

THE STORY OF ESTHER – THE SHORTER INTERACTIVE VERSION !

PART 1 – NARRATOR & SIDE-KICK (in italics): – Our story begins in Ancient Persia in the fourth century before Christ. The Holy Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed 50 years earlier, and the Jewish people were subjects of the mighty Persian empire. (*Great! So far, so boring!...*)...

Now let me tell you about King Ahasuerus (*rolls right off the tongue doesn't it?...*). This guy was the new ruler of Persia. He celebrated by throwing a grand 180-day-long party for everyone. (*That's quite a party!...*). On the last day of this mega party, the King had drunk far too much wine (*Uh-oh! I smell trouble...*). The King commanded his wife Vashti to appear before all the partying men. He wanted to show off her exquisite beauty to them. Not wanting to be paraded like this, Vashti said 'no'. So, the King ordered Vashti be killed. (*Bit of an over-reaction, don't you think?*).

The King was lonely for a wife (*I wonder why?!*). His servants suggested that he organise a beauty pageant. All beautiful girls would be brought to the King, for him to choose his new queen. (*This King sounds like Henry VIII to me !*). The leader of the Jews at that time was Mordechai. Mordechai had a cousin called Esther, who was an orphan. So Mordechai treated her as his own daughter. (*I hope you are following all this...!*). Now Esther had no desire to be queen. (*I wonder why?!*). But she was taken by force, to participate in the contest. While all the other contestants put on perfumes and lotions, Esther did nothing. (*Good thinking!*). But when Esther appeared before the king, he immediately liked her, and Esther became the new Queen of Persia. (*Uh-oh...!*) But Mordechai warned Esther not tell anyone, even the king, that she was Jewish. (*Good thinking! ...*).

SONG – THANK YOU JESUS...

PART 2 – NARRATOR & SIDE-KICK

Soon after Esther became queen, Mordechai overheard two of the king's servants plotting to kill the king. So Mordechai quickly reported them and the traitors were hanged. (*Lots of plotting & whispering – bit like watching 'Traitors' on TV...!*).

Meanwhile, Haman, one of the king's ministers, was promoted to the position of prime minister. Haman really hated all the Jews. (*Uh oh! I smell trouble – again!*). Immediately after his promotion, the king ordered everyone to bow down whenever Haman appeared. Now Haman would walk around with a large idol hanging from a chain around his neck. (*Is that a dollar sign I see on his gold medallion?*) When Mordechai, a proud Jew, refused to bow down, Haman was infuriated. He resolved to take revenge against all the Jews. So he drew lots to decide the "lucky" day for his plan. The lot fell on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar. (*Uh-oh! 13, not so lucky for some...!*).

PART 3 - NARRATOR ONLY - INSTRUCTIONS: Now this is where the story really starts to get going. So we are going to follow this part of our story with people reading the words of the different characters in our story. Remember, there is Ahasuerus the King; Esther the new Queen; Mordechai, leader of the Jews. And then there was Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Now, we need someone to read their parts... And these characters need to wear a hat (so they can't hide)... But we all take part in this story, in order to create the drama. Whenever Esther or Mordechai stand up to speak, we all cheer. Whenever the King stands to speak, we must all bow. But whenever Haman gets up to speak we must all jeer & boo & heckle & stamp our feet – because he planned a genocide against God's people.

(NARRATOR & 4 CHARACTERS):

Haman came to the King & said: (BOOs!). "I will offer you 10,000 silver talents in exchange for permission to exterminate the Jews". No friend of the Jews himself, the King said (BOW), "The money is yours to keep, and the Jews are yours to do with as you please." Haman said, rubbing his hands, (BOOs), "O goody!". Haman sent out proclamations to everyone. They ordered the people to rise up against the Jews and kill them all on the 13th of the month of Adar.

Somehow Mordechai got wind of this order. He said (CHEERS): "I've got to do something. But what can I do... ?" So, Mordechai decided to send a message to Esther: (CHEERS) "You must approach the king and beg him to spare our people". Esther replied (CHEERS). "But anyone who enters the king's presence without first being summoned will be put to death...!" Mordechai sent another message (CHEERS): "But if you stay silent at this time, salvation will come to the Jews another way ... Who knows - it might be you reached this royal position for just such a time as this ?" Esther said: (CHEERS) "I will approach the king, as you ask. But first you must gather all the Jews in this city, and let them all fast for three days and nights. After this, I will take my life in my hands and approach the king". So Mordechai agreed (CHEERS). "I will do as you ask". He gathered all the Jews of the city. They fasted & prayed to God.

SONG – STRENGTH WILL RISE

PART 4 - NARRATOR ONLY: To cut a long story short... Each time one of the four characters is mentioned, please stand to receive the response of your audience...

Haman (BOOs) continued to plot against Mordechai (CHEERS). Why? – because he still refused to bow to Haman (BOOs). So Haman (BOOs) had a gallows built. Haman (BOOs) got ready to rejoice at the death of Mordechai and thousands of Jewish people throughout Persia (that needs an extra BOO!)... (NOW, QUIET FOR THIS BIT...)

But that night the King (BOW) strangely was unable to sleep. So he asked for his servants to read for him from the Royal Chronicles. They happened to read the story

about Mordechai (CHEERS). How the king (BOW) had been saved from being killed by Mordechai (CHEERS). The King (BOW), - he asked them whether Mordechai was rewarded for this. They all said 'no'... (HEAD-SHAKING). The King (BOW) decided he must reward Mordechai.

The next day the King (BOW) asked Haman (BOOs) a question: 'What should be done for a person the King wishes to honour?' He thought the King was thinking about him – Haman (BOOs). So he came up with a list of ways **he** wanted to be honoured. Then the King (BOW) ordered him to get royal robes & a royal horse. And who did he have to parade through the streets but Mordechai (CHEERS) ... What a turn-around!

Then Esther (CHEERS) threw a party for the King (BOW). Also there was Haman (BOOs). She made a request of the King (BOW). "The life of my people is my request", said Esther (CHEERS). She went on: "All my people have been sold to be killed". "On whose orders?" asked the shocked King. (BOW) She pointed at Haman (BOOs). The King (BOW) – he was outraged. He ordered that the enemy of the Jews be hanged on the gallows made by Haman himself (BOOs)... Poetic justice, don't you think?

So this is a story of how God rescued the Jews. A story in which God is not mentioned. Not once. But the people had prayed to God. Esther had trusted God with her life. So God used Mordechai & Esther to together save his people... (CHEERS). This Festival, called 'Purim', is joyfully celebrated every year by Jewish people around the world. It usually falls in Lent, when Christians around the world are getting ready to celebrate the victory of Jesus – for all peoples. Jesus' victory is a much greater victory, for all time, over sin, death & the evil one. (If you have any voices left, that deserves the biggest CHEER of all...!).

SONG – (2004 SF) OUR GOD IS A GREAT, BIG GOD