



For Such A Time As This

THE STORY OF ESTHER AND MORDECAI

Part IV – A Tale of Two Choices
Pride vs Humility
Esther 5-7



“On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So, Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.” “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” (Esther 5:1-5)



So, the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.” (Esther 5:6-8)

- ✓ Esther is pretty much on her own as Mordecai had no possible chance at having an audience with the king
- ✓ It's important to note that Esther was taking a big risk in doing this, for Persian culture at the time didn't give equal treatment to women (**just ask Vashti**) and her presence could have been perceived different than intended
- ✓ Whatever the circumstances that caused King Xerxes to respond favorably to Esther – it is clear that the Lord is answering the prayers and supplications of Esther, Mordecai and their people
- ✓ Without knowing her wishes he offers her up to half his kingdom – did he really mean that, and could Esther have held him to it?





“Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king’s gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. (Esther 5:9-11)



“And that’s not all,” Haman added. “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.” His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.” (Esther 5:12-14)

- ✓ Pride has a way of blinding a person and this will become very evident as the story unfolds in chapter 6
- ✓ For now, Haman is in “high spirits” and feeling as though he is on top of the world
- ✓ Haman has a wicked hatred toward Mordecai and this bitterness will completely consume him
- ✓ Note the contrast that you see between the actions and attitude of Haman toward Mordecai and the actions and attitude of a Christ follower.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”
(Ephesians 4:31-32)



You can see the progression of Haman's **pride** which is shown in his **bitterness** and **anger** toward Mordecai

- ✓ Each time Haman would see Mordecai he would seethe with anger which is evidence by his desire to have him killed
- ✓ It is probable that Haman felt that killing Mordecai would remove any organized opposition to his overall diabolical plan to eliminate all Jews and be rid of his enemy forever
- ✓ They suggested that Haman construct a gallows (a stake or pole) and build it so high (50 cubits or 75 feet high) that everyone from all directions could see Mordecai dead
- ✓ The hatred and bitterness seemed to control Haman so much that it worked against him as the gallows that he built to have Mordecai killed would actually be used on himself



C.S. Lewis wrote; “The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride.

Unchastely anger, greed, drunkenness and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison; it was through pride that the devil became the devil; Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind.....as long as you are proud you cannot know God at all. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”



“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Proverbs 16:18



An Ironic Change in Circumstances

Esther 6



“That night the king could not sleep; so, he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered” Esther 6:1-3)

“That night the king could not sleep; so, he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him”

- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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?*



“That night the king could not sleep; so, he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him”

- ✓ The book of chronicles/records were chronicled events in Persian history that were noteworthy and were often very detailed
- ✓ The Greek historian Herodotus who wrote during the 5th century noted that the king kept extremely detailed records of those who served him well
- ✓ *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?

- ✓ “The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery” (Daniel 2:47)
- ✓ “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah” (Ezra1:2)
- ✓ “Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.” (Nehemiah2:5)



The record/chronicle that was found was the assassination plan by two of the kings' bodyguards (Esther 2:21-23)

- ✓ The two eunuch's (Bigthan and Teresh) were previously 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?
- ✓ 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 **honored** and Haman would be **horrified**





“The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him. His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?”
(Esther 6:4-6)

Haman is oblivious

- ✓ 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
- ✓ I think that Haman was a bit of a schemer and schmoozer and had the wool pulled over the king's eyes. Those protecting the king may well have been more afraid of Haman than they were the king
- ✓ 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?





So, he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’” “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for **Mordecai the Jew**, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended” (Esther 6:7-10)

Mordecai is Honored

- ✓ Haman is still thinking this is all about him and advises the king that this individual should be adorned with royal attire
- ✓ Haman even goes as far as to suggest this person be paraded throughout the city so that everyone can show him honor and respect.
- ✓ The king agrees and commands this honor to be bestowed on Mordecai for his actions (5 years prior) in saving the king
- ✓ Haman had no choice but to carry out the king's order even though it no doubt made him very angry and it was a total embarrassment to him
- ✓ Instead of receiving honor, Haman was humiliated





“So, Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!” Afterward Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!” While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.”
(Esther 6:11-14)

Haman is Horrified

- ✓ The tables are now turned, and the Lord has altered the outcome of these two men:
 1. **Mordecai** who once stood and publically 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 honor him
 2. **Haman** who once stood to gain a high position in the Persian Kingdom now privately 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 horrified at the consequences that await him





An Abrupt Turn of Events

Esther 7



“So, the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.

(Esther 7:1-4)

Esther Discloses Her Nationality

- ✓ Take note of how (even though she is the queen) Esther understands that her position and standing with the king is solely at his discretion:
 1. The request that she makes of the king is to spare her and her people from being killed and ultimately annihilated as this was the ultimate plan of that wicked man named Haman
 2. Esther needed for the king to understand that this was no trivial matter. Had her people only been sold into slavery (commonly done to an oppressed class of people in the Persian Empire) she wouldn't have bothered the king, but this was a massacre of all the Jews in the kingdom.



Esther Discloses Her Nationality

- ✓ King Xerxes is in a bit of a conundrum:
 1. The decree was already issued to destroy the Jews throughout the Persian Empire and it carried the signature of the king
 2. The king was bound by that edict and his authority to overturn it was limited, as (per Persian law) the decree could not be altered or revoked.
 3. The King could (as we will see) disrupt the edict by certain allowances and this will give the Jews an opportunity to defend themselves





King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face”
(Esther 7:5-8)

Haman is now Public Enemy #1

- Haman was *terrified*, for he knew that his actions were about to be exposed to the most powerful man on earth (at the time) and his death (execution) was pretty much a sure thing!
- This is an interesting twist of events in which Haman went from being in complete control of the fate of Mordecai, Esther and the entire Jewish race to having his life in the hands of the very ones he intended to kill.
- It is rather ironic that the man who hated the Jews so much was now forced to beg for mercy from the Queen, who was a Jew herself – but Haman's fate was sealed





“Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, “A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.” The king said, “Impale him on it!” So, they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided. (Esther 7:9-10)

Haman is no more

- Harbona (one of the King's seven eunuchs/guards) made sure the king was reminded of what Mordecai had done for him
- This swift action to hang Haman would help the king remove the one responsible for the plot to kill the Jews which would in turn save his beloved queen and satisfy her request of the king
- By removing Haman (killing him) who was the driving force (the leader) behind the plot to kill the Jews, the king would further be helped in staying within the confines of that edict that he himself signed. This advantage will become more obvious as the story continues to unfold in the next chapter



A Big Problem Remained

- The edict to annihilate the Jews throughout the Persian Empire was still in effect. Without a change or removal of the decree (which was impossible in Persian culture), there would be a great slaughter of many innocent people.
- The king's dilemma in trying to protect the life of his queen and the lives of the Jewish people was about to be put to the test as the king was bound by this edict that he himself signed into law.
- Had the edict/decreed been fully carried out as planned by Haman then the Jews would not have continued as a people, the Temple would not have been rebuilt, and ultimately the Messiah would never have been born – God had other plans

