

ESTHER



The Book of Esther

True stories of real people and their exciting lives serving the one true God

ESTHER



WRITTEN BY RON BAREFIELD
ILLUSTRATED BY JERRY AND FAITH MCCOLLOUGH

The book of Esther records God's deliverance of His people from a threatened destruction by the wicked Haman, a high official in King Xerxes' court. This took place during the Jewish captivity under the rule of the Persian Empire.

Through a series of unusual circumstances, God arranged for a Jewish girl, Esther, to become Queen, so that she would be in a position to intervene in Haman's plot at mortal risk to her own life, to save the thousands of Jews that Haman planned to massacre. Esther's faith in God for His protection, and obedience in going before the King signalled a national deliverance of the Jews still celebrated today as the feast of Purim.

Lessons from the book of Esther:

1. though evil may sometimes prosper and good people may suffer, eventually God will reverse the order;
2. God's care for his people may not always be apparent, but nevertheless it is being exercised;
3. God foresees and provides for every emergency - with Him nothing happens by chance.

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I've just heard a story about Cinderella.

This poor girl had two wicked stepsisters who made her do all the work. But one day she got to go to a royal ball in a carriage made from a pumpkin. She was the most beautiful maiden at the ball in her elegant gown and glass slippers that fit only her tiny feet. But at the stroke of midnight her carriage turned back into a pumpkin and...



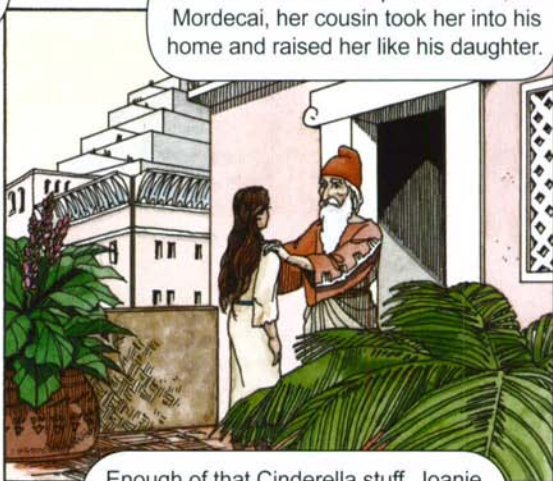
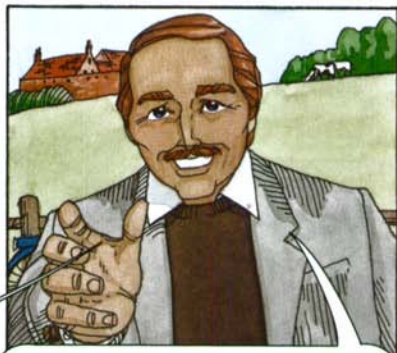
Wait a minute!
Wait a minute! That's not a true story. That's a fairy tale!



But I do know a true story from the Bible that is even better than Cinderella.



Just turn the page.



This is a story about a poor orphan girl named Esther.

When both of her parents died, Mordecai, her cousin took her into his home and raised her like his daughter.

Did she have wicked step-sisters?

Enough of that Cinderella stuff, Joanie. Let me continue with this **TRUE** story.

This Story of Esther begins in the year 483 B.C. in the ancient Persian Empire. Xerxes was the king of this vast empire that stretched from what we know today as Pakistan all the way to the African country of Sudan. Altogether, he ruled 127 provinces.



Esther, Esther come here.




Yes Mordecai?




The king has just disposed of Queen Vashti because she would not obey one of his commands. Now he wants all the young maidens in the provinces to be brought together and be presented to him. He'll choose one of them to be the next Queen.

You're so beautiful, Esther, I know he will choose you.







Did she have big or little feet?



Now Joanie, if you bring up Cinderella again, you'll have to leave.




I told you this is a true story, not a fairy tale. This really happened. You can read it for yourself in the Bible. Esther has a book named after her in the Bible.



Wow! A book named after her. I'll be quiet until the stroke of midnight.

JOANIE!



Okay, okay, just don't turn me into a pumpkin.



Where were we before Joanie interrupted us?

Oh, yes, Queen Vashti had just been dethroned and Mordecai had arranged for Esther to be one of the maidens to be presented to King Xerxes.

Esther was first brought to Hegai, who was in charge of all the women in King Xerxes' palace.



And who is this beautiful young maiden?



I am Esther.



Hegai liked Esther and assigned seven maids to take care of her. He gave her the best place possible to live.

For the next year the maidens were given beauty treatments to make sure they would look their best when presented to the king.



For six months they were treated with oil and myrrh...
...and for six months with perfumes and cosmetics.

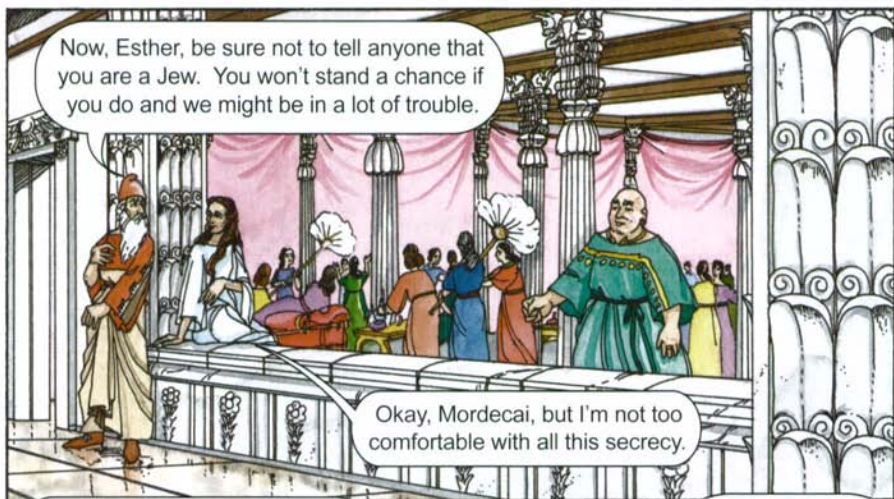
Well, not Freddy.

Would you please quit interrupting the story?
We've finally gotten Joanie calmed down.

Wow, even
Freddy would look
presentable after
a year of that.

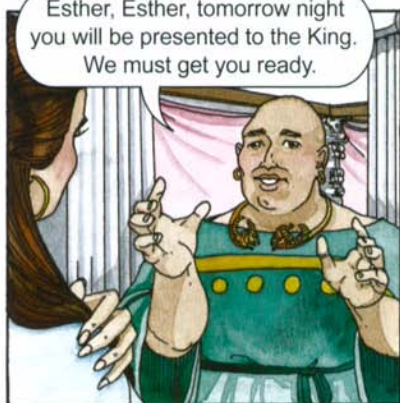


Now, Esther, be sure not to tell anyone that
you are a Jew. You won't stand a chance if
you do and we might be in a lot of trouble.



Okay, Mordecai, but I'm not too
comfortable with all this secrecy.

Esther, Esther, tomorrow night
you will be presented to the King.
We must get you ready.



...and these
jewels in your hair

Wear this
beautiful robe...



