Yet God so ordered things, that this letter should be sent in due time before it was too late; for there were yet near nine months to come before that appointed day.

It was written unto the Jews; that they might understand their liberty, and be encouraged to use it for their own defence.

And to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces; that they should publish and disperse them into all parts, that both themselves and others might take notice of the king's pleasure and kindness to the Jews.

[Es 8:10](#)

Which were not employed in the sending of the former letter; but this coming later required more care and speed, that the Jews might be eased from the torment of their present fears, and have time to furnish themselves with necessaries for their own defence.

[Es 8:11](#)

To stand for their life; to stand up and fight for the defence of their lives against all that should seek to destroy them.

All the power of the people; either governors or governed, without any exception, either of age, dignity, or sex, as it follows.

Both little ones and women; which is here added, because it was put into the former decree; and to strike the greater terror into their enemies; and according to the laws and customs of this kingdom, whereby children were punished for their parents' offences; which also in some cases was allowed and practised in sacred story. Yet we read nothing in the execution of this decree of the slaughter of women or children, nor is it probable that they would kill their innocent children, who were so indulgent to their families, as not to meddle with the spoil.

[Es 8:12-14](#)

By the king's commandment; by his particular. and express command to that purpose.

[Es 8:15](#)

With a great crown of gold; which the chief of the Persian princes were permitted to wear, but with sufficient distinction from the king's crown.

The city of Shushan; not only Jews, but the greatest number of the citizens, who, by the law of nature written upon their hearts, had an abhorrency from bloody counsels and designs, and a complacency in acts of benignity and mercy; or for other reasons, of which [See Comment on Es 3:15](#).

[Es 8:16](#)

Light is oft put for *gladness*, as [2Sa 22:29](#); [Job 18:5-6](#); [Ps 27:1](#), because light is pleasant and disposeth a man to joy, whereas darkness inclines a man to sorrow.

Gladness and joy: this explains the former metaphor by two words expressing the same thing, to note the greatness of the joy.

Honour, instead of that contempt under which they had lain.

[Es 8:17](#)

A feast and a good day, i.e. a time of feasting and rejoicing, and thanksgiving, *The fear of the Jews*; when possibly they had irritated by their former threatenings, and now gave this evidence of their repentance, that they were willing to submit to that severe precept of circumcision.

Chapter 9

The Jews slay their enemies, [Es 9:1-9](#), with the ten sons of Haman, [Es 9:10](#). Ahasuerus, at the request of Esther, granteth another day of slaughter, [Es 9:12-19](#). The days of Purim made festival, [Es 9:20-32](#).

[Es 9:1](#)

In that day which was selected by Haman with great industry and art, as the most lucky day, and which their enemies had oftentimes formerly thought of, and no doubt threatened the Jews with it.

[Es 9:2](#)

No man could withstand them; their enemies, though they did and were allowed to take up arms against them, yet were easily conquered and destroyed by the Jews.

The fear of them; who had such potent friends at court, and so great a God on their side, who by such unusual and prodigious methods (whereof doubtless they had been particularly informed) had brought about such a mighty and unexpected deliverance.

[Es 9:3](#)

And officers of the king, Heb. *and all them that did the king's business*, i.e. not only the chief persons designed by the foregoing words, but all his other ministers or officers, of what quality soever.

[Es 9:4](#)

Mordecai was great, i.e. the greatest in place, and power, and favour with the king, both for his near relation to his beloved queen, and for his good service done to him in preserving his life and managing his affairs, and for those excellent abilities and virtues which he discovered in him, and especially by the disposition of the heart-ruling God.

[Es 9:5-6](#)

In Shushan the palace, i.e. in the city so called, as was noted before, [Es 1:2](#); it not being probable either that they would make such a slaughter in the king's palace, or that they would be suffered so to do.

Five hundred men; whom by long experience they knew to be their constant and inveterate enemies, and such as would watch all opportunities to destroy them; which also they might possibly now attempt to do. Part of them also might be friends and allies of Haman, and therefore the avowed enemies of Mordecai.

[Es 9:7-10](#)

Either because they were desirous it should come into the king's treasury; or because they would leave it to their children, that it might appear that what they did that day was not done out of malice to their persons and families, or covetousness of their estates, but out of mere necessity, and by that great and approved law of self-preservation, and that they were ready to mix mercy with judgment and would not deal with their enemies so ill as it was apparent that their enemies intended to do against them.

[Es 9:11](#)

Possibly with evil design to incense thee king against the Jews.

[Es 9:12](#)

What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? in which doubtless many more were slain. So that I have fully granted thy petition. And yet, if thou hast any thing further to ask, I am here ready to grant it.

[Es 9:13](#)

According to this day's decree, i.e. to kill their implacable enemies. For it is not improbable that the greatest and worst of them had politicly withdrawn or hidden themselves for that day; after which, the commission granted to the Jews being expired, they confidently returned to their homes, where they were taken and slain by virtue of this private and unexpected decree.

Haman's sons were slain before; now let their bodies be hanged upon their father's gallows, for their greater infamy, and the terror of all others who shall presume to abuse the king in like manner, or to persuade him to execute such cruelties upon his own subjects. This custom of hanging up the bodies of malefactors after their death was frequent among the Jews, and Persians also, as is well known.

