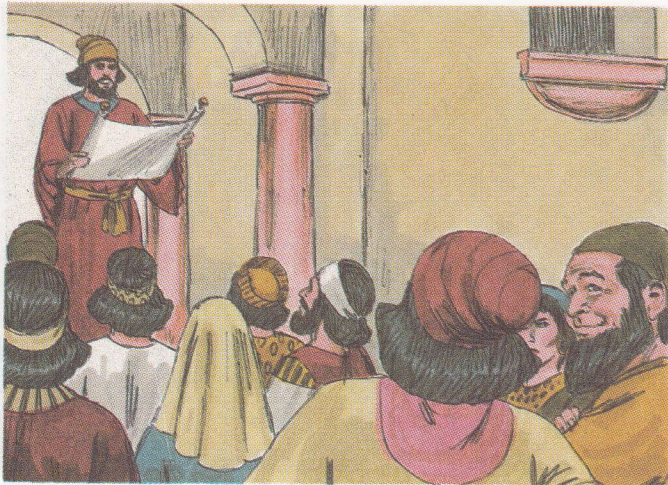
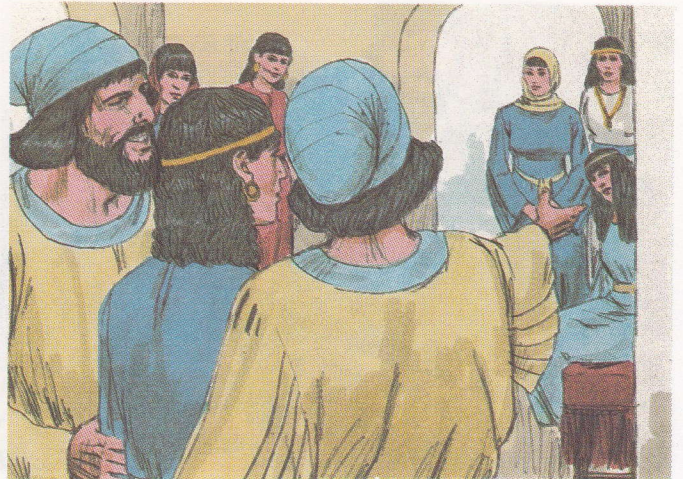


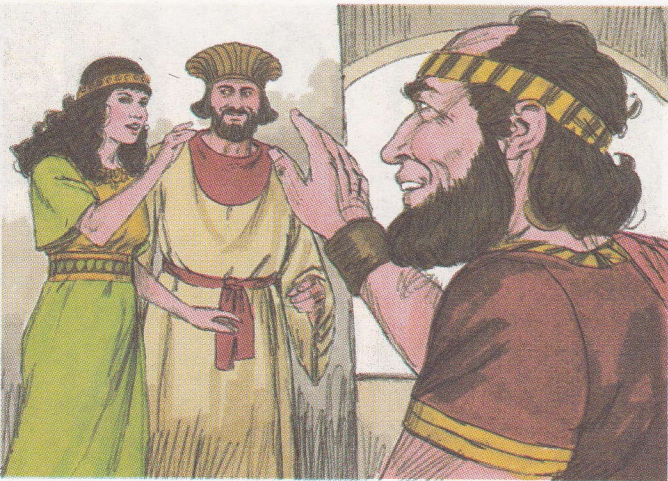
Esther Becomes Queen



1 When the people of Judah were captives of the Babylonians, the Persian empire destroyed Babylon. Xerxes, the Persian king, was unhappy with his wife. He began to search for a new queen.



2 Many beautiful young women were chosen from all parts of the empire and brought to Susa, the capital city of Persia.



3 Now there was a Jewish girl named Esther who lived in Susa with a relative named Mordecai. She was one of the girls chosen to come before the king. Esther told no one she was Jewish.



4 For a full year the girls were given a special beauty treatment. Then they were presented to the king. Xerxes liked Esther more than all the others and chose her to be his new queen.



