

A Counter Decree

Esther 8: 9-17

Although much had changed in a short period of time, work remained for Esther and Mordecai. We must understand the process involved regarding an official decree of the king. Once a decree was signed, it could not be altered or changed. It remained law until it was carried out. In reality, the decree Ahasuerus had signed under the influence of Haman was still legal and binding. The king himself did not have the authority to annul the writing. The Jews only hope now was for Mordecai to write and seal a decree that would serve to counter the previous writing. This new decree would carry as much weight officially as Haman's decree, but it would not remove it. Mordecai knew this new decree must be carefully worded to provide security and safety for the Jews. This was there only hope.

Things remained uncertain, but the Jews enjoyed a decided advantage. God had sovereignly placed Esther and Mordecai in their respective positions, and He would use them to provide deliverance for the Jews. Our lives face much adversity at times, but we too can rest in the sovereign hand of God. Thankfully His Word is forever settled and it will never be altered or countered by the devices of men or Satan.

Let's examine this [details](#) of Mordecai's carefully crafted decree as we consider: [A Counter Decree](#).

I. The Issuance of the Decree (9-10) – Here we discover the details surrounding the issuance of Mordecai's counter decree. Consider:

A. The Appointment (9a) – [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.](#) Once Mordecai had crafted the decree, the king's scribes were called in before him. This meeting was held on the twenty third day of the third month. Haman's decree was scheduled to be carried out on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. This would allow the Jews a little less than nine months from this day to make preparations according to Mordecai's decree. The kingdom was vast, and it would certainly take some time to get the word to the remotest regions. There would be no time to waste, but a counter decree had been signed, offering hope to the Jews.

B. The Accommodation (9b) – [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. The decree had been crafted by Mordecai, according to his earnest desire, and would be made available to all the Jews in their own language, regardless of which province they lived within the kingdom. This decree, like Haman's, was sent throughout the kingdom.

- I am thankful that the message of hope and life within the Gospel wasn't reserved for the Jews who dwelt in and around Jerusalem following the resurrection of Christ. It has been made available to all people throughout the world. All who hear and respond to the call of Christ in salvation are assured of eternal life in Him!

C. The Authority (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.* Mordecai had written the decree, but he signed it with the king's name and sealed it with the king's signet ring. This decree enjoyed the backing and authority of the king himself. No one would be able to deny or dispute its validity or ignore its mandate. The decree would be sent out by posts on the backs of animals throughout the entire kingdom. The decree was signed and it would soon be delivered to each of the 127 provinces throughout Persia.

- I couldn't help but think of the sovereign decree signed on my behalf. I was sinful and condemned of God. The record was clear and I had no hope of pardon or reprieve. At the moment of my salvation, my account was marked "PAID IN FULL," signed and sealed with the precious blood of my Lord and Savior. The enemy doesn't like it, but he cannot alter the KING's decree! *Eph.1:13-14 – In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ^[14] Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

II. The Implications of the Decree (11-13) – These verses reveal the implications the decree would have on the Jews and the entire kingdom. Consider:

A. The Guarantee (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.* While this would not provide them with royal forces, the Jews were granted specific rights by the decree. They were granted permission to assemble themselves together in order to defend their lives and their possessions. They could use whatever means necessary to defeat those who sought to take their lives and were even granted permission to take whatever

spoils remained as the spoils of war. We will see that the Jews didn't take the spoils of war, but they did gather together in order to defend themselves and their families.

- As believers we are called to love others as we love ourselves. We are not to be divisive or unnecessarily confrontational, but that doesn't mean we should not be willing to stand for truth and defend our faith. I would never advocate violence, but we must be willing to stand for the Lord and His Word in a day when that is no longer accepted or popular. We must stand for the right to gather together and worship our Lord in peace. We cannot bow to the dictates of modern society!

B. The Guidelines (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*. This is the day Haman's decree was to be carried out. It remained in effect, and couldn't be altered. The Jews would certainly face some opposition on that day, and they were authorized to stand and fight when the opposition came. This decree did not grant an unhindered right to fight and pillage at any time, just that one day. The Jews would be allowed to prepare and gather together to withstand the onslaught of enemy attack to preserve their lives and the lives of their families. They were not to seek out those who sought to do them harm, but be prepared to fight when confronted.

