

*The* UNSEEN GOD

*ruth*

*esther*



ev / youth

# RUTH & ESTHER THE UNSEEN GOD

## TERM 3 PASSAGE

Week 1	God's People, God's Place, God's Blessing	
Week 2	Ruth 1	God's Kindness
Week 3	Ruth 2	God's Love
Week 4	Ruth 3	God's Provision
Week 5	Ruth 4	God's Redeemer
Week 6	Esther 1:1-2:20	A New Queen
Week 7	Esther 2:21-4:17	The Plot Against God's People
Week 8	Esther 5-7	The Man the King Delights to Honour
Week 9	Esther 8-10	Rescue and Triumph (Part 1)
Week 10	Esther 8-10	Rescue and Triumph (Part 2)

**We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.**

Who are you on mission to?

Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself).

**Pray for three friends, once a week, for one minute (3-1-1).**

List the names of your family and friends here:

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# INTRODUCTION: RUTH & ESTHER

## OVERVIEW

Where is God today? If I can't see Him, is He really there? What if things aren't going well—does He take any notice? Is He involved in the details of my life?

These are age-old questions; questions that people in the Bible wrestled with millennia ago, and questions that many of us still wrestle with today. So, what would God say to these questions? The books of Ruth and Esther address these questions wonderfully, showing us a God who cares for His people. Even when He cannot be *seen*, He is there. And He works for the good of His people – even through the storms of life.

## RUTH

Ruth is a true heart-warming story, set in the cruel and harsh “days when the judges ruled” (1:1). This was a time in Israel’s history when sin and chaos ruled: “Israel had no king; [and] everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25).

In this tumultuous time, we are introduced to one seemingly inconsequential family. They too were living according to the times - doing as they saw fit. Judgment comes to their household and we are thrown into the hopeless situation of the woman, Naomi, who has lost her husband and her sons, and is left vulnerable in a foreign land, devoid of a future.

As Naomi ventures back to her homeland, the reader, along with Naomi, questions God’s goodness in her circumstances. Throughout the story, Naomi is met time and time again with impressive displays of human kindness and provision, yet God remains silent and hidden in it all. But, we are made to reflect on these events from the characters’ understanding of God: He is the one who is owed the credit for these human acts of kindness. The conclusion of the story brings a surprising twist, leaving no doubt of God’s active hand in showing kindness to Naomi, and, through her, kindness to all of His people, extending even to Christians today.

## ESTHER

From Ruth, we fast forward many centuries in Israel’s history, into the book of Esther, an incredible story of reversal. Because of their sin, God’s people had been exiled from the promised land. Now a small minority in the world’s largest Empire (the pagan nation of Persia), the Israelites now face a new threat: total annihilation at the hand of the Empire’s villainous prime minister, Haman, and the self-invested King Xerxes (3:13).

But God is always at work for His people—raising up the lowly, bringing down the proud. The young, orphaned Israelite girl, Esther, becomes the Queen of Persia. And, although God’s name is never even mentioned in the book, the Unseen God is clearly seen by His actions: God authored Esther’s rise to power, and is there every step of the way bringing about the salvation of His people.

### **RUTH AND ESTHER FOR TODAY**

The books of Ruth and Esther do two big things for us today. First, they remind us of the astonishing way in which God loves, protects, and provides for His people in Christ. Our God is for us and so works for our good in all circumstances (Romans 8:28). This is true even when we can’t easily see His hand at work. Second, Ruth and Esther remind us that God prevails in the end. In a world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity, in the end, nothing can prevail against the Unseen God, and the redemption He has brought about in Jesus Christ.

# WEEK 1: God's People, God's Place, God's Blessing

*Before we get stuck into Ruth & Esther, this week of daily reading notes will be spent looking at 3 key themes that shape the Bible's overarching story of salvation. The 3 themes are: God's People, God's Place and God's Blessing. Through these themes we get to see how God has related to His people throughout human history. And seeing this will help us get two important things: 1) God's covenant (a special, binding agreement) relationship with Israel; and 2) The context and background of the books of Ruth and Esther.*

## DAY 1

Today, we are going to look at something called the 'Abrahamic Covenant'. A covenant is a promised agreement between two parties – sort of like a marriage! The Abrahamic Covenant is between God and Abram (Abraham).

