

PARTS OF A FAMILIAR STORY

“The events that followed in rapid succession,—**the appearance of Esther before the king**, the marked **favor shown her**, the **banquets of the king and the queen with Haman** as the only guest, the **troubled sleep of the king**, the **public honor shown Mordecai**, and the **humiliation and fall of Haman** upon discovery of his wicked plot against the Jewish people,—**all these are parts of a familiar story**. In a marvelous manner God wrought in behalf of his penitent people; and a counter-decree issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives, was rapidly communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers who were ‘hasted and pressed on by the king’s commandment.’ ‘And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.’

“On the day appointed for their destruction, ‘the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.’ **Angels that excel in strength had been commissioned by God to protect his people** while they gathered themselves together, and ‘stood for their lives.’

“The trying experiences that came to God’s people in the days of Esther, **were not peculiar to that age alone**. The Revelator, looking down the ages to the close of time, declared by inspiration, ‘The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ In the near future we shall see these words fulfilled, as the Protestant churches unite with the world and with the papal power against commandment-keepers. The same spirit that actuated those who persecuted the true church in ages past, will lead Protestants to pursue a similar course toward those who will maintain their loyalty to God. Church and state are now making preparations for the last great conflict.

“**The decree which is to go forth against the people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther**. The Protestant world today see, in the little company keeping the Sabbath, a **Mordecai** in the gate. His character and conduct, expressing reverence for the law of God, are a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord, and are trampling upon his Sabbath; the unwelcome intruder must by some means be put out of the way.

“The same masterful spirit that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey his law. Satan will excite indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church-members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, they will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a ‘thus saith the Scriptures’ to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws. Those who fear God cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. On this battle-field comes the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Now, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate his truth and his people.

“Mordecai was advanced to the position of honor formerly occupied by Haman. He was ‘next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren;’ and he sought to promote the welfare of his people. Thus did God bring his chosen people once more into favor at the Medo-Persian court, making possible the carrying out of his purpose to restore them to their own land. But it was not until several years later, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, **the successor of Xerxes the Great**, that any considerable number returned to Jerusalem to assist their brethren in the restoration, under the leadership and spiritual watch-care of Ezra.” *Review and Herald*, January 23, 1908.

“Under the favor shown them by **Cyrus**, nearly **fifty thousand** of the children of the captivity had taken advantage of the decree permitting their return. These, however, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia, were but a mere remnant. The great majority of the Israelites had chosen to remain in the land of their exile rather than undergo the hardships of the return journey and the re-establishment of their desolated cities and homes.

“A score or more of years passed by, when **a second decree**, quite as favorable as the first, was issued by **Darius** Hystaspes, the monarch then ruling. Thus did God in mercy provide another opportunity for the Jews in the Medo-Persian realm to return to the land of their fathers. The Lord foresaw the troublous times that were to follow during the reign of **Xerxes,—the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther**,—and He not only wrought a change of feeling in the hearts of men in authority, but also inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return.

“‘Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north,’ was the message given the scattered tribes of Israel who had become settled in many lands far from their former home. ‘I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.’ Zechariah 2:6-9.” *Prophets and Kings*, 598, 599.

“Occasions of indulgence such as are pictured in the first chapter of Esther, do not glorify God. But the Lord accomplishes His will through men who are nevertheless misleading others. If God did not stretch forth His restraining hand, strange presentations would be seen. But **God impresses human minds to accomplish His purpose, even though the one used continues to follow wrong practices. And the Lord works out His plans through men who do not acknowledge His lessons of wisdom. In His hand is the heart of every earthly ruler, to turn whithersoever He will, as He turneth the waters of the river.**

“Through the experience that brought Esther to the Medo-Persian throne, God was working for the accomplishment of His purposes for His people. **That which was done under the influence of much wine worked out for good to Israel.**” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 3, 1139.