C. The Gravity (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*. Like Haman's decree, the counter decree of Mordecai was carried throughout the kingdom and carried the same weight. Everyone in Persia would know the Jews had been granted the authority to fight when confronted. As we will see, this decree was not taken lightly by the vast majority of Persians.

III. The Impact of the Decree (14-17) – Finally we discover the impact Mordecai's decree had upon the people of Persia. Notice:

A. The Urgency (14) – *So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace*. The royal decree was signed in Shushan the palace and sent out in haste. Mordecai knew it would take some time to reach the outlying provinces and he wanted to ensure as much time as possible for the Jews to prepare for their defense. He knew their lives and livelihood hung in the balance.

- This is yet another reminder regarding the urgency of our day. While we don't know the date that our Lord will return, we do know His coming is imminent. There is no time to waste. None are promised tomorrow and Jesus is coming soon!

B. The Legitimacy (15) – [And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.](#) At first this verse seemed out of place, but then I realized it must have been part of Mordecai's well thought out plan. Following his signing of the decree, Mordecai made a public appearance wearing the royal garments and crown of gold. If there had been any hesitation or question regarding the authority of Mordecai, this would certainly put it to rest.

- While we are not royalty, but we do have the authority of the Word of God and the enabling of the Spirit working on our behalf. The world has consistently denied the truth of the Word and the Gospel of Christ, but that doesn't minimize its legitimacy. Christ died and rose again for the sin of humanity. He is now preparing a place for the saved in heaven. We have the support of our Savior as we strive to live for Him and proclaim the Gospel.

C. The Revelry (16-17a) – [The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.](#) ^[17] [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.](#) To say the Jews were delighted would be an understatement. The fight was not over yet, but the pendulum had definitely swung in their favor by the providence of God. Upon hearing the news of Mordecai's decree, the Jews from Shushan to the far reaches of the kingdom rejoiced with joy and gladness.

- Our struggles haven't ended either, and they won't as long as we live upon this earth. However, we too have reason to rejoice. Unlike the Jews in Esther's day, our victory has already been won. We fight from victory, not for victory. Our enemy is defeated and he knows it. He will never defeat the Lord or His church, but he seeks to wreak as much havoc and damage as he can. While faced with adversity, we can rejoice in the victory secured by Christ our Lord.

D. The Irony (17b) – [And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.](#) Haman's hatred for Mordecai and the Jews was so intense that he sought to eradicate the kingdom of their presence. He wanted to ensure every Jew within Persia was killed, along with their influence. Rather than that being accomplished, many of the Persians became Jews, fearing for their lives because of the favor the Jews now enjoyed. Rather than God's people being annihilated, those who were exposed to His grace expanded. God's work and His sovereign plan will never suffer defeat!

- Isn't that ironic? As we began to study the book of Esther, she and Mordecai were afraid to make their identity known. Now many of the Persians are afraid of failing to identify with the Jews. Today many have to keep their Christianity out of public view, fearful of attack or even death. Our society ostracizes those who identify with Christ. There is coming a day when men would gladly identify with the risen Christ, but it will be too late. I had rather suffer for my Lord in this life than suffer without Him for all eternity!

Conclusion: This passage has reminded me yet again of the great love and care God has for His people. Like the Jews in Persia, we too faced certain death, but the Lord stepped in and made a way. Christ came as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. Through Him we have access to all that heaven has to offer. We enjoy strength and wisdom, grace and peace, hope and life. We will face adversity in this life, but we are promised eternity within the heavenly kingdom. That alone is reason to rejoice. Regardless of what we face in this life, the saved by grace have something far greater waiting!

Have you received Christ as your personal Savior? He alone is the means of salvation and eternal life. If you haven't, I urge you to do so before it's too late. Christian, I hope this study has brought a measure of comfort and assurance to you. What could we possibly face that our Lord isn't the Master of?