### Pray + Read Genesis 12:1-3

1. God promises 3 big things to Abram here: People, Place & Blessing. Where do you see these promises in these verses, and how are they described?

People?

Place?

Blessing?

2. What does God ask for in return? (Hint: this is a trick question)
3. How does this remind you of what God offers you in the gospel?
4. From the verses after Genesis 12:1-3, how does Abram show that he trusts God? What can we learn about the gospel from this Abrahamic Covenant? (Hint: Hebrews 11:8-9)

**Prayer:** Thank God for His awesome promises! Ask Him to help you trust them.

## DAY 2

Today, we are going to look at the end of Moses' speech to the Israelites right before they enter the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 12. In Moses' speech, he talks about the 'Mosaic Covenant'. The Mosaic Covenant was a covenant between God and Israel, given through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20).

### Pray + Read Deuteronomy 28:1-19

1. Does anything stand out to you from this passage? Got any questions?

2. Use the table below to compare the Mosaic and Abrahamic Covenants.

What's the same ?	What's different?

3. Which of the two Covenants do you reckon is most like the gospel? Why?

4. Why is it good news that the gospel is more like the first Covenant?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the Gospel of Grace! Ask God that you would never rely on works to be saved, but faith alone.



## DAY 4

Today we are going to read about the lowest, saddest point in Israel's history in the Old Testament. The small, remaining group (remnant) of God's people are sent from the promised land (exiled) into Babylon.

### Pray + Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-23

1. Draw a couple of mini pictures to summarise what happens in these verses.
2. How would you describe the spiritual state of God's people (Israel) in these verses?
3. Do you remember God's promises in Deuteronomy 28 of what would happen if the Israelites didn't obey God? How did God keep those promises in this passage?
4. What hope was there for Israel in this passage? (v 22-23)
5. What is surprising about this hope given what God said would happen to Israel if they were disobedient?
6. What does this show you about God?

**Prayer:** Spend some time saying sorry to God for the times that you've rebelled against Him and His commands this week. Thank God that He is a God who loves to show mercy!

## DAY 5

Today we are going to flick forward to the end of your Bible where you'll read about the end of history and the future hope for all of God's people.

### Pray + Read Revelation 21:1-7

1. What do you love about these verses? Is there something that particularly stands out?

2. What were the three things that God promised to Abram in Genesis 12?

a. Who are the *people* of God in this passage?

b. What do you learn about the final *place* that God promises His people in this passage?

c. What does it look like to be *blessed* by God in this passage?

3. How do these verses show God keeping His promises to Abram?

**Prayer:** Use the space below to write a prayer. Include things like thanking God for His promises and the future hope He's given us and ask Him for help to always trust His promises.

# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**

*the* UNSEEN GOD

*ruth*



## THE UNSEEN GOD: RUTH

<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Ruth 1</b>	<b>God's Kindness</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Ruth 2</b>	<b>God's Love</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Ruth 3</b>	<b>God's Provision</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Ruth 4</b>	<b>God's Redeemer</b>

# WEEK 2: God's Kindness

## DAY 1

### Pray + Read Ruth 1:1-2

1. Read Deuteronomy 28:15-18. Why do you think there was a famine in Israel at this time?
2. Elsewhere in Deuteronomy God says not to “seek a treaty of friendship” with the Moabites “as long as you live.” Was Elimelek’s decision a good one? Why/why not?
3. Have a think about the time we live in now. Do you think the average Aussie lives obeying God or doing whatever seems good to them?
4. Have there ever been times when you have chosen to look for satisfaction away from God?

**Prayer:** Ask God for forgiveness for the times where you have done whatever seemed good to you, instead of living with Jesus as King. Pray that God would help you to follow Jesus and always be satisfied in Him.

## DAY 2

### Pray + Read Ruth 1:3-5

1. Deuteronomy 7:3 God says “Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.” According to this, what did Elimelek’s family do wrong in verses 3-5?
2. How do we see God’s judgement in these verses? How does this show how serious sin is?
3. If you were Naomi, how would you be feeling after all this?
4. In this time an older woman like Naomi without a husband or sons was particularly vulnerable as she would not have been able to provide for herself, or her daughters-in-law. Who can you think of in our society today that is particularly vulnerable?

**Prayer:** Pray for people in our society and/or in your life who are particularly vulnerable, you might like to pray for those who are sick, poor, or homeless. Ask that they might find comfort in God.

