

Lesson 21

Last week we ended partway through a discussion of Esther 7:8-10. In verse 8, the king returned from the palace garden to find Haman sprawled on a couch with the Queen. In verse 9, the King learned that Haman had also tried to kill Mordecai, a man who had earlier saved the king's life. In verse 10, not surprisingly, Haman is executed on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

This entire scene is steeped in irony. Both Esther and Haman plead for their lives in Chapter 7. Mordecai the Jew initiated the conflict by refusing to bow before Haman the Agagite, but here we see Haman the Agagite falling down before a Jewish woman. And, in the end, his fate was sealed by something as seemingly insignificant as the king's sleepless night.

Some commentators argue that Esther should have interceded for Haman, telling the king that he was not actually attacking her. One writes that Esther's "character would have been more attractive if she had shown pity toward a fallen foe." But that author makes a crucial error – Haman was not at that time a fallen foe – he was a *falling* foe. He could yet do much damage while he remained alive.

And are they really asking Esther to follow the example of King Saul, who years earlier had spared the life of another Agagite against God's explicit command? Esther had finally succeeded where Saul had failed – and Esther, like Saul, was acting with royal authority. In fact, what had Mordecai said to her in 4:14? "Who knoweth whether thou art come **to the kingdom** for such a time as this?" As Queen of Persia, Esther was now Queen of the Jews, and she was carrying out a royal sentence on this great enemy of God's people.

Showing pity to Haman would have been wrong, just as King Saul's pity toward Haman's ancestor was wrong and disqualified Saul from being king. Esther killed Haman with her cleverness just as Saul **should** have killed Agag with his sword. What was at stake here was God's plan of redemption! There was only one way for Haman to exit, and Esther made sure that was how he left!

Haman died in his own trap. "The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust." (Proverbs 11:6) And the same is true today. Many are caught in a trap of wickedness and deceit, and for many that trap is their own creation. They thought they could control it and use it on others, but in the end they were the ones captured by it. Haman was not the first nor the last to die on his own gallows!

Although one might expect the book of Esther to end with Chapter 7, a very serious problem still remains. How can Esther revoke an irrevocable law? Although Haman is dead, his edict against the Jews lives on. The death of Haman is *not* the climax of the book. Haman is dead, but Haman's evil deeds live on.

Revelation 14:13 – "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Sadly, the opposite is also true. The works of the evil follow them as well. And we are about to

see how the evil works of Haman followed him after his death.

QUESTION ABOUT CHAPTER 7: Verses 2, 7, and 8 refer to this second banquet as a “banquet of wine.” Esther 5:6 referred to the first banquet in the same way. Is there any significance to this, and can some of Haman’s unseemly behavior with Queen Esther be explained by his drunkenness?

ANSWER: Back in Chapter 1, we discussed the significance of wine when it came time for Persians to make important decisions. Here is how Herodotus described it:

“Moreover it is [the Persians’] custom to deliberate about the gravest matters when they are drunk, and what they approve in their counsels is proposed to them the next day by the master of the house where they deliberate, when they are now sober and if being sober they still approve it, they act thereon, but if not, they cast it aside. And when they have taken counsel about a matter when sober, they decide upon it when they are drunk.”

So history tells us that drunkenness was an important part of any Persian banquet – and once again the historical accuracy of the Biblical text is confirmed. I am reminded of a quote I recently read: “Renowned archaeologist William F. Albright started out as a Scripture debunker in the radical German historical criticism school, and ended up carrying a Bible around with him just for convenience because things always turned out to be where the Bible says they are.”

But let’s focus on this particular banquet. Was Haman drunk? Does that explain his behavior with the Queen? Perhaps, but I suspect the events at this second banquet were moving much too quickly for Haman to have had much time for drinking.

Esther 6:14 tells us that the eunuchs “hasted” to bring Haman to the banquet, and Chapter 7 begins with the king asking the question that had kept him up all night – which we would expect to happen early at the banquet due to the king’s curiosity and impatience. If so, then Haman’s fate would seem to have been sealed before he had much time for drinking. (Remember that the “second day” in 7:2 refers to the second banquet – not that the second banquet lasted two days.)

Esther 8:1-2

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews’ enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. 2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Herodotus tells us that in the Persian Empire the goods and property of condemned criminals were taken over by the king. That appears to have happened here. The Hebrew word translated “house” may have also included Haman’s family.

