

The Queen and I: For Such a Time as This

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from **Jerry Vines Ministries**
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Let's Begin

In the providence of God, He has given the Jewish people a special place and purpose. They are His chosen people, and His Word tells us that all the nations of the world will be blessed by them (cp. Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18). The three greatest gifts God has given to the world through the Jews are the Scriptures (Rom. 3:2); the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:5); and the gift of salvation through Jesus (John 4:22). In His providence, God has also decreed that the Jews are absolutely indestructible. In fact, God promised that as long as the sun, moon, and stars continue to exist, so will the Jews (Jer. 31:35-37).

Yet, now in the book of Esther we find the will of God and the will of man on a collision course. In Esther 3 a decree has been proclaimed throughout the entire Persian Empire saying the Jewish people are to be destroyed.

The will of God says they are an indestructible people. The will of man says they are to be destroyed. Historians have estimated there were approximately 15 million Jews in the Persian Empire at this time. The empire was a tremendous kingdom and covered almost all the known world. The Jews had nowhere to go. It is at this point in the story we come to the memorable words, "for such a time as this." Using the outline below, let's see how God uses these words in the life of Esther and what they can mean for us today.

I. A Mournful Rue (4:1-9)

II. A Momentous Resolve (4:10-5:8)

III. A Menacing Recourse (5:9-14)

IV. A Meaningful Recognition (6:1-14)

I. A Mournful Rue (4:1-9)

When Mordecai hears about the king's decree, which came about through Haman's malicious lies (cp. 3:8-13), he puts on the mourning clothes of sackcloth and ashes. He then goes into the city wailing with a loud and bitter cry (4:1). He is mourning not only because of the decree but also because he knows he is the one responsible for it. When he arrives outside the king's gate or palace doors, he stands

there but does not enter (v. 2a). As he stays outside, he is letting everyone who does go in and out know that he is grieved by the king's decision. The rest of verse 2 also tells us why Mordecai dared not to enter the king's palace, "... for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth." In those days the kings were protected quite well. Nothing was to come into their presence that would make them

unhappy or sad. Aren't we glad our King is not like that? We can go into the presence of the King of kings with all our sorrows and cares. The Lord is not troubled by our "sackcloth" or our tears. In fact, He is Who we should run to when we are overcome with grief or cares. He is the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and tells us to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7).



Verse 3 lets us know that Mordecai is not the only one in mourning. When the Jews throughout the 127 Persian provinces hear of their impending doom, they also go into mourning. Esther appears to be the only Jew not grieving because of the news. But that is because she does not know about it. Remember, she lives in the palace and is also sheltered from the outside world. She does hear about Mordecai (4:4). He has been like a father to her, so she is grieved because she knows something has grieved him greatly. She sends him clothes so he can change and come into the palace, but he will not receive them. Not understanding why Mordecai does not accept the clothes, Esther sends Hatach,

one of the king's chamberlains, to Mordecai, to find out what is wrong (4:5).

Reflection Connection.

Discuss possible reasons why Mordecai refused to change from his mourning clothes when Esther sent him the new clothes.

It is at this point that Hatach becomes an intermediary between Esther and Mordecai. He goes out to Mordecai and finds out about the plot to destroy the Jews (4:6-7). Mordecai also gives Hatach a copy of the decree to show Esther (4:8). It is not just for information purposes. He tells Hatach to explain to Esther that she needs to go in to the king and ask him to spare her people (4:9). Esther does not

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II. A Momentous Resolve (4:10-5:8)

Verses 10-14 tell us about the conversation between Mordecai and Esther that is carried on with Hatach. First, Esther sends a message to Mordecai and explains to him her delicate position. It had been 30 days since the king had asked to see her. Not only that, everyone knew that those who entered the king's inner court without being invited could be killed unless he held out his golden scepter to accept them (4:11). We already have seen what kind of man Ahasuerus is. He has a hot temper. Vashti lost her crown because she disobeyed him (cp.