### DAY 3

#### Pray + Read Ruth 1:6-22

1. How does Naomi feel towards God after all that has happened? (v13, 20-21) Circle the words that you think are most appropriate:

Angry                      Trusting                      Sorry                      Distant  
Abandoned                      Unchanged                      Confused                      Confident  
Upset                      Humbled                      Peaceful                      Offended

2. What does Naomi decide to do in verse 6? Why might this have been a hard decision?

3. Remember that on day 1, we saw that Elimelek made the wrong decision to seek refuge away from God in Moab. What does Naomi's decision to return to God in Israel show about her trust in God?

4. What moments in your life have you had to choose whether to turn towards God or away from Him?

**Prayer:** Ask God that you would be like Naomi and turn towards God when life gets hard. Ask for forgiveness for the times you have turned away from Him, knowing that in Jesus we are already forgiven.

## DAY 4

### Pray + Read Ruth 1:6-22

1. How does Ruth respond when Naomi tells her to go back to her family in Moab?
2. Why is this so surprising?
3. What does it reveal about Ruth's character – that she chose to move to a foreign country with her poor mother-in-law instead of returning to the comfort and security of home?
4. In remaining loyal to Naomi, Ruth welcomed God into her life (v16). What comfort does God give to those who follow him? (Hint: Acts 3:19)

**Prayer:** Praise God that in Jesus our sins are forgiven, and we have the promise of eternal joy and rest in heaven.



# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**





### DAY 3

#### Pray + Read Ruth 2:3-20

1. Why does Boaz show special kindness to Ruth? (Hint: Look at vs 11-12 and 20)

Note: Have a look at your Bible's footnotes to understand more about the 'guardian redeemer'.

2. How does Boaz being Ruth and Naomi's 'guardian-redeemer' help us understand why Boaz shows special kindness to them?

3. Do you think it was an accident that Ruth "happened" to end up in Boaz's field? What does this show us about God?

4. Can you think of a time in your life where you know God worked in your life?

**Prayer:** Give thanks to God for His sovereign love and care for His people. Pray that you would have a deep trust in God's sovereign and loving care for you.





# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**

# WEEK 4: God's Provision

## DAY 1

### Pray + Read Ruth 3:1-14

1. In chapter 3:14, we see that Ruth could be shamed if anyone recognises her lying on the floor. But she follows Naomi's plan anyway. Why do you think Ruth goes along with the plan?
2. Does following Jesus involve any risks? If so, why do you think people still follow him?
3. What is it about Jesus that makes you willing to follow Him?

**Prayer:** Thank God for his Word, which shows us the trustworthiness of Jesus. Pray that God would strengthen you to always trust and follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

**DAY 2**

**Pray + Read Ruth 3:1-11**

1. Use the table below to describe how Ruth is seen in:

Chapter 2:6-10	Chapter 3:10-12

2. How has the public image of Ruth changed? What has Ruth done that might contribute to this change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Can you see any moments of Ruth's life that remind you of Jesus?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the perfect obedience of Jesus, and that God has made Jesus' righteousness our own through the Gospel! Pray that you might grow in a godly character

like Ruth's, through kindness to others in quiet, humble, and hardworking obedience to God.

## DAY 3

### Pray + Read Ruth 3:1-18

1. In verse 10, we see Boaz's reaction to Ruth. Use emoji's or drawings to show his reaction.
2. Is this how you would expect Boaz to react? How else do you think Boaz could have reacted?
3. In chapter 2:1, Boaz is called 'a man of standing'. Write a list of traits that stand out to you about Boaz's character.
4. From the list you made, think about which traits match the traits of Jesus. What other traits could you add to the list that could describe Jesus?

**Prayer:** Thank God for revealing Jesus to you and calling you to put your trust in Him. Pray that you might grow in godly character like Boaz, through kindness, generosity, trustworthiness, and willingness to protect the vulnerable.

## DAY 4

### Pray + Read Ruth 3:1-18

1. Naomi had a prayer for Boaz in 2:19-20. How can we see this prayer being answered through chapter 3?
2. Look back at Boaz's prayer for Ruth in 2:12. How can we see Boaz's prayer being answered through chapter 3?
3. From these examples what can we learn about how God answers prayers?
4. Use the table to compare vs 1 with vs 17.