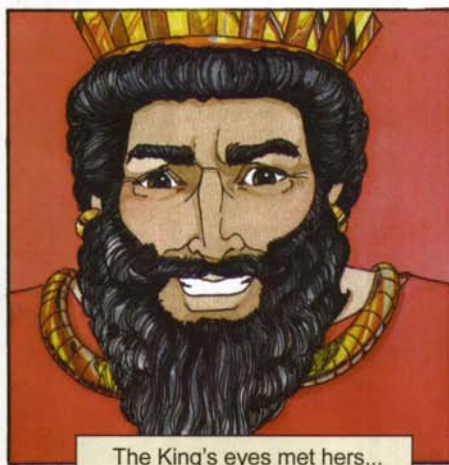
When Esther approached the King's court she was dazzled by the beauty - the marble, the alabaster, the linen and purple drapes. Even the floor was mother of pearl.



But when she walked into the room it was as if everything else dulled. She walked with confidence and radiance no one else had ever seen.



Her eyes met the King's...

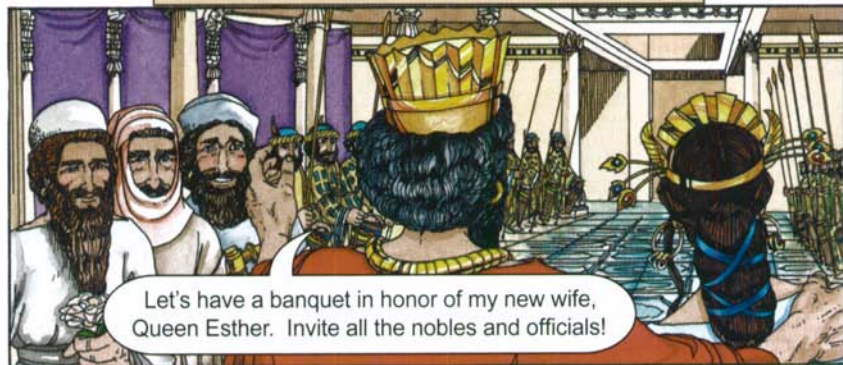


The King's eyes met hers...

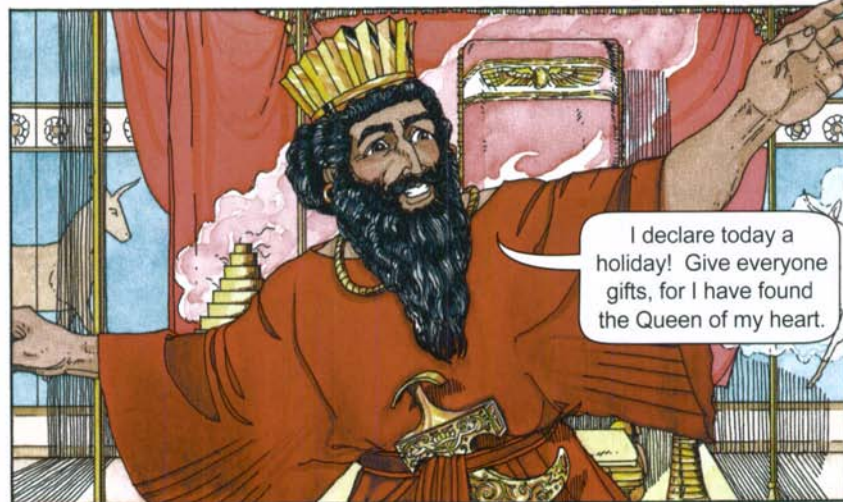
It was love.



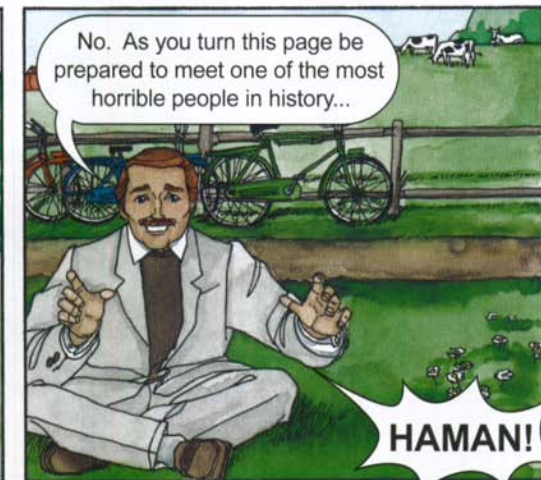
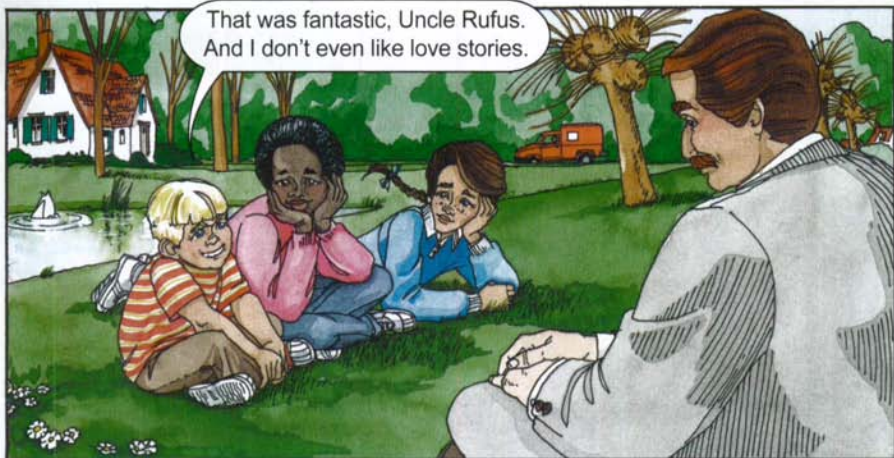
The contest was over. The King had found his Queen.



Let's have a banquet in honor of my new wife, Queen Esther. Invite all the nobles and officials!



I declare today a holiday! Give everyone gifts, for I have found the Queen of my heart.



Haman the Horrible, I like to call him.

Ugh! He needs a thousand years of those myrrh and oil treatments!

Man, is he ugly!

This is a family comic book. Why did you put someone so awful in here?

Well, he probably didn't look that bad. But when you learn about his deeds you'll think he did.

Haman was ruthless. He did everything he could to promote himself.

What can we do today to make Haman look better?

Who can I take advantage of?

Who can I hurt?

I've got King Xerxes right where I want him. He's so caught up in his pleasures he lets me run his kingdom!



King Xerxes liked Haman so much he decreed that everyone should bow down and pay honor to him.



Hail to Haman!

Haman is great!

All glory to Haman!