1:10-21). He is such a brutal man that he has just approved a decree to destroy an entire race of people.

But Mordecai understands Esther's Divine position (4:13-14). He lets her know first that there is no real protection in the king's palace. Mordecai's words also show that he believes in the providence of God and the indestructibility of his people, the Jews. That's why he says to her, "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place ..."

(4:14a). He knows God will send deliverance another way if Esther is not willing for God to use her.

Mordecai concludes his appeal with these words, "... and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14b). He wants Esther to understand the very reason she had been chosen to be the queen in the first place may have been for this very reason, to save her people.

Esther gives Mordecai her answer in verse 16, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me,



and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise ...” She doesn’t mention prayer, but it surely was the reason for the fasting. That is because in the Bible fasting and prayer always go together (cp. Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9; Ezra 8:21-23; Dan. 9:3). She wants Mordecai and everyone in Shushan to spend three days and nights fasting and praying for her. She is not asking them to do anything she is not willing to do also. She and her maidens will likewise fast. And after the three days, she will then go in to the king.

The last part of verse 16 shows us Esther’s commitment, “... if I perish, I perish.” This was not a grim resignation or complaint. Esther was resolved; whatever the cost, she wanted to do the will of God.

Reflection Connection:

Read Romans 12:1 and discuss how Esther’s words remind us of this verse.

After the three days of fasting, Esther puts on her royal apparel and enters the king’s inner court (5:1). As soon as the king sees her, she “obtained favor in his sight” (5:2). He welcomes her and holds out his golden scepter. In fact, the king is in a very

receptive mood. Using a figure of speech, “even to the half of the kingdom,” he tells Esther he will give her whatever she wants

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(5:3). She responds by inviting the king and Haman to a banquet she has prepared (5:4). In verse 5 we see this is exactly what takes place. Haman has no idea what is really going on. He thinks he is being included because he is “getting in good” with the king and queen. We can only imagine his pride at this time.

At the banquet the king repeats his request (5:6). He had to be intrigued by what Esther really wanted. Esther delays the matter and invites the king and Haman to another banquet on the next day (5:7-8). Some people wonder why Esther didn’t plead for her people right then and

there. But the indication is she had a definite plan and strategy in mind. She understands that timing is very important in life. If we aren’t careful, we can be too hasty at times. When we do this, we can easily miss the Lord’s perfect timing. Never be in a hurry to make decisions. In fact, the greater the decision, the greater should be the delay. We should take even more time to pray and seek God’s guidance in that decision. Psalm 37:23 reminds us, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ...” Notice, it says “the steps,” not “the leaps.”

The right place is also an important issue in life. It is possible the first banquet was in an area where there were a lot of people. Esther wants Haman to be in a place where he will be totally caught off guard. There is a timing issue. There is a place issue. But there is also a providence issue. The providence of God is at work right here. God is getting all the pieces of the puzzle together. Something else has to take place here. God has a plan and a purpose. The providence of God moves slowly but deliberately.

III. A Menacing Recourse (5:9-14)

When Haman leaves Esther’s banquet and knows he had been invited to a second banquet, he has a “glad heart” (5:9a).

He’s a happy man because he thinks he’s getting in good with the king’s wife. But his happiness is interrupted when

he passes by Mordecai (5:9b). Even with the decree against the Jews, Mordecai still refuses to bow before him. This infuriates



Haman. He refrains from doing anything but goes home and calls for his friends and wife (5:10).

With everyone gathered together, Haman starts boasting (5:11-12).

Notice the personal pronouns Haman uses. He talks about “his” riches, “his” children, and how the king promoted and advanced “him.” He is also careful to let them know he was the only one invited to Esther’s banquet with the king, and she had invited him to another banquet the next day. Haman had a definite pride problem. But the Bible has a lot to say about pride. Proverbs 16:18 warns, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 29:23 adds, “A man’s pride shall bring him low ...” In God’s economy, the way up is down and the way down is up. When

we think about it, we don’t have anything to be proud of in our lives. It is God’s amazing grace that “saved a wretch like me!”