Ch3 vs1	Ch3 vs17
"One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, 'My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.'"	"He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed'".

What does this comparison about Ruth, reveal about how God works through human plans?

**Prayer:** Take a moment to pray for those in need in your life. Pray that God would provide for them. Pray also that God would use your efforts to answer this prayer.

Write these prayers down somewhere so that you can look back on them in time and give thanks to God for any answers to them.



# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**



## DAY 2

### Pray + Read Ruth 4:11-17

1. David (verse 17) is a key player in God's plan to save the world. How does this add significance to the story of Ruth?
2. How has God worked to care for Naomi? Where have we seen her recognise God's care for her?
3. What role has Naomi played in this chapter? How does this remind you of the Gospel? (Compare to Ephesians 2:8-9)

**Prayer:** Acknowledge God's work in your life by giving thanks to Him for His care and provision. Give thanks to God for His Gospel of grace alone!







# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**

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## THE UNSEEN GOD: ESTHER

<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Esther 1:1-2:20</b>	<b>A New Queen</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Esther 2:21-4:17</b>	<b>The Plot Against God's People</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Esther 5-7</b>	<b>The Man the King Delights to Honour</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Esther 8-10</b>	<b>Rescue and Triumph (Part 1)</b>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Esther 8-10</b>	<b>Rescue and Triumph (Part 2)</b>

# WEEK 6: A New Queen

## DAY 1

### Pray + Read Esther 1:1-12

1. Google a map of the Persian empire. See if you can find the key places the passage mentions in verses 1-3 on the map. Hint: Cush is below Thebes
2. King Xerxes throws a HUGE party. List any details you see.
3. What do you think King Xerxes is trying to show about his power and kingdom by holding this large banquet?
4. How does King Xerxes treat his wife Vashti in verses 10-11?
5. How would you describe King Xerxes character from all we've seen?

**Prayer:** Give thanks to Jesus for though he is powerful, he is humble and gave himself up for us by coming to earth and facing the humiliation and pain of the cross.



## DAY 3

### Pray + Read Esther 1:10-22

1. After Queen Vashti refuses to obey King Xerxes, Xerxes and his officials send out an edict (a royal decree/official order vs 1:19). Look at verses 20-22. What was Xerxes trying to achieve?
2. If Xerxes was trying to show and maintain his power and authority, how does this edict actually achieve the opposite? What does it expose about him to his entire kingdom? (Hint: check vs 17-18)
3. The Persians knew Xerxes as the 'king of kings' (Ezra 7:12). The Bible also uses this title to describe the Lord Jesus Christ, the ultimate king! (Revelation 17:14) From what you know about Jesus, how is Jesus a far greater king than Xerxes?

**Prayer:** Thank God that Jesus is a far greater king than Xerxes and any other rulers we have. Thank Him that he is a good and just king who is in complete control. Ask God to help you trust and live with Jesus as your king.



## DAY 5

### Pray + Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Today we'll think about the question: 'What does Esther 1-2 teach us about God and about ourselves?' 1 Corinthians will help us answer this question.

1. This passage describes who it is God calls to Himself. Looking at verses 26-29...

a. Who does God choose to save?

b. What reasons does the passage give for why God chooses these people in particular? (Nullify means to make something useless)

2. Remember the main characters from Esther 1-2: King Xerxes, Queen Vashti, Esther, and Mordecai. Out of these characters, who are the 'powerful', and who are the 'weak'? Place each on this scale:

Weak ----- Powerful

3. Just like God chose the young, orphaned, minority girl Esther to become Queen, God chooses to save the 'lowly' through Jesus Christ. How does remembering this, help you to be humble and give God the glory in everything?

**Prayer:** Thank God for choosing to save you! Ask Him to help you to remain humble and to give glory to Him for everything.

# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**



## DAY 2

### Pray + Read Esther 3:7–15

1. In verse 7, a dice is rolled to choose the date that all the Jews would be killed.
  - a. In what month is the dice rolled?
  
  - b. What month is chosen for Haman's plan?
  
2. Haman's plan to kill the Jews was set to take place 11 months later.
  - a. Who has control of this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why do you think God planned it like this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Imagine being a Jew at this time! Use drawings or emojis to describe how they might have felt?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. God is our rescuer. Is there anything you are struggling with at the moment that you could ask God for help with? What are they?