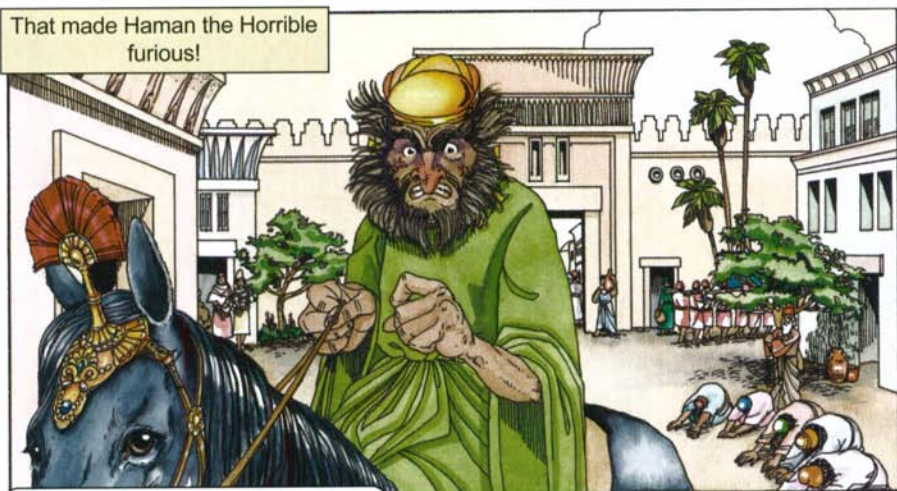
Everyone bowed down to him. Everyone that is, but Mordecai.



I only bow down to the Lord God of Israel.

I will not bow down to that MAN!

That made Haman the Horrible furious!



I've got a plan that will get Mordecai.



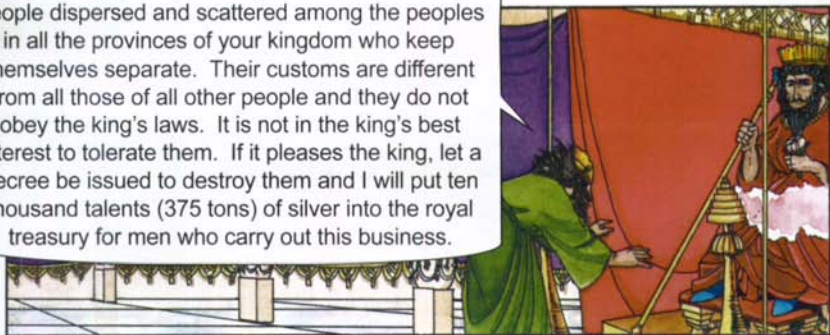
No, not just Mordecai...



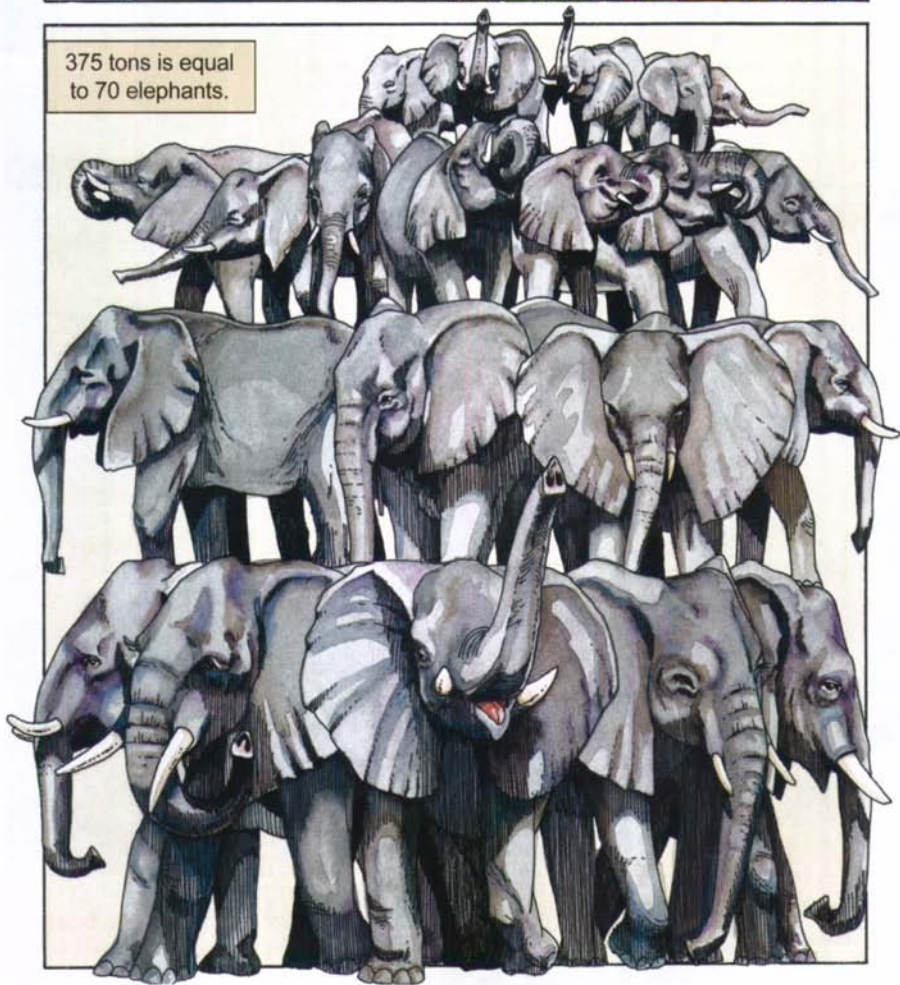
I'll get ALL the Jews!!!



Oh, Mighty King Xerxes, there is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from all those of all other people and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them and I will put ten thousand talents (375 tons) of silver into the royal treasury for men who carry out this business.



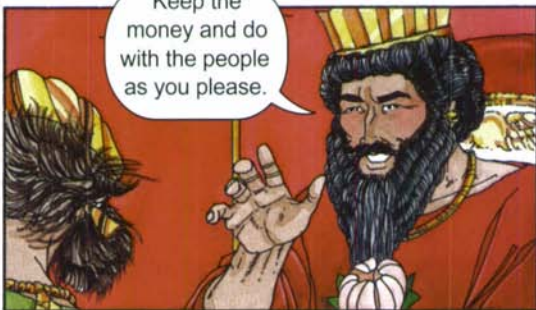
375 tons is equal to 70 elephants.



The king took off his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman.



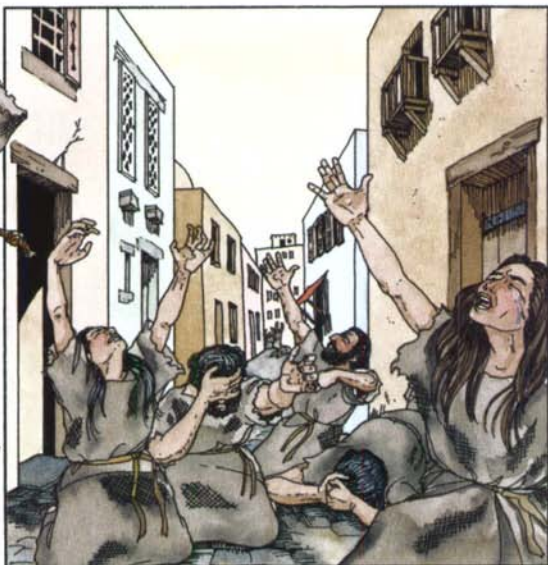
Keep the money and do with the people as you please.



Ah HA, I've got Mordecai now. He'll wish now that he kissed my feet.



When Mordecai heard what happened, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly.



In every province to which the edict of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

Queen Esther heard about Mordecai's concerns.

Hathach, go find Mordecai and find out what is troubling him.

Queen Esther, Mordecai says that King Xerxes has signed a decree that will have every Jew put to death on the 13th day of the 12th month.