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Besides having a problem with pride, Haman has a problem with malice. After bragging about everything, he says “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew sitting at the king’s gate (5:13). He doesn’t just hate Mordecai, he wants him dead. Haman’s wife, Zeresh, has the solution. She tells him to build a gallows fifty cubits or 75 feet high to hang

Mordecai on the next day. Then he could go “merrily” with the king to Esther’s banquet (5:14). The word “gallows” literally means a tree. Because of this, it was believed that a gallows was a tree that people were impaled on. It was similar to crucifixion. Haman’s wife’s advice was to impale Mordecai on a tree so high that everybody in this city would see him hanging on that tree. Look at how Haman responds, “... And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made” (5:14c).

Reflection Connection

Read Proverbs 5:21-22 and discuss why these verses can encourage us even when it looks like the wicked are in control.

IV. A Meaningful Recognition (6:1-14)

Chapter 2 told us about Mordecai discovering an assassination plot against the king (2: 21-23). He received no honor or recognition for saving the king’s life. The event was simply recorded in the king’s chronicles and forgotten. We are going to come back to that account now and see it becomes a turning point in our story. We have said Esther is a book about the providence of God. A part of His providence is the matter of timing. God always knows what He is doing and has

a reason for His delays.

“On that night” the king cannot sleep and has the historical records brought to him (6:1). It doesn’t sound like anything big is getting ready to take place. In fact, it may seem like a little thing. But it is amazing how God can take little things, things that don’t seem to be very important, and work through them. There had to be numerous history volumes that could have been read to the king. In fact, there were many other things

Ahasuerus could have chosen to do that night. But on that particular night, he wants the historical records read, and they just happen to read to him the account of Mordecai saving his life.

The king’s realization that nothing had been done for Mordecai again reminds us of God’s sovereignty. If Mordecai had been rewarded when he first saved the king, his heroism may have become a long-forgotten event. The king discovers



nothing had been done and is ready to remedy it (6:2-3). Again, we see God's perfect timing. It is at that point that Haman enters the king's court to ask the king permission to hang Mordecai (6:4). Isn't that interesting? The very moment the king decides he's going to honor Mordecai, Haman arrives wanting to hang Mordecai.

Before Haman can make his request, the king asks him what should be done for a man the king wants to honor (6:5-6). Because of his pride, Haman thinks the king is talking about him and gives his suggestions (6:7-9). The man should wear the king's royal robes and ride the king's horse. And then one of the king's most noble princes should lead him throughout the city and proclaim the king was honoring this man.

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The king likes Haman's idea and tells him to hurry and do just as he said for Mordecai the Jew (6:10). We can only imagine how stunned Haman must have felt when he heard the honor was for Mordecai. He doesn't dare contradict the king. Instead he has to lead Mordecai through the city (6:11). Afterwards, he

hurries back to his own home. Now it is his turn to mourn (6:12). In chapter 5, Haman had come home bragging. Now he comes home dejected and completely humiliated.

Haman tells his wife and friends everything that had happened (6:13). Without realizing how prophetic their words were, they tell him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." They understand that judgment is ahead for Haman. While they are talking with him, the king's chamberlains come to escort him to Esther's banquet (6:14).

Reflection Connection:

Read Genesis 12:3 and discuss why Haman was doomed for wanting Mordecai's death.

Wrap Up

We have the advantage of knowing how the story of Esther ends. We need to realize that Esther did not know but had to live by believing and understanding she was where she was "for such a time as this." What does that mean for us today? We are also part of God's purpose and plan. Wherever He has placed us, we are there "for such a time as this." The questions we need to ask ourselves are, "Do we understand this, and are we letting the Lord use us to accomplish His purpose and plan?" Let's follow Esther's example and present ourselves as living sacrifices to our Lord!