The king gives Haman’s house to Queen Esther, likely either to compensate her for her grief or just to demonstrate his royal favor on her.

In verse 1, Mordecai appears before the king for the first time in the book.

Verse 1 tells us that Esther had told the king what Mordecai was to her, which likely means she told the king more than that they were related, but also that Mordecai was her advisor and her protector. It seems that, at last, the king finally knows that Esther is a Jew and that his edict had been against the Jewish people.

Some commentators find it unbelievable that the king did not already know the relation between Esther and Mordecai. In response, I would ask – have they not been paying attention? By the time we reach Chapter 9, can anyone be surprised about the cluelessness of this king? Also, Esther and Mordecai had gone to great lengths to keep their relationship secret, using a eunuch to pass messages back and forth. Even devious Haman had not known about the relation between the two.

Mordecai's relation to Esther further increases his status in the eyes of the king. In verse 2, Mordecai takes over in the position recently vacated by Haman, making Mordecai second in command to the king.

Esther also sets Mordecai over the house of Haman. This action really shows us how Esther has changed. When she was introduced to us, she was an orphan, taken in by Mordecai. Now, she is Mordecai's benefactor. In a book of reversals, perhaps the greatest reversal is the dramatic change we see in Esther herself.

Should Esther have given Haman's property to Mordecai, and should Mordecai have accepted it? If Mordecai's motivation in creating this huge problem had been to right the wrong that King Saul caused in disobeying God's commands about the Amalekites, then one might have expected Mordecai himself to obey the command. 1 Samuel 15:3 – "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Saul did not obey that command. Instead, "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." (1 Samuel 15:9)

Here in Esther, it again seems that part of that command is obeyed and part is not. But once again we should ask whether that was a command intended for Mordecai in the first place? Did God want Mordecai to disobey King Xerxes because of what had happened hundreds of years earlier back in 1 Samuel 15?

If so, how can we reconcile that with the much more recent command in Jeremiah 29:7 – "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Hadn't all of the trouble here started after Mordecai disobeyed that explicit command in Jeremiah 29 that was made to all of the exiles, including himself? Was Mordecai seeking the peace of the city when he stubbornly refused to honor Haman?

Why is Mordecai promoted to Haman's vacant office? One possibility is that Mordecai's advancement is meant to compensate Esther for the grief she suffered because of Haman's decree. In that case, it is Esther who is being compensated, not Mordecai.

Another possibility goes back to our earlier theory that Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman because he felt Haman had received the promotion unjustly, and that it should have been his for saving the king's life. In that case, Xerxes' elevation of Mordecai would simply be righting the wrong that had led to all the unpleasantness in the first place. (But that view seems doubtful in light of what we have said about the ancient racial hatred being the reason why Mordecai would not honor Haman – although perhaps Mordecai had more than one reason!)

Yet another possibility, and likely the best answer, is that Mordecai's promotion represents a further reward for his deliverance of the king from the assassination plot. If so, it might seem overly generous. Overhearing a conversation would not necessarily make one qualified to be a chief administrator. But, according to Herodotus, Xenagoras was made governor of all Cilicia as a reward for saving the life of the king's brother during a brawl. Here the reward was for saving the life of the king himself – a policy the king certainly wanted to encourage!

The transfer of the signet ring is somewhat different here than in the case of Haman. Haman had not received the ring when installed in office, but only when the king commissioned him to write the edict concerning the Jews in 3:10. Here, however, the signet ring is transferred as a sign of office. All the power eventually granted to Haman with the signet ring is immediately given to Mordecai, empowering him to do what is necessary to overturn Haman's edict.

Although there are certainly some key differences, I think the text is inviting us to compare Mordecai with Joseph. Both received a signet ring from the king (Genesis 41:42); both are Israelites residing in a foreign land as exiles; both are threatened by the authorities; both are promoted to second-in-command; both use their authority to secure the salvation of their people. Earlier we also looked at some similarities between Esther and Joseph. To the careful student of the Bible, these similarities with Joseph are an unmistakable sign that God is acting behind the scenes here.

Haman had sought to publicly humiliate and kill Mordecai, but now ironically – and in a great reversal – Haman is dead and Mordecai has taken his place both in the palace and in Haman's own home.

Esther 8:3-6

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, 5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Although Esther had saved the Jews from Haman, Haman's handiwork remained in the form of an

irrevocable sentence of death against the Jews. She falls at the king's feet and pleads with him to avert Haman's evil plan.