**Prayer:** Thank God that he is in control, thank Him for sending the ultimate rescuer Jesus and ask Him for help with anything you are anxious or worried about.

## DAY 3

### Pray + Read Esther 4:1–8

1. Using drawings, how did Mordecai and the Jews react?
2. In verse 3, it says that Jews engaged in fasting. Read Jonah 3:5-8. What does this passage say about those who are fasting?
3. Unlike the situation in Jonah, the Jews here do not turn to prayer when fasting. Do you think they should have? Why?
4. Esther who is the Queen, lives in a palace far away from the rest of God's people. And so, even though she is the Queen, it is revealed in verses 5-8, she does not know about the edict to kill all the Jews. Why is Esther being separated from the other Jews a problem? What spiritual dangers could arise for her?
5. Today we have seen the importance of prayer and being gathered with God's people.
  - a. What can you be doing to make sure you are gathering with God's people?
  - b. What can you be doing to make sure you are praying to God often?

**Prayer:** Thank God that we live in a country that allows us to freely read his word, pray to him and gather with his people. Ask God to help you never give up meeting with other Christians and praying to Him often.

## DAY 4

### Pray + Read Esther 4:8–11

1. In verse 8, what does Mordecai want Esther to do?
2. What is Esther's response to Mordecai?

### Read Esther 4:12-14

3. It is clear that Esther did not want to reveal herself to the King in fear that she may be persecuted with all the other Jews. Mordecai's response in this passage brings great warning. What is the warning?
4. Picture yourself in Esther's shoes. She is at risk of death whether she does nothing to save the Jews or approaches the King without being summoned. How do you think she was feeling?
5. While we do not know what happens to Esther yet, we can see that her life is on the line. Compare Esther's position to Jesus and how he put his life on the line for us.
  - a. What are some similarities between Esther and Jesus?
  - b. What are some differences between Esther and Jesus?

**Prayer:** Thank God that Jesus willingly came and suffered and died for us to bring us back to God, to secure us a future.

## DAY 5

### Pray + Read Esther 4:12 – 17

1. In verse 14 Mordecai says that “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place”. What do you think this means?
2. Why do you think Mordecai’s confidence in God is so great?
3. Do you share the same confidence in God? Why/why not?

**Prayer:** Spend some time writing out a prayer to God. If you share the same confidence as Mordecai, then you can thank God for that in your prayer. If you are not currently confident then you could spend this time asking God to build your confidence in Him.

Dear God,

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**





### **DAY 3**

#### **Pray + Read Esther 2:21-3:1 and 6:1-10**

1. “All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king” (2:23). When we first read chapter 2, this seemed like a random detail for the author to include: Mordecai saves the king, and it was written down that this happened. Why bother to include that it was written down?! But with verse 6:1 in mind, why was it important that this happened?
2. Likewise... in 6:1 we read that the king was having a hard time sleeping one night. But with the rest of chapter 6 in mind, how did the king’s sleeplessness prove to be important?
3. Even small events (like the fact that the king couldn’t sleep one night!) show the absolute power of God. Because the king couldn’t sleep that night, Mordecai escapes being killed, and the Jews are saved from slaughter! What seemingly random things did God use to help bring you to salvation in Christ?

**Prayer:** Give thanks to God for using the things in our lives to bring us to faith in Jesus. Pray that He would use the circumstances in the lives of others to save them.





# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**

# WEEK 9: Rescue and Triumph (Part 1)

## DAY 1

The end of the story has almost come. Esther's boldness has paid off, and Haman, the "enemy of the Jews", has been punished for his wickedness. But the king's edict (order) for the destruction of the Jews is still in place...

### Pray + Read Esther 8:1-11

1. How did King Xerxes reward Esther and Mordecai for their actions? (See 8:1-2)
2. The king's signet ring is mentioned four times in this passage (verses 2, 8, 10). Re-read these verses. What does a signet ring do?
3. King Xerxes could not undo his previous edict. The Jews would still be attacked. How does King Xerxes fix this? (See verses 8-11)
4. Back in Genesis 12, God made some very big promises to Abraham and his descendants, and God is faithful to His promises. "*I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you*" (Genesis 12:3). How does God's promises give us confidence, knowing that through the book of Esther, the Jews would triumph?

