

Esther Series

Revised – August 2010

Good News Bible Studies

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Pride Has Its Price

Esther 6

The King's Heart is Stirred (Esther 6:1-3)

1. “During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king” (Esther 6:1)
 - It’s not unusual for a person to go to bed and find it difficult to sleep and there are many possible reasons that King Ahasuerus experienced a restless night.
 - 1) Somehow, I don’t think insomnia was a new issue given his chosen lifestyle which probably caused or created many problems that he had to wrestle with before retiring to bed.
 - 2) On this particular night however, it is fairly easy to conclude that the Lord was the one responsible for bringing on this particular restlessness.
 - This sleepless night took place the evening before the second banquet that Esther prepared in which she was going to inform the king as to what was troubling her.
 - 1) If you recall, Esther had prepared an earlier banquet to inform the king about Haman’s plan but she chose not to and it was at this second banquet that she planned to expose Haman.
 - 2) It is not difficult to conclude that the Lord was at work and His timing was perfect as He guides this entire course of events with the ultimate goal of saving the Jews from extinction.
 - *Does the Lord stir your heart? Do you sometimes find yourself having a restless night and wonder if the Lord is trying to bring something to your mind? What do you do in those situations?*

- Take note that King Ahasuerus requests that the **“book of records”** be brought to him and read in his presence:
 - 1) These records were chronicled events in Persian history that were noteworthy and were often very detailed. (see Ezra 6:1-2)
 - 2) The Greek historian Herodotus who wrote during the 5th century noted that the king kept extremely detailed records of those who served him well.
 - 3) What is interesting is that in all of the recorded events that they could have chosen to read that took place up to this point during the king’s 12 year reign, they chose the portion that spoke of Mordecai helping to save the king from assassination. *What were the chances of this happening? Do you think that the Lord had anything to do with them choosing this part of Persian history that happened 5 years earlier to read to the king?*

- Is it unusual for the Lord to guide the paths of kings, be they followers of Him or not? (What are some Biblical examples of this?)

- It is worth noting that this king, who had everything at his disposal (musicians, dancers, alcohol and drugs) to bring him to a deep sleep or at least take his mind off of what was troubling him and rid him of this insomnia, just couldn’t seem to.

- What becomes abundantly clear is that the Lord is at work in both the heart of the king and also in guiding him to the right historical record.

2. “It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuch’s who were doorkeepers, that they sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. The king said, what honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? Then the king’s servants who attended him said, nothing has been done for him” (Esther 6:2-3)

- This recorded event involved the assassination attempt by two of the king’s eunuchs or body guards. (Esther 2:21-23)

1) If you recall, Mordecai had overheard their plot to kill the king and reported it to Queen Esther who then reported it to the king.

2) The two eunuch’s (Bigthan and Teresh) were found guilty and subsequently hanged on the gallows for their subversive act.

- The king apparently had no recollection of this event and questions those around him as to what was done for Mordecai in return for his heroic act?

1) An apparent bureaucratic oversight had taken place some 5 years back that the king was now going to make right.

2) What is important to note is the Lord’s sovereign working through a situation in which things looked pretty grim for the Jews and this little shift in the king’s awareness of Mordecai’s assistance some 5 years earlier would set in motion a plan to rescue them from annihilation.

3) Can you think of other Biblical events in which the Lord worked His will even though the circumstances seemed grim?

3. While all of this is going on; Haman was busy preparing for Mordecai’s execution, and the Lord was clearly at work. The stage was set for a reversal of fortune in which Mordecai would be _____ and Haman would be _____.