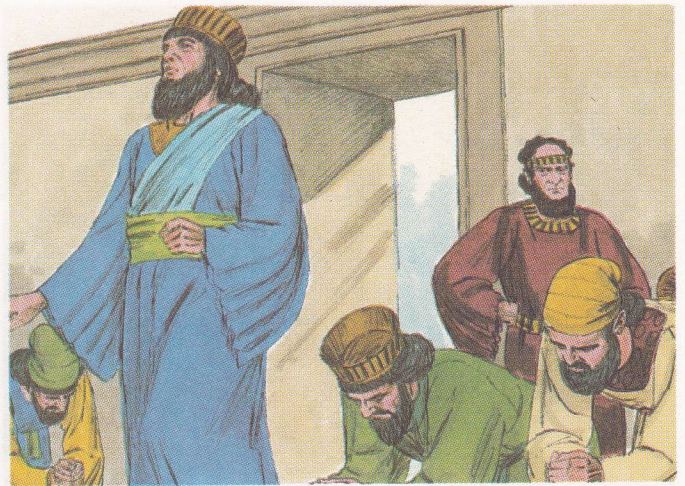
5 During that year Mordecai got a job in the palace. One day he happened to overhear a plot: two of the palace guards planned to kill the king. He told Esther, and she told the king.



6 The two guards were arrested and put to death. The king put a report of this matter in his official records. It later turned out to be a good thing for Mordecai that he did so.



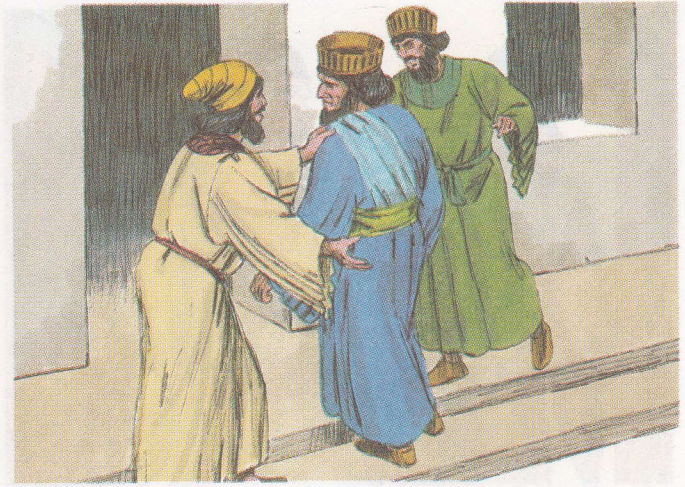
7 About five years after Esther became queen of Persia, the Jews of that land faced a great danger. It all began when a man named Haman received a promotion from the king.



8 King Xerxes made Haman greater than anyone else in the land. He even ordered that all his servants must bow down before Haman. But one person refused to do that — Esther's cousin, Mordecai.



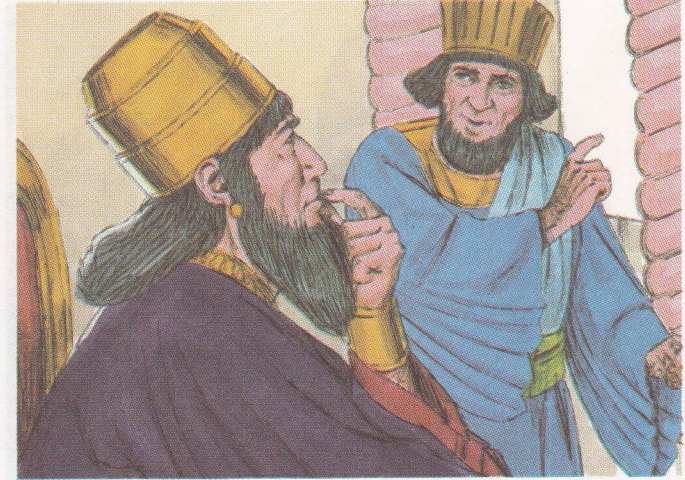
9 The other servants asked Mordecai why he did not obey the king. The only explanation he ever gave them was that he was a Jew. Every day they tried to get him to bow down before Haman.



10 Finally, they reported Mordecai to Haman. They wondered if he would let Mordecai get away with this. Haman was furious when he heard that Mordecai refused to bow down before him.



11 Haman wanted to get even with Mordecai. He was so angry that he worked out a plan to kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews living in Persia.



12 He persuaded King Xerxes that all the Jews were unlawful and should be destroyed. A decree was issued: "On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all the Jews will be put to death."