He wants you to go to the king and get him to change the law.

But if I go to the inner court of the king without his invitation there is but one fate for me...DEATH!!!
The only exception is for the king to extend his golden scepter and spare the life of the intruder. It has been 30 days since I was called to go to the king.

Mordecai sent back the message...

Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all Jews will escape. Who knows, maybe it was for a time like this that you were made Queen?

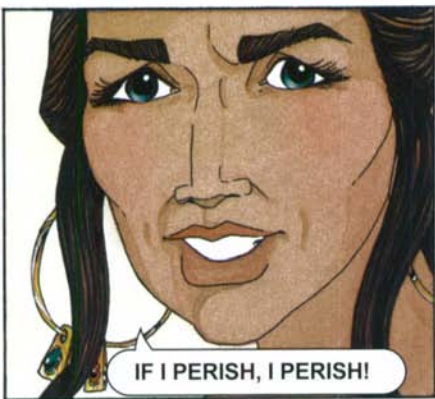
Tell Mordecai to gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day.



I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king even though it is against the law.



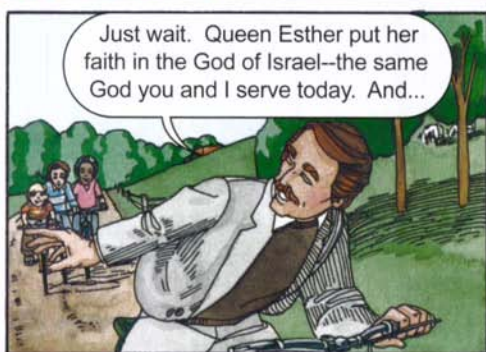
IF I PERISH, I PERISH!



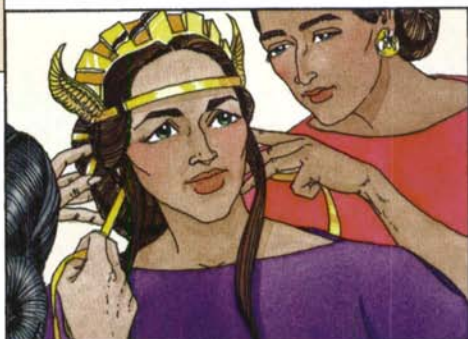
Good question, Joanie. When a person fasts, they do without food. When I fast I am usually trying to find out what God wants me to do. The hunger pains are a constant reminder to me to be in prayers concerning the purpose of my fast.

Uncle Rufus, what is a fast?



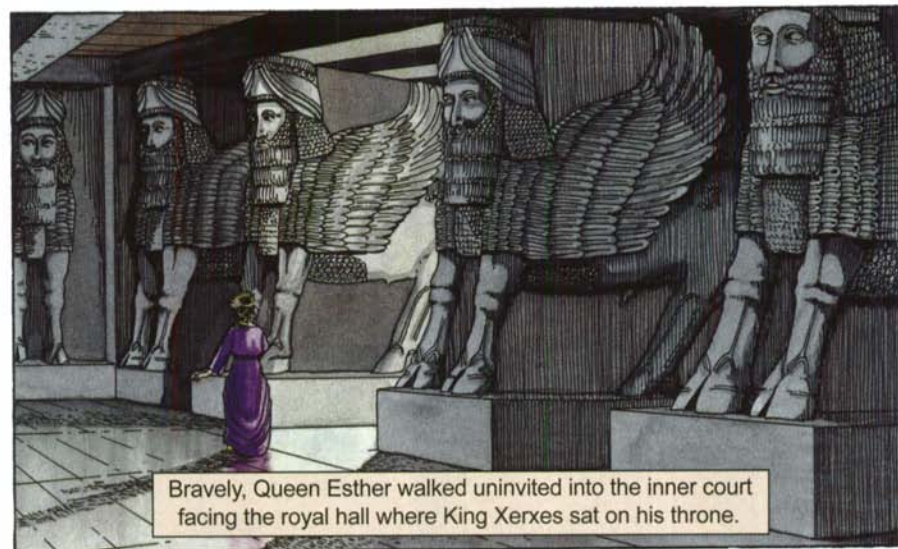


As soon as three days of fasting were over, Queen Esther dressed in royal purple.

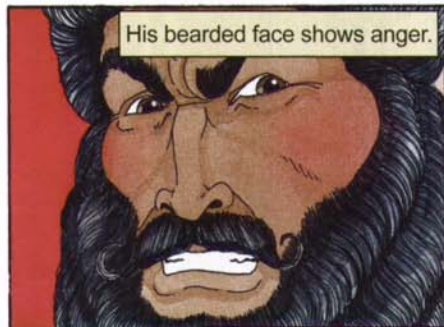
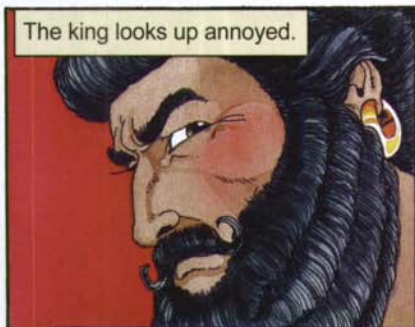
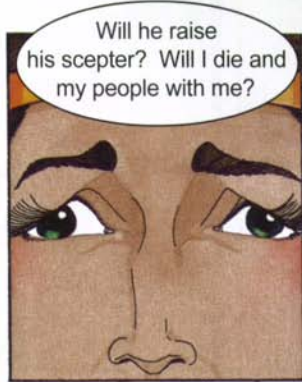
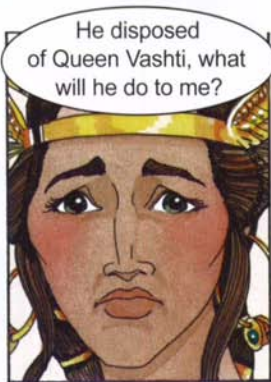


She had her hair braided in gold. She was as beautiful as the day she was chosen Queen over all other maidens.

I must be confident.
If I perish, I perish. But I
must save my people.



Bravely, Queen Esther walked uninvited into the inner court facing the royal hall where King Xerxes sat on his throne.



BE VERY CAREFUL AS YOU TURN THE PAGE.
PLEASE DON'T MAKE ANY NOISE.
PLEASE DON'T MAKE THE KING ANGRY!