[Es 9:14-17](#)

On the thirteenth day: this belongs not to the feast, but to the work done before it. The meaning is, This they did, i.e. they slew their foes, as was now said, [Es 9:16](#), upon the thirteenth day.

[Es 9:18-19](#)

Therefore, to wit, because they did their whole work upon the thirteenth day, as was noted [Es 9:17](#), to which this manifestly relates, the 18th verse coming in as it were by way of parenthesis.

In the unwall'd towns, Heb. *in the cities of the villages,* i.e. in the lesser cities and villages, which are here opposed to the great city Shushan, and those who dwelt in it.

[Es 9:20](#)

Mordecai wrote these things; either, 1. The letters here following. But that is distinctly mentioned in the next words. Or, 2. The history of these things, which was the ground of the feast; which Mordecai knew very well ought to be had in remembrance, and to be told to their children and posterity, through all ages, according to the many commands of God to that purpose, and the constant practice of the holy men of God in such cases.

[Es 9:21](#)

Because both these days had been set apart this year, the latter at Shushan, the former in other parts; and because that great work of God, which was the ground of this solemnity, had been done both upon the thirteenth and the fourteenth day.

[Es 9:22](#)

Which they used to give upon days of thanksgiving; of which see [Ne 8:10](#).

[Es 9:23](#)

Having by this means opportunity to gather themselves together upon any occasion, the chief of them assembled together, and freely and unanimously consented to Mordecai's desire in this matter, and bound it upon themselves and posterity.

[Es 9:24-26](#)

i.e. Both for the respect which they justly bore to Mordecai's letter, and because they themselves had seen and felt this wonderful work of God on their behalf.

[Es 9:27](#)

All such as joined themselves unto them, i.e. Gentile proselytes; who were obliged to submit to other of the Jewish laws, and therefore to this also; the rather, because they enjoyed the

benefit of this day's deliverance; without which the Jewish nation and religion had been in a great measure, if not wholly, extinct in the world.

According to their writing, i.e. according to that writing which was drawn up by Mordecai with Esther's consent, [Es 9:23](#), [29](#), and afterwards confirmed by the consent of all the Jews in the several places.

[Es 9:28-29](#)

Wrote with all authority: the former letter, [Es 9:20](#), did only recommend, but this enjoins the observation of this solemnity; because this was not only Mordecai's act, who yet had by the king's grant a great power and authority over the subjects of that kingdom, and consequently over the Jews, but it was the act of all the Jews, binding themselves and posterity to it, [Es 9:27](#). Or, *with all might*, or efficacy, as that word usually signifies; he pressed it with all earnestness and vehemency.

[Es 9:30](#)

Or, even *words of peace and truth*; which may respect either, 1. The form of the writing, wherein after the custom he saluted them with hearty wishes of their true peace or prosperity, or of the continuance of those two great blessings of God, *truth*, i.e. the true religion; and peace, either among themselves, or with all men, that they might peaceably and quietly enjoy and profess the truth. Or, 2. The manner of his writing, which was *with peace*, i.e. friendship and kindness to his brethren; *and truth*, i.e. sincerity; which is the more noted and commended in him, because it is so unusual in such great courtiers as he now was; compare [Es 10:3](#): or the matter of his writing, which was to direct and persuade them to keep both peace and truth, i.e. both to live peaceably and lovingly both one with another, and with all their neighbours, not insulting over them upon their confidence in Mordecai's great power, or upon this late and great success, as men naturally and commonly do, nor giving them any fresh provocations, and yet holding fast the true religion in spite of all the artifices or hostilities of the Gentiles among whom they lived.

[Es 9:31](#)

For or about those great and overwhelming calamities which were decreed to all the Jews, and for the removing of which, not only Esther, and the Jews in Shushan, but all other Jews in all places, as soon as they heard those dismal tidings, did doubtless according to the precepts of Scripture, and the constant practice of their godly predecessors in all ages, fly to that last and only refuge of seeking to God by fasting, and earnest prayers, and strong cries unto God; which God was pleased graciously, to hear, and in answer thereunto to give them this amazing deliverance. And this was that which they were now to remember, to wit, the greatness of their danger, and of their rescue from it. And accordingly the Jews use to observe the first of those days with fasting, and crying, and other expressions of vehement grief and fear, and the latter with feasting, and thanksgiving, and all demonstrations of joy and triumph.

[Es 9:32](#)

Esther had received authority and commission from the king to impose this upon all the Jews.

In the book; either in the public registers of that kingdom; or rather, in the records which the Jews kept of their most memorable passages.

Chapter 10

Ahasuerus's greatness and Mordecai's advancement.

Es 10:1

i.e. Upon all his dominions, whether in thee main continent, or in the islands.

Es 10:2-3

Accepted of the multitude of his brethren; who did not envy his greatness, as men most commonly do in such cases, but rejoiced in it, and blessed God for it, and praised and loved him for his right and sweet management of his vast power.

To all his seed; or, for all his seed, to wit, the Jews, who were of the same seed and root from which he was descended. He spoke and acted with great kindness and friendliness to them, when they resorted to him upon any occasion.