Mordecai is Honored (Esther 6:4-11)

1. “So the king said, who is in the court? Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. The king’s servant said to him, behold Haman is standing in the court, and the king said let him come in. So Haman came in and the king said to him, **what is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?** And Haman said to himself, whom would the king desire to honor more than me? (Esther 6:4-6)

- It appears here that Haman’s status as Prime Minister was still in good standing as he had the privilege of being inside the outer court with an anticipation of having a meeting with the king.
 - 1) It’s a little odd to me that the king asks “who is in the court” which would seem to indicate either a lax security force or Haman may have wielded an immense amount of authority and power.
 - 2) I think that Haman was a bit of a schemer and schmoozer and had the wool pulled over the king’s eyes and those protecting the king may well have been more afraid of Haman than they were the king.
- What was the reason than Haman was there to speak with the king?
- The king did not appear to know what was on Haman’s mind and he poses a question to Haman based on his most recent discovery of what Mordecai had done for him some 5 years earlier - **what is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?** Who is the king speaking of?
- At this point, Haman is not aware of what the king has discovered and makes the prideful assumption that the king must be talking about him. He answers the question to himself; **whom would the king desire to honor more than me?**
- This is not at all what the king is thinking and the tables were about to be turned and a reversal of fortune awaits Haman.

2. “Then Haman said to the king, for the man whom the king desires to honor, let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on who head a royal crown has been placed; and let the robe and the horse be handed to one of the king’s most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor” (Esther 6:7-9)

- **Haman thought this was all about him** he and he had a lust for respect from his peers and especially from Mordecai. So his answer to the king was as if this glory was to be bestowed upon him – boy was he in for a big surprise!!
 - 1) Haman advised the king that such a recipient should have the appearance of _____ by wearing royal attire and riding a royal horse.
 - 2) The man whom the king honored should be _____ by one of the king’s most noble princes which would represent the king’s respect and admiration.
 - 3) Haman recommended that the king should _____ this person throughout the city and have him on _____ so that everyone could show him honor and respect as well.
- All of these things would have fed Haman’s ego and had it gone his way he would have seemed invincible.....but things were about to change!
- Haman’s response to the king was driven by internal pride and arrogance
- What are the warning signs of pride and arrogance and how do we distinguish these sinful traits from non-sinful characteristics like confidence and boldness?

3. “Then the king said to Haman, take quickly the robe and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king’s gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said. So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor” (Es. 6:10-11)

- The idea that Haman put forth must have appealed to the king, as he directed this honor to be immediately bestowed on **Mordecai the Jew**.
 - 1) This is a rather abrupt and ironic turn of events and no doubt a complete embarrassment to Haman.
 - 2) Haman’s pride was driven by the desire to be honored and respected by Mordecai and yet now the tables are turned.
 - 3) It must have taken the wind right out of Haman to witness Mordecai as the one to be the recipient of such honor and respect.
 - 4) This is the first of five times that Mordecai is called “**the Jew**” which no doubt had some significance. It was apparently worth noting by the author of the book, that a Jew held a prominent position in the Persian Empire which has some unique irony it itself. (Esther 8:7, 9:29, 9:31, 10:3)
- It does seem a little strange that the king, who calls Mordecai a Jew, did not recall the edict to eliminate the Jews, but instead chooses to honor him. What do you think might be the reason for this?
- Haman had no choice but to carry out the king’s order even though it no doubt made him very _____ and it was a total _____ to him.
- Instead of receiving honor, Haman was humiliated and runs home to tell his wife and friends as to this reversal of fortune.

Haman is Horrified (Esther 6:12-14)

1. “Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered. Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, if Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.” (Esther 6:12-13)
 - The tables are now turned and the Lord has altered the outcome of these two men:
 - 1) **Mordecai** who once stood and _____ grieved for himself and his people, who were facing complete annihilation, was able to return to the king’s gate and preparations were being made to _____ him.
 - 2) **Haman** who once stood to gain a high position in the Persian Kingdom now _____ grieved for he knew his plans to annihilate the Jews and destroy Mordecai was about to change. Instead of returning to the king’s palace, Haman hurries home in complete humiliation and is _____ at the consequences that await him.
 - Haman returned home and told his advisors (wise men) and his wife as to what transpired. After discussing the matter with him they gave him very little hope:
 - 1) They seemed to have recognized the doom that awaited Haman and probably based it on fate, chance or luck which would have been the normal custom as the Persian religion was steeped in omens and signs as a basis for the outcome of events and circumstances.
 - 2) It is also possible that these advisors had an understanding of recorded events surrounding the Jewish people and recognized the fate that awaited Haman was being driven by the God of the Jews.
2. “While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuch’s arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared” (Esther 6:14)..**stay tuned!**