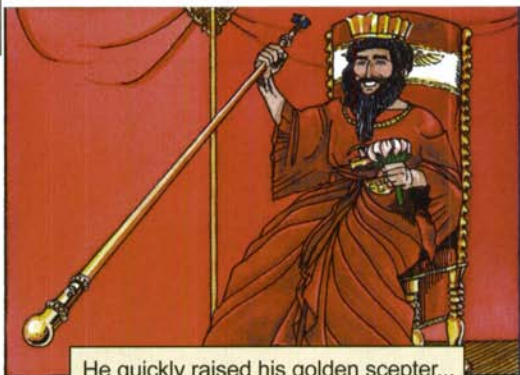
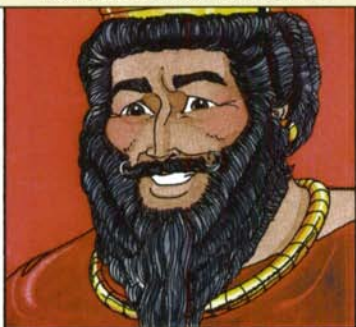




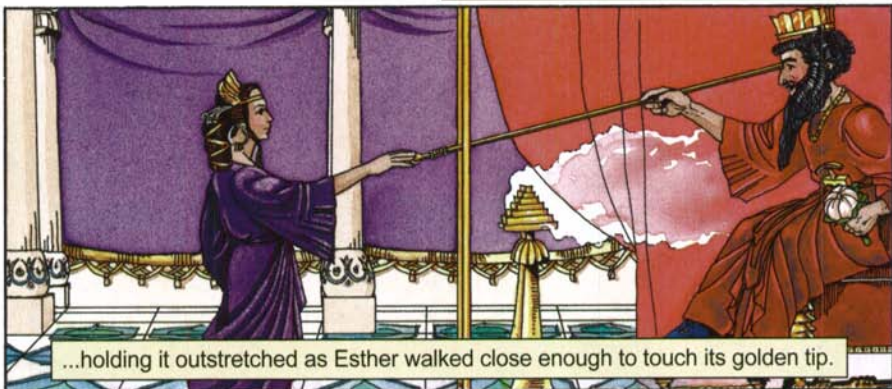
Now we asked you to please be quiet! We'll do this one more time. Now please don't do anything to make the king more angry.

Okay, we'll try one more time. Please, please be quiet!! Turn this page very carefully.

When the king saw Queen Esther, his frown melted into a smile.



He quickly raised his golden scepter...



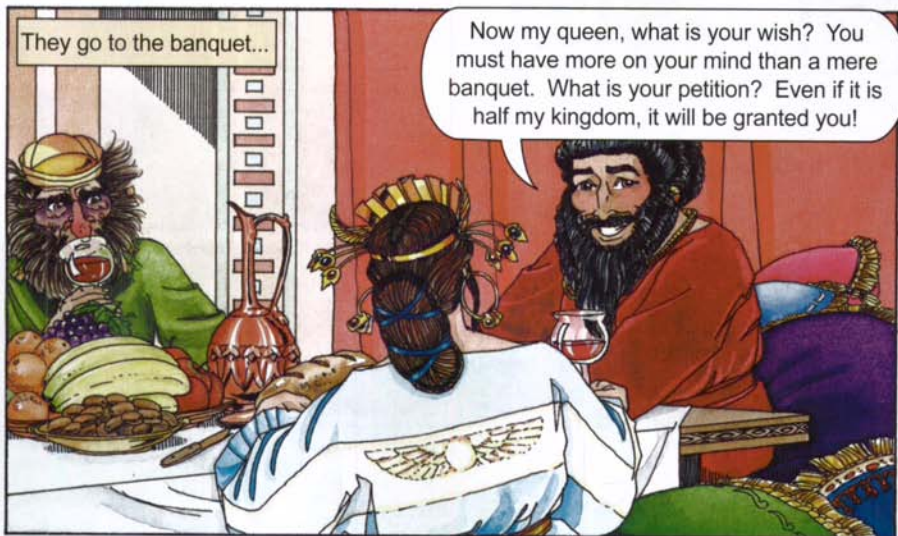
...holding it outstretched as Esther walked close enough to touch its golden tip.


Now, my queen, what is your wish? It will be granted up to half the kingdom!



If it please your majesty, let the king and Haman attend the banquet I have prepared for the king.








Even the queen recognizes how important I am. And why not? I do all the work in the kingdom...




...and I am more handsome than the king. I can't say that I blame the queen for wanting me at her banquet.


As Haman leaves the banquet, he sees Mordecai at the gate.



That Jew! He keeps sitting at that gate and refuses to bow before the mighty Haman. What am I going to do?



Zeresh, that Mordecai has just ruined what would have been the best day of my life. I've been invited to another banquet with the royal couple, and he just sits there at the gate refusing to bow to me.



Have gallows erected and tell the king first thing in the morning that Mordecai must be hanged on it. Then you can enjoy the king and queen's banquet knowing that you are rid of Mordecai. You won't have to wait until the 13th day of the 12th month. You'll be rid of him now.

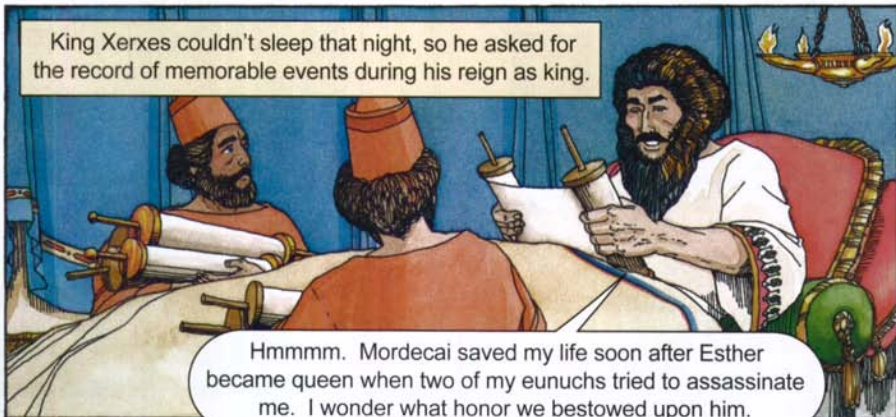
Build me a gallows tonight!



I have a Jew to hang in the morning!
What a wonderful morning it will be.
I can't wait. I must go to the king tonight.

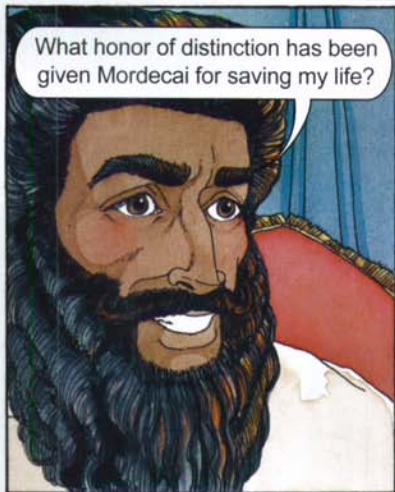


King Xerxes couldn't sleep that night, so he asked for the record of memorable events during his reign as king.

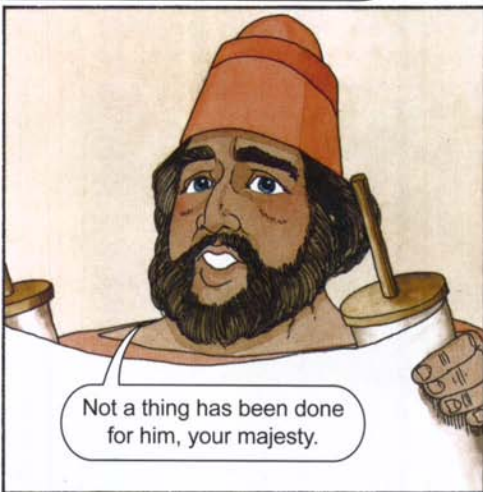


Hmmm. Mordecai saved my life soon after Esther became queen when two of my eunuchs tried to assassinate me. I wonder what honor we bestowed upon him.