**Prayer:** Although the Jews seemed to be in real danger, God is always faithful; God would be faithful to His promise to bless His people and curse their enemies. Ask God to give you confidence in His faithfulness, and to know deeply the security you have before Him in Christ.

## DAY 2

### Pray + Read Esther 8:11-14

1. Note the similarities between Haman's and Mordecai's edicts (3:13-14; 9:11-13).

<b>Haman's Edict (3:13-14)</b>	<b>Mordecai's Edict (9:11-13)</b>
<p><sup>13</sup> Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.</p> <p><sup>14</sup> A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.</p>	<p><sup>11</sup> The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies. <sup>12</sup> The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.</p>

2. What are the big differences between the two edicts?
3. Mordecai's edict made sure the Jews could defend themselves against their attackers (9:11). But, reading about war in the Bible can seem wrong or confronting for us. When we read Esther, it is important to remember the context that God's people were in: They were foreigners in a pagan nation which had unjustly declared war on them (3:13). How is Mordecai's edict good news for the Jews?

**Prayer:** Pray that you would be reminded of Jesus' victory over your enemies of sin, Satan and death. Jesus won this victory not with a sword in His hand, but with nails *through* His hands and feet, and a spear in His side. Praise God for Jesus' sacrificial victory on the cross.

### DAY 3

#### Pray + Read Esther 8:15-17

1. Compare 4:1-3 with 8:15-17, underlining or highlighting anything that is similar.

<b>Response to Haman's Edict (4:1-3)</b>	<b>Response to Mordecai's Edict (8:15-17)</b>
<p><sup>1</sup>When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. <sup>2</sup> But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. <sup>3</sup> In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.</p>	<p><sup>15</sup> When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. <sup>16</sup> For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honour. <sup>17</sup> In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.</p>

2. 'Reversal' is a key idea in 8:15-17. How have things been reversed or changed for Mordecai and the Jews?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Another great reversal takes place when someone starts to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Just like the Jews celebrated when they were saved from their enemies, we should celebrate since we have been saved from sin. How is God stirring you to be thankful day?

**Prayer:** Praise God that he loves and cares for His people. Ask God to help you rejoice in thankfulness, that God sent his Son to rescue us from our sin.

## DAY 4

### Pray + Read Esther 9:1-19

1. Does anything stand out to you from this passage? Maybe it's something epic, something that surprises you, something you haven't thought about before or could even be a question that you have.
2. Despite the great number of Persians killed in this war, there are a few hints that the Jews were not unjust or cruel in their actions. How can we see this in verses 10, and 15-17?
3. Some Christians today find it is strange that there is fighting like this in the Bible. How does remembering the context the Jews were in help you to understand why this fighting had to occur?

**Prayer:** Very few of us have lived in parts of the world affected by war. Give thanks to God that He has kept so many of us from war. Pray for peace in our nation and globally.



# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**

# WEEK 10: Rescue and Triumph (part 2)

## DAY 1

### Pray + Read Esther 9:20-32

1. Have a look at verses 20–22 again, what instructions does Mordecai give to the Jews?

2. Why was the festival called 'Purim'? (See verses 24-26)

3. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33).

God is still not mentioned by name, even as Mordecai establishes a festival that was to be celebrated every year. Even still, what should the festival's name, 'Purim', remind everyone about God?

4. The main celebrations we have today are Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and New Year. What attitude and mindset should we bring to these celebrations as Christians?

**Prayer:** Pray that God, our Creator and Saviour, would be at the front and center in all your thoughts. Pray that this might shape you into a person of joyful thanksgiving.





## DAY 4

### Pray + Read Colossians 2:13-17

Over the next two days we will read Colossians 2:13-17. It is particularly relevant in light of the book of Esther: it looks at both salvation from our enemies (verse 15), and how to think about religious festivals (verses 16-17).

1. From verses 13-14, make a list of the things we needed saving from.
2. Verse 15 brings the spiritual realm into view. How did God defeat the evil spiritual powers?
3. God's rescue of His people in Esther's day was truly wonderful. Even so, in what way is this a much 'bigger' salvation?
4. Keeping Colossians 2 in mind, what are you thankful for today?

**Prayer:** Thank God for the salvation you have in Jesus – the forgiveness of sins and eternal freedom from condemnation.



# **NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / QUESTIONS**