

Sunday School

ESTHER'S ZEAL FOR HER PEOPLE

International Sunday School Lesson for June 13, 1948

GOLDEN TEXT: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"—Esther 4, 14.

Lesson Text: Esther 4: 10-17

The story of Esther is probably familiar to all. The king of Persia, Ahasuerus, known in history as Xerxes, returned

Persia after a disastrous campaign into Greece. Soon thereafter he gave a feast to honor the nobles and princes of his kingdom. At the same time, the queen, Vashti, entertained the ladies of the court. While these two feasts were in progress, the king commanded the queen to appear before the princes in order that they might admire her beauty, but she refused to do so. Such an affront to the king, which enraged him, could not go

unnoticed and the princes urged him to divorce her on the grounds that if the queen would not obey the king, the princes could not expect their wives to obey them. The king consented and, in order to find a new queen, had the fairest maidens of the land in Shushan assembled from which he could choose.

In Shushan there lived a Jewish exile, Mordecai, one of the courtiers of the king, whose cousin, named Hadassah he had adopted and whose Persian name was Esther. She was fair and beautiful, and Mordecai entered her into the beauty contest and had the joy of seeing her crowned queen, although the king was not told that she was a Jewess.

One day, while waiting near the palace gate for news of his cousin, now the queen, Mordecai overheard of a plot to assassinate the king and reported it to the two guilty chamberlains who were hanged. Haman, another courtier, is promoted to a position above all the other princes and because Mordecai refused to bow down to him, Haman persuades the king to sign a decree ordering the slaying, on a certain day a year hence, of all the Jews in his kingdom.

Mordecai hears of the decree and, in order to attract Esther's attention, sits at the gate of the palace in sackcloth and with ashes on his head—a sign of deep mourning. Messages pass between the queen and Mordecai and Esther is persuaded to make an appeal for the Jews to the king. Realizing the risk of asking an audience with the king unsolicited, Esther asks all the Jews to fast and pray for her safety and, after three days of preparation, she approached the king, who extended the golden scepter, promising to grant her any request, even to giving her half of his kingdom. Esther simply asked the king and Haman to a banquet.

At the banquet, when the king further inquired of her desires, she invited them to another banquet the next day. Haman was delighted with these honors from the queen. When he discussed with his wife the insolence of Mordecai, she and some friends advised him to build a high gallows, for one in such a high position could certainly manage the destruction of his enemies.

That night the king could not sleep and had a servant read the chronicles of his reign to him. Thus, he heard for the first time of the plot against his life and realized that no reward had been granted Mordecai. At that moment, Haman presented himself outside the king's chamber. When escorted into Ahasuerus' present, the king asked him what should be done to the man "the king delighteth to honour." Thinking that the king referred to himself, Haman advised the king to allow the honored one to wear the royal robes, ride the king's horse, wear the king's crown and be led through the

streets by the king's most noble prince.

Imagine Haman's surprise and chagrin when the king commanded Haman to thus honor Mordecai. Haman, of course, dared not disobey but when he had finished his unpleasant task, he went home with his head covered in deep mourning.

When, at the second banquet of the queen's, Ahasuerus asked Esther what she desired, she requested the king to let her life be spared and the lives of her people, explaining that they were all doomed by the king's decree. When he learned that it was through Haman's machinations that he had been persuaded to sign such a decree, the king was terribly angry. When he further learned of the high gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai, the king ordered Haman to be hanged on the very gallows. Mordecai was then promoted to the office Haman had held and the decrees which saved the Jews were dispatched all over the kingdom.

When peace had come, the Jews from all over the kingdom gathered to celebrate their first Feast of Purim, a celebration still observed to commemorate their deliverance from their enemies. The message of the book of Esther is one of personal courage and loyalty. Esther's willingness to sacrifice her life for her people reminds us of Jesus, another Jew, who died not only for his own people but for all who accept him.

Breeding Program Making Progress

The artificial cattle breeding program is making rapid progress in North Carolina, reports J. F. Brown, extension dairy specialist at State College.

He says there are now 23 organized artificial breeding associations in the State with a total membership in excess of 2,500, and it is estimated that more than 20,000 cows will be bred under the program this year.

Reports show that in January and February 2,258 cows were bred by 21 associations. Two associations began operating in

March, and all others except those in Forsyth, Yadkin, and Davie counties began in January.

Despite the fact that most of the technicians are new, reports as of April 1 indicate that the non-return percentage by technicians on January 1 services will average around 44 per cent, which is considered a fairly good

figure with so many new men on the job. Reports already indicate improvement in the percentage for February 1 services.

All counties doing artificial breeding have been contacted by one or more extension dairymen and given detailed assistance with the overall program.

FOREIGN BROKERS
Congressional investigators estimate that foreign brokers profited by \$64,500,000 to \$129,000,000 speculating on United States commodity markets during 1946 and 1947 and are asking "tighter tax reins" to bar American and alien grain speculators from dodging a profits tax.

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at 2 O'CLOCK

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