What honor of distinction has been given Mordecai for saving my life?



Not a thing has been done for him, your majesty.

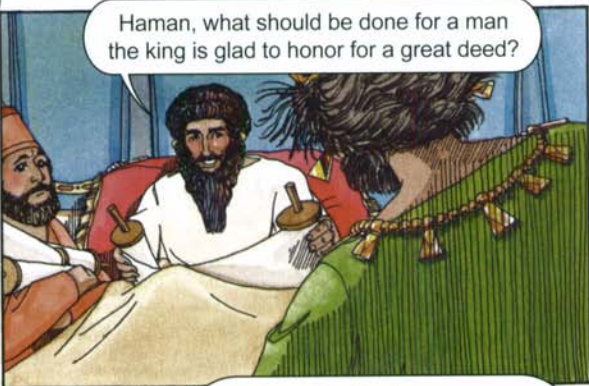





Who's that in the outer court?



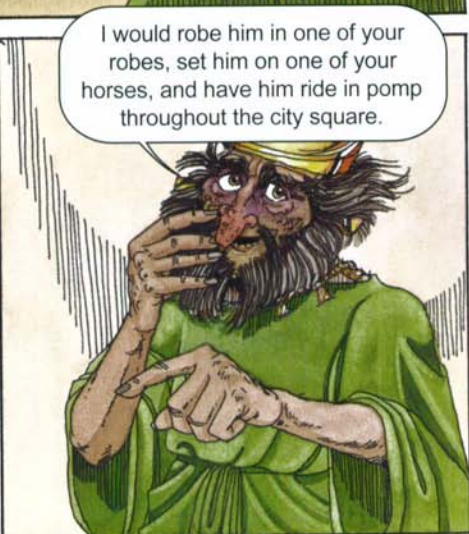
It's me, Haman, your majesty.



Haman, what should be done for a man the king is glad to honor for a great deed?



Well, the king is finally going to recognize me for all I have done for him.

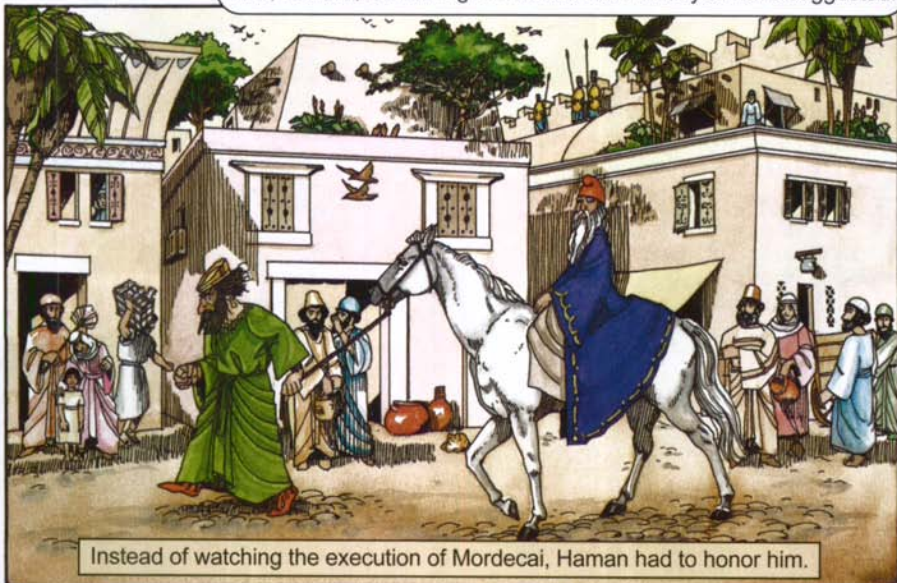


I would robe him in one of your robes, set him on one of your horses, and have him ride in pomp throughout the city square.

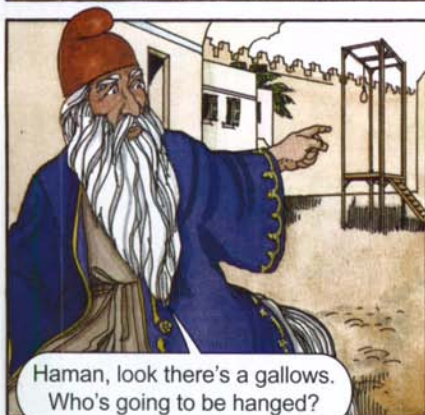
Haman, do so to Mordecai, the Jew who sits at the royal gate.



And, Haman, let nothing be omitted from what you have suggested.



Instead of watching the execution of Mordecai, Haman had to honor him.



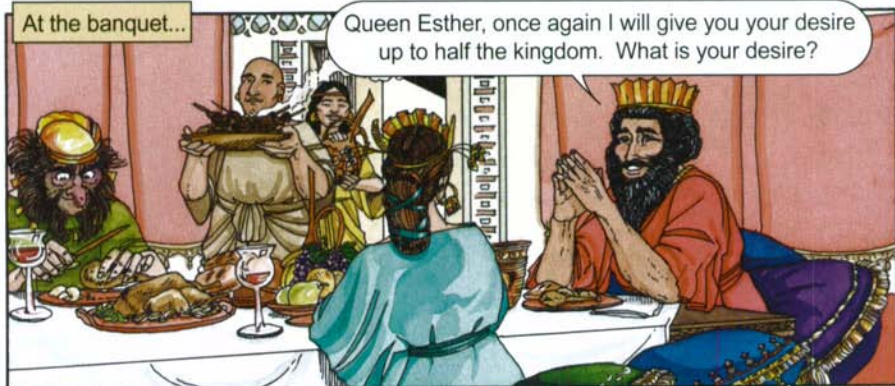
Haman, look there's a gallows.
Who's going to be hanged?



It was
supposed to be
YOU, JEW!

At the banquet...

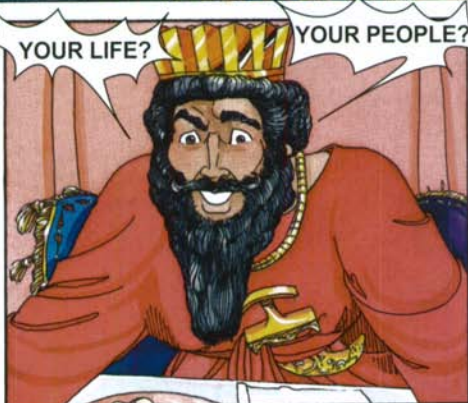
Queen Esther, once again I will give you your desire up to half the kingdom. What is your desire?



If it please your majesty, then may my life be granted me at my petition, and my people at my request.



YOUR LIFE? YOUR PEOPLE?



We have been sold. Sold to be destroyed, to be killed, to be obliterated. I beg you for our lives, my king, my husband!



Who is the man who dared contemplate such a thing?



HAMAN!



As Haman cowers in fear...



...the king leaves in a rage.