Some understand these verses as describing a second time at which Esther risked her life by approaching the king unsummoned – and we do see the king hold out his scepter to her in verse 4.

But, a better view is that verse 3 is just a continuation of the scene in verses 1-2, which would mean that the scepter here is just an encouragement by the king for Esther to rise and speak. This latter view seems better because, unlike verse 1, verse 3 does not provide a time frame (“on that day”), and verse 3 says “Esther spoke” rather than “Esther entered.” Esther here does not seem to have left the king's presence, and so this is not another case where she is appearing unsummoned.

Verse 3 is the first time since 3:10 that Haman has been specifically identified as “Haman the Agagite.” Haman is mentioned by name 44 times in Esther, but he is identified as an Agagite only four times – each time in the context of his plot against the Jews. This supports, and we might even say confirms, the view that the animosity between Haman and Mordecai was due to racial hatred. Verse 7 will again refer to Mordecai as “Mordecai the Jew.”

In verse 5, Esther again stresses the ethnic dispute that led to the edict – Haman the Agagite sought to destroy the Jews – perhaps hoping that the king would see that he had been used by Haman to further Haman's own personal agenda against the Jews.

Once again, Esther must proceed very carefully. In Chapter 7, Esther could present the matter as one of personal insult to the king, and an attempt to swindle him. Here, however, the king's honor is no longer at issue. Indeed, it might be seen as dishonorable for the king to rescind an order he had already signed into law.

Esther seems to be safe, and Mordecai seems to be safe – but Esther's people are definitely not safe. This second appeal to the king may have taken more courage than the first. The king had a personal interest in the first appeal (the life of his queen and the reward to Mordecai for saving his life), but he had no personal interest in saving the other Jews (unless he had believed Esther's argument about their financial worth!). In fact, Xerxes had reversed the policies of religious tolerance of his predecessors and destroyed many temples of Marduk in favor of his own Zoroastrian philosophy. Why would he help the Jews?

Esther asks the king in verse 5 to issue an order revoking the letters issued by Haman. Notice that Esther did not use the word “law” but rather the word “letters,” perhaps hoping that the king might determine that the edict against the Jews was not really a royal edict at all and thus revocable.

Also, she does not use the word “overturn,” but rather uses the word “recall.” Also, as Esther describes it, the letters are not the king's letters – they are Haman's letters, and Haman is an Agagite. Perhaps Haman's letters could be recalled even if the king's law could not be overturned. Can't we find a loophole somewhere? Esther suggests three herself!

Should the legal appeal fail, Esther adds a personal appeal in verse 6. The destruction of her people would be an unbearable tragedy for the queen herself. If the king truly loves her, would he not desire to spare her such heartache?

Does Esther's statement that she does not want to "see" the destruction of her people imply that she expects to escape the destruction herself? Not necessarily. First, the phrase "to see" or "look upon" can be synonymous for "experience."

Also, unless Esther expected to be the first person executed, she would surely be forced to witness the destruction of her people if the decree were to go into effect.

In 7:3-4, she speaks as if she expected to be included in the destruction, and Haman's death has not changed the situation. No explicit decree has been issued exempting Esther from the slaughter. As unlikely as it might seem that she would be slain, it is still a legal possibility, and one that Esther can use to her advantage.

Esther 8:7-8

<p>7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.</p>

The king's statement in verse 7 that Haman had been executed because he laid his hand upon the Jews is not technically correct. Haman had been executed, not because he had attempted to lay his hand upon the Jews, but because he had attempted to lay his hands upon one Jew in particular – Queen Esther. Xerxes is rewriting history a bit, most likely to make the point that he has already done his part.

At the end of verse 8, the king responds to Esther's suggestion that the letters be recalled. The king reminds her that no writing sealed with the king's ring can be recalled. This statement serves two purposes – it explains why Esther's suggestion will not work, and it explains why the king's suggestion will work.

The law had been sealed with the king's ring and thus could not be revoked. So what then could be done? Another edict could be written, and in this one they could write as they pleased with regard to Jews. How do you reverse an irreversible law in a book of reversals? Simple. You write a second irreversible law!

We are about to see a parallel to what happened in Chapters 3 and 4, but here the tables are turned. Now the Jews will destroy their enemies rather than be destroyed by them.

As before, the king is unwilling to take any action on his own but instead turns the writing of the edict over to someone else – but this time it is to Mordecai rather than to Haman.

