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# John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible

## Esther 8

### Introduction

#### INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 8

This chapter relates the gifts Ahasuerus gave to Esther and Mordecai, Esther 8:1, the suit Esther made to him to reverse the letters for the destruction of the Jews, Esther 8:3, which, though it could not be formally granted, was in effect done by letters sent to the Jews, giving them power to rise in their own defence, and slay their enemies, Esther 8:7, the consequence of which, and the advancement of Mordecai, were matter of great joy to the Jews, Esther 8:15.

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### Verse 1

**On that day did the King, Ahasuerus, give the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, unto Esther the queen,**.... That, and all the goods in it, and estate belonging to it; which being confiscated to the king, he gave to Esther, who would have been the sufferer, had his scheme taken place; so the Targum adds, "and the men of his house, and all his treasures, and all his riches:"

**and Mordecai came before the king;** was introduced into his presence, became one of his privy counsellors, one of those that saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom, Esther 1:14

**for Esther had told what he was unto her;** what relation he stood in to her; her uncle, according to the Vulgate Latin version, and so Aben Ezra and Josephus, but wrongly, for she was his uncle's daughter; so that they were brother's children, or own cousins, see Esther 2:7.

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### Verse 2

**And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai,**.... which, with the Persians, was a token of the strongest affection and strictest friendship<sup>F26</sup>; the Targum calls it his signatory ring, that with which he signed laws, edicts, letters, patents, &c. and so hereby made him keeper of the seals:

**and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman;** appointed him her steward of the estate of Haman, the king had given her.

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### Verse 3

**And Esther spake yet again before the king,**.... Went into his presence, without being called for as before, with a new petition:

**and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears;** the more to work upon his

affections, and move him to grant her request; which she might be the more encouraged to hope for, through the success she already had:

**to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews;** to revoke, abolish, and make void a mischievous scheme Haman had devised against the Jews, to root out the whole nation of them in the Persian empire.

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#### Verse 4

**Then the king held out the golden sceptre towards Esther,**.... As a token that she had not incurred his displeasure by coming into his presence without leave, and that she was admitted to speak and make her request; see Esther 5:3

**so Esther arose and stood before the king;** she rose from the ground on which she lay prostrate, and stood upon her feet, in an humble manner, to make her speech, and present her petition to the king.

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#### Verse 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,**.... This heap of phrases, which signify much the same thing, are used to work upon the king's affections, and to show how submissive she was to his will:

**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.** She wisely takes no notice of any concern the king had in them, but suggests as that she looked upon them as forged by Haman, who put the king's name and seal to them, without his knowledge and consent.

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#### Verse 6

**For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?**.... I cannot bear it; it will break my heart; I shall die to see all my people massacred throughout the realm; the thought of it is shocking and shuddering; to see it, intolerable: or "how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" the same thing in different words, and somewhat more express and explanative. She explains the evil coming upon her people of the utter destruction of them, not barely an oppression, but an extermination of them; and she makes use of a word expressive of their relation to her, as more endearing, being her kindred; she and they being, as it were, of the same family, and with whom she could not but sympathize in distress.

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#### Verse 7

**Then the King Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew,**.... Who was present at the same time, either at the desire of Esther, or by virtue of his office, being now one of those that saw the king's face, Esther 8:1,

**behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman;** See Gill on Esther 8:1,

**and him they have hanged upon the gallows;** which he had prepared for Mordecai, Esther 7:10

**because he laid his hand upon the Jews;** intended to do so, and had prepared for it, and wrote letters, ordering their destruction on such a day. Now as the king had shown favour to Esther and Mordecai, and had punished Haman for contriving mischief against them and the Jews, which was publicly known, the people would be fearful of doing anything against them, lest they should incur the king's displeasure, and therefore might

make themselves easy about this matter; but, however, to give them all the satisfaction he could, he directs them to do as follows.

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## Verse 8

**Write ye also for the Jews as it liketh you,**.... Whatever may be thought fit and proper for their safety and security:

**in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring;** as the former letters were:

**for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse;** which is a reason both for the writing and sealing of the present letters in this manner, and why the former could not be reversed; nor does it appear that they were, but that, in virtue of them, the people had power to rise and kill the Jews on the day appointed, if they dared, or were so disposed; and these empowered the Jews to rise in their own defence, and kill all that made any attempts upon them, for which they had the royal authority; and these letters coming after the other, though they did not formally reverse them, which might not be done, yet rendered them ineffectual.

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## Verse 9

**Then were the king's scribes called at that time,**.... As they were to write the former letter, Esther 3:12,

**in the third month, that is the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof;** which answers to part of May, and part of June. This was two months and ten days after the writing of the former letters; so long the Jews had been in distress by reason of them, and was a just rebuke upon them for not returning to their own land when they might, as well as for other sins:

**and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews.** Mordecai dictated to the scribes, and ordered what they should write; and which were sent to the Jews in the first place, partly to ease them of their present distress, and partly that they might prepare against that time for their defence, for which they had sufficient time, it being now more than nine months to it:

**and to the lieutenants, and the deputies, and the rulers of the provinces, which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces.** The letters were directed to the same magistrates in the several provinces as the former, giving orders to them, that, notwithstanding them, they were to suffer the Jews to defend themselves, and not punish them for what should be done by them in self-defence; see Esther 1:1,

**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;** some provinces spoke the Persian language, and used the character of it, others Chaldee, others Syriac, &c. and wrote in the usual characters, as the Jews did in Hebrew, and in the characters of that language; and now these letters were written in the language and character of the people of the several provinces they were sent to, that they might be easily read and understood.