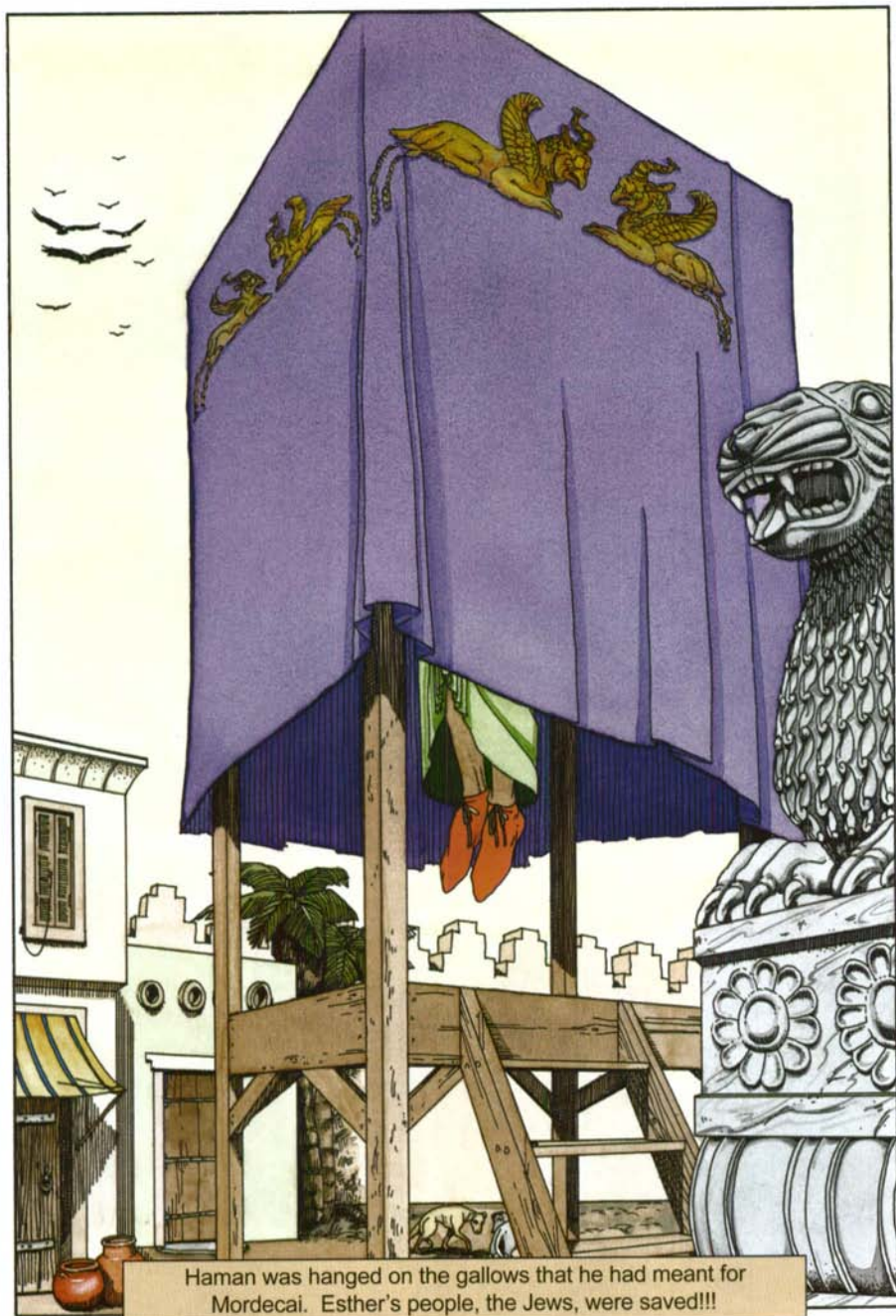
While he is gone, Haman pleads with Queen Esther for his life.



The king returns with his soldiers.



HANG HIM IMMEDIATELY!



Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had meant for Mordecai. Esther's people, the Jews, were saved!!!

Fantastic story, Uncle Rufus!



Wow! Haman got what he deserved.

Now, I'd like to tell you about another person.

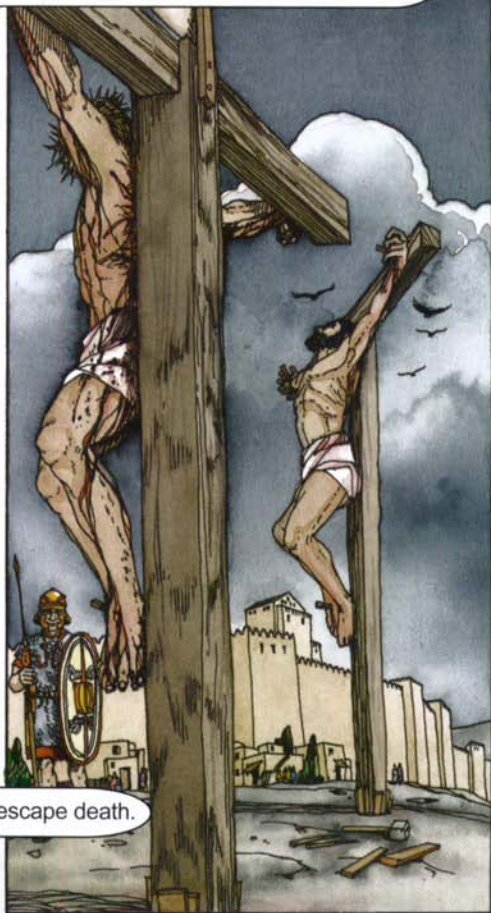
This person died on a cross to save you and me.



He had done no wrong, just like Mordecai had done no wrong.



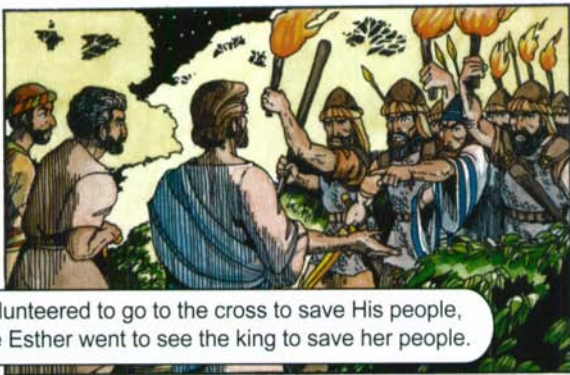
But he didn't escape death.



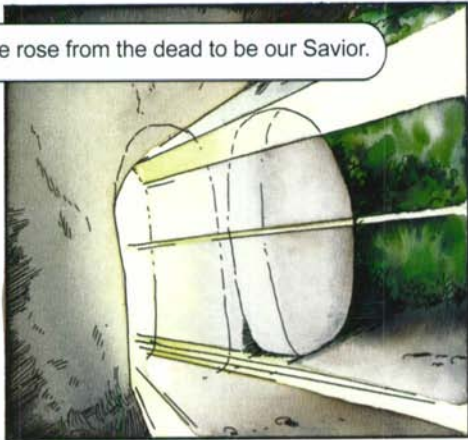
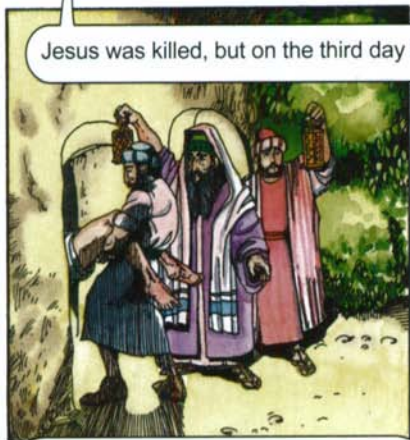
That person is Jesus Christ.