One commentator says that the Hebrew words used in verse 7-8 "strongly suggest that the words are spoken in a sharp and exasperated tone of voice." Most of that tone is lost in the English translation. A better translation might be, "Now look here. I have given Esther the house of Haman. You, you write about the Jews as you like," or "Look! This is what I have done for you! Not only

can you not expect me to do more, but I cannot do more!”

Xerxes’ reaction fits well with what we know about him. For starters, he wants the entire thing buried so that his own role will be covered up. In short, he washes his hands of the matter.

Also, he does not like being in the position where he is bound by what Haman did and unable to change it. So, as usual, he turns the entire problem over to someone else. Xerxes may have failed in many areas – but he certainly knew how to delegate!

Esther 8:9-10

9 Then were the king’s scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus’ name, and sealed it with the king’s ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:

The 23rd day of the third month in verse 9 was 2 months and 10 days after Haman’s edict in 3:12, which occurred on “the thirteenth day of the first month.”

This time span could itself be significant: two months and ten days is seventy days. As we know from our study of Daniel, seventy is a significant Biblical number, being the product of two numbers that represent perfection and completion, seven and ten. The number here is a literal 70 days, as was the 70 years of the exile – but it is possible that a figurative meaning was also intended.

The month of Sivan is mentioned only here in the Old Testament. The Babylonian month names were adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian exile. And we have seen that they also adopted Babylonian names for themselves.

Also, for those who keep track of such things (and you know who you are!), verse 9 is the longest verse in the Bible.

What we are seeing in these final chapters parallels and reverses what we saw in the opening chapters. There is, however, one exception in verse 9. The second edict was translated into the language of the Jews, whereas Haman had no such concern with the first edict.

The terms describing the types of horses used to distribute the edict in verse 10 are difficult to translate. In fact, the Hebrew text simply transliterates the Persian terms into Hebrew characters. Various translations include “race horses,” “swift dromedaries,” and “post horses.” Taken together, the words likely mean that the very best royal-bred horses were used.

The text takes a significant shift at this point. From the time where Mordecai first approached

Esther about petitioning the king in Chapter 4, the focus has been on Queen Esther and her plan to get the king to reverse his decree. But from this point on, there will be greater emphasis on Mordecai's actions. In fact, Esther is not mentioned at all from 8:9 to 9:12, where the king asks her what more she desires.

Esther 8:11-13

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, 12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. 13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

“To destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish” is the same phrase found in Haman's original decree (3:13), but here the Jews are the ones doing the destroying rather than the target of the destruction. They were being allowed by the king to defend themselves against any that might attack them.

The two decrees operated together to create in effect a legalized civil war between the Jews in Persia and the Persians hostile to the Jews. How many such Persians were there? The number of Persians hostile to the Jews may have decreased now that Haman was dead and Queen Esther was known to be a Jew, but as we will soon see, some certainly remained.

There is something of a letdown in this outcome: after more than two months of deliberation, is this the best they could come up with? Surely the Jews would have defended themselves, even without such an edict.

But the decree is not so empty as it might first appear. Its chief provision is to give the Jews the right to “assemble” (“gather themselves together” in the KJV). The Hebrew term used here often means to muster an army. While Haman's decree is not revoked, in verse 11 the Jews are given permission to form armies to defend themselves against anyone who dares to attack them.

Without such official sanction, the process of assembling an army would have been viewed as an act of rebellion. It also appears that the Persian army will not take part in the action against the Jews, but it is not obvious that they were ever expected to participate.

As before, the decree is publicized throughout the empire. Anyone who might be tempted to follow the first edict would now know that the Jews had permission and would be ready to defend themselves.

Who are the children and the women in verse 11? Are they the children and women of the Jews, or are they the children and women of those who would attack the Jews?

Some argue that the “women and children” are part of the compound direct object of the verb

“attack,” which would mean that the decree is giving the Jews permission to destroy any armed forces that would attack the Jewish women and children. But apparently that is a minority view among Hebrew scholars, with most arguing that the text gives the Jews permission to destroy the women and children of any who would attack them.

This second view (which has been called the “almost unanimous” and “standard, almost universally accepted” view) makes more sense from the context. Why? Because then the second edict would be giving the Jews the same power that had been pronounced against them in 3:13. “The text needs to be interpreted as it stands, rather than be watered down to accommodate modern moral standards.”

But should we be troubled by the fact that the Jews were given permission to kill women and children?