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## Verse 10

**And he wrote in the King Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring,**.... Which gave the letters authority, and made them irreversible, and for this Mordecai had the king's order, Esther 8:8

**and sent letters by post;** by runners or couriers:

**on horseback;** that rode on horses that were racers, that ran swiftly:

**and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries**; which were all different creatures, and swift ones, according to our version, especially the latter; see Jeremiah 2:23 which were a kind of camels, but swifter, and would go more than one hundred miles a day<sup>F1</sup>; and, as Diodorus Siculus says<sup>F2</sup>, not less than 1500 furlongs or about two hundred miles: though it may be only one sort are meant, namely, "mules", for the next word, "ahashteranim", in the Persian language signifies mules<sup>F3</sup>, and so Aben Ezra interprets it, and likewise Kimchi and Ben Melech; and the last words may be rendered "sons of mares", so David de Pomis; that is, such mules as are gendered by he asses and mares: and so the same writer observes, that the word in the Arabic language signifies "mares"; and such mules that come from them he says are stronger than those that come from she asses; so that the whole may be rendered to this sense, "riders on mules", (which in the Persian language are called "ahashteranim",) namely, such as are "sons of mares"; and which according to Aelianus<sup>F4</sup> and Pliny<sup>F5</sup> are the swiftest; though the Persians had camels swifter than are common elsewhere, called "revatrie", the "goer", which trot as fast as an horse can gallop<sup>F6</sup>.

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## Verse 11

**Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together,....** In some part of the city they should choose, and remain in a body, being sufficiently armed:

**and to stand for their life**; to defend themselves, and fight for their life, should any attack them, or attempt to take it away; in such case they might act offensively:

**so as to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them**; every army of them, or as many as should join in a body to attack them, any mighty or powerful mob; and not men only:

**but both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey**; the same words are used, and the same power is given them as were to their enemies, Esther 3:13, not that they made use of it to the utmost extremity, it is certain they did not in one point, in taking the spoil, Esther 9:10, and, since they spared that, it is highly probable they spared women and children.

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## Verse 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.** The day appointed and fixed in the former letters for the destruction of the Jews, Esther 3:13.

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## Verse 13

**The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published to all people,....** A copy of the letters sent to the governors of provinces; the sum and substance of them was published by an herald, or fixed in public places, that all might know the contents thereof; and take care not to assault the Jews, as it would be to their peril:

**and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies**; Abendana thinks this is to be restrained to those that were of the seed of Amalek, who were their principal enemies; but no doubt it includes all that should rise up against them.

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## Verse 14

**So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out,....** Or on the mules, which in the Persian language were called "ahashteranim"; See Gill on Esther 8:10,

**being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment**; who gave them a special order to make what haste they could, that the Jews might have time to prepare for their defence, and their enemies be the more intimidated:

**and the decree was given at Shushan the palace**; the king's counsellors agreeing to it, and perhaps signing it, as they did the former; see Esther 3:15.

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## Verse 15

**And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king**,.... And walked or rode about in the city to show himself to his friends:

**in royal apparel of blue and white**; such as the Persian kings wore, and were not allowed to any other, as Xenophon writes<sup>F7</sup>:

**and with a great crown of gold**; a coronet, such as princes and nobles wear; the latter Targum calls it a great golden chain, and such the eastern kings used to give to their favourites; see Daniel 5:29,

**and with a garment of fine linen and purple**; this must be an inner garment, since it is distinct from the royal robe before mentioned; though as the word signifies a wrap, or roll, it may design a turban, which was a roll of linen wrapped about the head; and such was the Persian diadem, according to Curtius<sup>F8</sup>, which was of a purple colour, mixed with white; and so the Septuagint version is, "and a diadem of fine linen, of a purple colour"; and if so, the crown of gold was not worn on his head, nor is it likely it should be allowed, but was carried before him; see Gill on Esther 6:8,

**and the city of Shushan rejoiced, and was glad**; not only the Jews in it, but the native inhabitants of it, that had any sense of humanity, expressed their joy at the sight of Mordecai thus arrayed; that so good a man was advanced at court, and so bad a man as Haman was displaced and put to death; see Proverbs 29:2.

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## Verse 16

**And the Jews had light**,.... Prosperity, as opposed to the darkness of adversity in which they had been, see Isaiah 8:22, or lightsomeness and cheerfulness of spirit, as explained by the two next words:

**and gladness and joy**; at the good news of their deliverance, so unexpected by them; thus light is explained by gladness, Psalm 97:11

**and honour**: among men; from their neighbours, who before were held in contempt, as a people doomed to destruction.

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## Verse 17

**And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came**,.... As they did to every province in the realm, and to every city in the province, where there were any Jews:

**the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day**; they expressed their joy on this occasion by keeping a festival, which in their language is called a good day; and such an one is annually kept by them unto this day, on account of their deliverance; of which see Esther 9:27

**and many of the people of the land became Jews**; or were proselyted, as both the Targums and Jarchi interpret it; they embraced the Jewish religion, and submitted to the rites and ceremonies of it; were circumcised, as in the Septuagint version, and so were proselytes of righteousness; and indeed no other could they be, dwelling in their own

land; many of them very probably were serious in it, observing the wonderful manner in which the Jews were delivered; wherein manifestly appeared to them the providence of God, the hand of the Supreme Being, and from hence concluded their God must be the true God, and they his favourite people, and their religion most correct; though others might only do it to gain the favour of Esther and Mordecai, who had now such great power and influence at court:

**for the fear of the Jews fell upon them**; lest they should be slain by them, in virtue of this new edict.

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