He volunteered to go to the cross to save His people, just like Esther went to see the king to save her people.



Jesus was killed, but on the third day he rose from the dead to be our Savior.



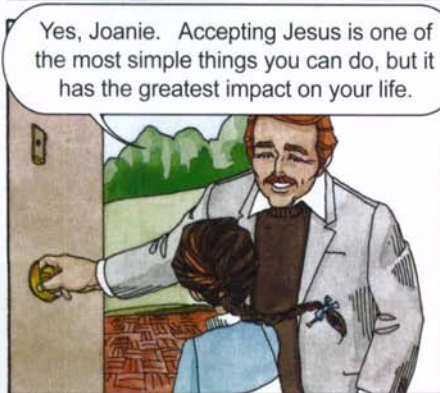
Uncle Rufus, I've heard about Jesus, but I've never accepted him as my Savior. I'd like to do that today.



That's the best thing you could do, Joanie.



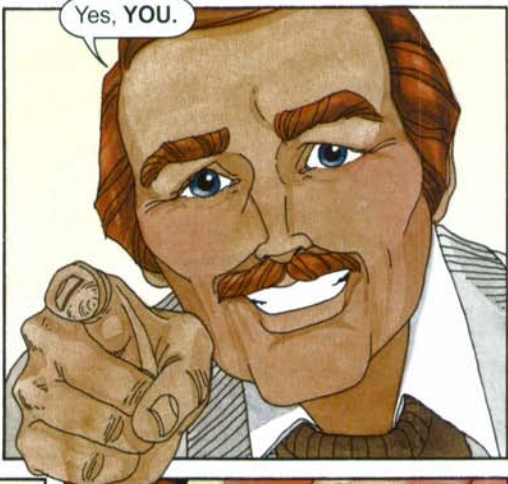
Pray this prayer with me and ask Jesus to come into your heart.



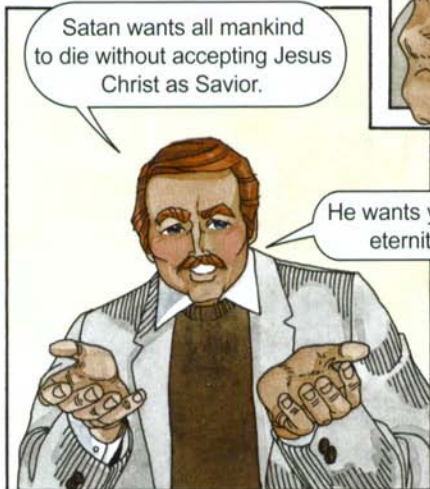
Now, I'd like to talk with you.



Yes, YOU.



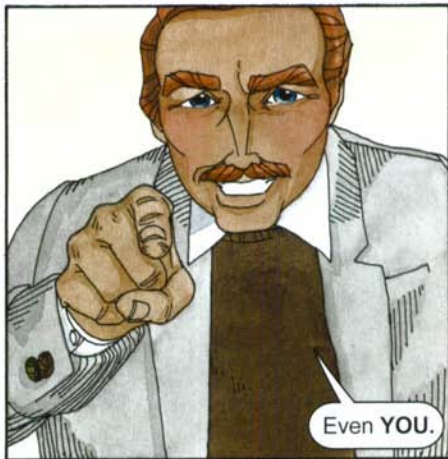
Satan wants all mankind to die without accepting Jesus Christ as Savior.



He wants you to spend eternity in hell.

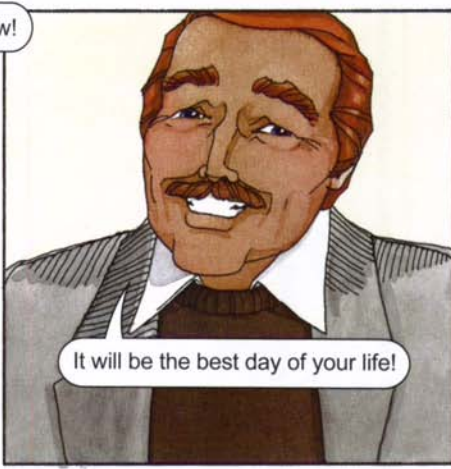
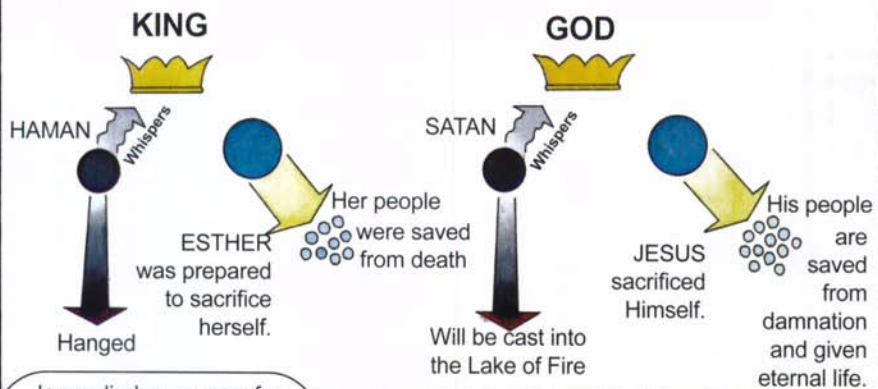


However, Jesus was sent by God to save mankind from this fate.




Even YOU.

Just as Esther was prepared to sacrifice herself for her people, Jesus was a sacrifice for ALL people.






Pray this prayer with me.



Jesus,
I realize
that I have sinned.
I ask you to forgive me.
I accept you as
my Lord and Savior.
Please come into
my heart and
make me the kind
of person you
want me to be.



Now, find a church that believes the Bible,
and go to it. Pray every day. Read your Bible.
Remember that Jesus loves you and is the
best friend you will ever have. He'll be with
you always.

Oh, yes, ...and tell someone else!

Ron Barefield began his writing career as a sportswriter, but has been writing the past 25 years with missions organizations helping build the church of Jesus Christ around the world. He enjoys writing these "Heroes of the Faith" books.



Jerry and Faith McCollough have been illustrating evangelistic material since 1987. They graduated from Woodbury University in Los Angeles, California with degrees in commercial art, but for 20 years Jerry worked in city government and Faith was a stay at home mom.

Spreading the Gospel through illustration is the realization of a long held dream for them.

ALSO AVAILABLE IN THIS

HEROES OF THE FAITH

SERIES:

DAVID, GIDEON & THE CHRISTMAS STORY

...AND COMING SOON:

PETER



IN THIS ISSUE

ESTHER

A poor orphan girl, raised by her uncle, risked her life to save her people from certain death! Will she be able to save herself as well?



KING XERXES

A mighty King of the ancient Persian Empire who ruled 127 provinces!



All the young maidens from the provinces are to be brought before him to choose his next Queen. Whom will he choose?



HAMAN

A ruthless and powerful man in the kingdom of King Xerxes. He enjoyed the favor of the king while scheming wicked plans to eliminate the Jews. Will his plan succeed?

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