First, having permission to do so and doing so are two different things, and later, when the body count is given, only “men” are mentioned (9:6, 15). (Although, the final count of 75,000 dead in 9:16 refers more generally to “enemies.”) Mordecai’s decree also gave the Jews permission to keep the plunder, but we will be told three times in Chapter 9 that the people did not take any plunder.

Second, remember that Haman had authorized the Persians to kill the Jewish women and children in 3:13. That is, Haman the Agagite tried to destroy the Jews in the same manner that the Jews now seek to destroy them.

Third, we need to remember the historical basis for this conflict with Haman the Agagite. God’s command to King Saul in 1 Samuel 15:3, “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man **and woman, infant and suckling**, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”

King Saul had been commanded to destroy the women and the children of the Amalekites. Haman’s decree had attempted to reverse God’s own decree of destruction against the Amalekites. Would God himself be reversed in this book of reversals?

Did God really order Saul to kill the women and the children? Yes – and Saul was punished when he disobeyed that order. And if Saul had obeyed, Haman might not have been around to cause trouble for God’s people hundreds of years later. And this situation is not unique—women and children also perished in the flood. In fact, every young child on earth at the time perished in the flood.

Although it may be hard for those who are suffering to discern the difference, there is a big difference between suffering because you are being punished for an evil action and suffering as a consequence of someone else’s evil action.

When people ask why God allows suffering, they are referring to suffering in the second category – suffering that comes as a consequence of evil rather than suffering as punishment for evil. Why does God allow suffering as a consequence of evil? Because God has given us free will and because man has used that free will to rebel against their creator – you put those two things together, and suffering is the inevitable result.

What does the Bible say about this distinction? The Bible is very clear that suffering as punishment is limited to the one who deserves the punishment. For example, men and babies died in the flood – they both suffered, and yet the men were suffering due to punishment for their wickedness, while the babies were suffering as a consequence of their parents' wickedness. How do I know that?

Deuteronomy 24:16 – “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”

Jeremiah 31:29-30 – “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.”

Ezekiel 18:20 – “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”

Although Jeremiah tells us that this principle is true under the New Covenant, Deuteronomy and Ezekiel tell us it was also true under the Old Covenant. The people of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's day were confused about this – they thought they were being punished for the sins of their parents. They were not; instead, they were suffering the consequences of the sins of their parents.

Our God is a just God – and a just God does not punish me for something someone else did. Does that mean I won't suffer because of what they did? No – that sort of suffering is inescapable in this world.

Does God punish people today (present tense) for the sins they commit? Yes. How do I know that? Paul and Peter tell us about one way in which God punishes sins today.

Romans 13:3-4 – “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

1 Peter 2:14 – “Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”

But, of course, Romans 3:23 reminds us that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages for that sin is death. Absent Christ, we would all face that punishment, but the good news of the gospel is that Jesus' own death has spared us from that punishment.

Isaiah 53:5 – “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die?” Yes, that is the rule, and it has been the rule since Genesis 2:17. But Jesus has saved his faithful followers from that rule by his perfect sacrifice on our behalf. With his stripes, we are healed.

Do I understand all there is to know about the commands by God in the Old Testament to kill children? No, I do not, and I don't think anyone else does either. But there is one thing I understand perfectly and completely about such commands – they can be understood only in light of Jesus Christ and in light of God's love for the world in sending his only begotten son to die on a cross. If God commanded it, then it was good and it was part of his plan to bless the entire world through Jesus Christ. That much I know with absolute certainty. I quote Pascal:

“Not only do we only know God through Jesus Christ, but we only know ourselves through Jesus Christ; we only know life and death through Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ we cannot know the meaning of our life or our death, of God or of ourselves.”

So if you are struggling to understand something about God in the Old Testament, your answer lies in the New Testament. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) Not only did Jesus rise from the death—he changed the meaning of death. Trying to understand death and suffering in the Old Testament apart from Jesus in the New Testament is a hopeless effort. No one understands suffering more than Jesus.

Why the command to kill everyone in 1 Samuel and why the same command here in Esther? (Although here in Esther it applies only to those who attack the Jews.) In both cases, the continuance of God's plan of redemption was at risk. God was working to bring a worldwide blessing through the Jewish people, and no one and nothing could be allowed to stop that plan. God saw the Amalekites as a threat, and God commanded their total destruction. That command was not obeyed, and, as a result, God's people were once again on the brink of extinction due to the Amalekites.