

## ESTHER - "SUCH A TIME AS THIS"

**By Keith Greer**

A great king, after subduing Egypt and Babylon, determined to have a feast. He invited all the princes of his empire. From the text, we learn that "wine flowed in abundance." The king's wife, Queen Vashti, was a very beautiful woman. After the feast, he commanded that she come and parade her beauty before the drunken men. What did she do? "But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him." {Esther 1:12} In his rage, he listened to his counselors and decided to remove Vashti from the throne and to replace her with another woman who would be his queen. Later, after he was sober, he regretted his decision.

So 400 virgins of the kingdom were prepared. From among them, the king would choose a new queen. One of these virgins was a young Jewish girl named Esther. Mordecai, her uncle, following the death of her parents, was raising her as his own daughter. He instructed her not to tell anyone of her Jewish heritage. After a year of preparation, she came before the king. "The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti." {Esther 2:17} So Esther became queen.

The king had promoted to the chief position a prince named Haman. One day, as Mordecai sat before the king's gate, he overheard a plot against the king. He informed Esther, and she told the king, who, upon confirming that indeed there was a plot, hanged the men. The event was recorded in the king's chronicle. Haman demanded, and received, homage from the people by having them bow before him. But Mordecai would not bow. Haman's anger went far beyond what he felt for Mordecai. "But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus--the people of Mordecai." {Esther 3:6} He tricked the king into signing a decree against the people whom Haman claimed were not keeping the king's law. It was determined that, at a set time, they would all be killed. Haman intended to rid the land of the Jews!

When Mordecai heard of Haman's plot, he was greatly distressed, as were all the Jews in the land (Esther 4:1-6). Mordecai sent Esther a copy of the decree. He wanted her to go to the king and ask him to set it aside. She replied: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." {Esther 4:11} Mordecai replied: "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" {Esther 4:14} Esther must choose between her own life or the lives of her people. "Go, gather

all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" {Esther 4:16}

In preparation, Esther put on her royal robes and stood outside the king's court. The king saw her and held out the golden scepter. "...If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared." {Esther 5:4,5}

Why have a banquet for the man who plans to kill your people? Esther had a plan of her own. "...What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done...If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said." {Esther 5:6,8} Haman is joyful because the queen wants to have a banquet for just him and the king. But his joy turned to anger at the sight of Mordecai. Haman's wife and friends make a suggestion, "...Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made." {Esther 5:14}

During the night, the king could not sleep. He commanded the king's records of the chronicles to be read before him. "And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus." {Esther 6:2} The king wanted to know whether Mordecai had, in any way, been rewarded. He asked who was in the court. Haman had just entered the outer court, intending to ask for Mordecai's life on the gallows. They brought him before king Ahasuerus to answer the question: "...What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" {Esther 6:6} Haman, overcome by his own pride, thought surely the king must be talking about him. "...For the man whom the king delights to honor, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!' {Esther 6:7-9} The king thought Haman had an excellent suggestion; so he commanded him to follow his own instructions to the letter--for Mordecai! What a sad turn of events! Haman must parade his enemy through the streets of the city--which he does. He then goes home in mourning with his head covered!

Now, it is time for the banquet. Haman and the king are present, and Esther makes her petition. "For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss." {Esther 7:4} The king demands the name of the one who would consider doing such a

thing. Esther names Haman! Haman is terrified, and the king leaves in a rage. Haman pleads with Esther to spare his life; the king returns and finds Haman sprawled out before Esther. What did the king do? "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided." {Esther 7:10}

The decree is revoked, and thanks to the courage of this faithful woman, God's people are safe. May we ever have the courage to stand up for the Lord, no matter what opposition arises. Esther's love for her people was stronger than her concern for herself. Who knows what may be in store for us to accomplish in the Lord's kingdom. Dear reader, what will you do when "such a time as this" comes during your work and service to God? May we all have the courage of Esther! \*\*\*