

Esther(2)

July 28, 2022

In the last lesson we learned of Haman's scheme to destroy every Jew—man, woman, and child—who lived in King Ahasuerus' vast kingdom. Mordecai pleaded with Esther to personally intervene for her people before the king, which she decided to do despite the real possibility of being put to death if she tried to do so.

Haman's Reward

At the end of the three days of fasting that she and all of the Jews of Susa had conducted, Esther entered the court before the throne room of the king. King Ahasuerus noticed Esther and he surmised that something was troubling her (either by her expression or because she was present without being summoned) and she obtained favor in his sight. He sought her request, even if it was to give half of his kingdom to her (Esther 5:1-3).

Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet that she had prepared for them. The king readily agreed and he and Haman both attended the banquet. The king understood that the banquet was the venue for Esther to make her request or petition to the king, so he asked again for her request. Esther asked the king for him and Haman to attend another banquet the next day (Esther 5:4-8).

The banquet, and the promise of another one, pleased Haman greatly. However, as he left through the king's gate and saw that Mordecai would not bow down before him, Haman burned with anger toward him. Haman gathered his senses and went home and brought his wife and friends together. He boasted of all of his glories before them, which were capped off by being the only other person besides the king to be invited to the queen's banquets. But all this glory was tainted by Mordecai's lack of respect, and Haman's wife and friends convinced him to have an exceedingly tall gallows built (presumably so that everyone could see it) and to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged prior to the next day's banquet with the queen (Esther 5:9-14).

The king, who had no knowledge of Haman's plans, was troubled for a reason unknown to himself after the banquet and could not sleep. He had the book of chronicles¹ read to him and found that Mordecai had saved the king from the plot to kill him. The king then learned that no honor had been bestowed on Mordecai for his act. He then summoned Haman who had just arrived in the courtyard to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai. Before Haman was given a chance to speak, the king asked him how best to honor a man whom the king desired to honor. Thinking that he himself was to be honored, Haman described exactly what the king should do (Esther 6:1-9).

The king, however, commanded Haman to do all that he said in order to honor Mordecai. Haman did so and was humiliated. After he shared with his wife and friends what had just transpired, they prophesied that Mordecai, because he was a Jew, would overcome Haman. At that very moment, the king's servants arrived and escorted Haman to the second banquet that Esther had prepared (Esther 6:10-14).

At the banquet, the king again asked Esther to give her petition. She pleaded for the lives of her people and herself, explaining the king's edict (through Haman) to kill all of the Jews in his kingdom. Thus, she

¹ This is not referring to the books of Chronicles in the Old Testament. Apparently, it was a custom of kings to have records, or chronicles, kept of their reign, as continues by most or all leaders to this day.

was disclosing herself as being a Jew. Esther further said that if her people were only being sold into slavery that she would have remained silent about the matter so as not to annoy the king. When the king asked who would do such a thing, Esther replied that it was Haman. The king, therefore, had been unaware of Haman's true intentions about ridding the kingdom of the Jews (Esther 7:1-6).

The king then left the banquet, but Haman remained behind to beg the queen for his life. The king soon returned, however, and observed Haman falling onto the couch where Esther was sitting. Assuming that Haman was trying to assault the queen, the king had Haman bound and commanded that he be hanged on the gallows that were intended for Mordecai. The king's anger subsided after the hanging of Haman (Esther 7:7-10).

Mordecai Honored and a New Decree

On that very day the king gave the house of Haman (i.e., everything he owned and all that was entitled to him) to Esther, at which time Esther disclosed her relationship to Mordecai. Mordecai was then summoned before the king who then gave his signet ring—the same ring that he had given to Haman—to Mordecai. Therefore, Mordecai was given the same authority in the kingdom that Haman had. That is, anything that Mordecai authorized would be in the name and seal of the king (Esther 8:1-2).

Esther then pleaded with the king to revoke the letters devised by Haman, to prevent the annihilation of her people. Through the instructions of Mordecai, the king's scribes wrote a new letter to be distributed to all of the people in the kingdom. The letter did not rescind the first letter from Haman, but granted the Jews throughout the kingdom the right to assemble and defend themselves by killing all who rose up against them. It also authorized the Jews to plunder the spoil of those people. This was to occur the same day that Haman had designated to destroy the Jews (Esther 8:3-14).

Mordecai left the presence of King Ahasuerus adorned in royal clothes and a golden crown. The Jews in Susa rejoiced, as did the Jews in all of the provinces. Many of the people of the kingdom became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them. They apparently recognized (feared) the power of the God of the Jews and conformed to their laws and worship (Esther 8:15-17).

On the very day that Haman had set to destroy the Jews, it was the Jews who killed all who rose up against them. However, all the leaders in the provinces assisted the Jews, for they feared Mordecai and the Jews. In all, the Jews killed 500 men in Susa on the designated day, and an additional 300 men the next day. Furthermore, the ten sons of Haman were hung as commanded by the king (at the request of Esther). In the other provinces, another 75,000 enemies of the Jews were killed by the Jews. In no case, however, did the Jews plunder the possessions of those that they killed. The Jews celebrated this day each year as a holiday and feast day; the day was memorialized by Mordecai to be observed and remembered annually (Esther 9).

Final Tribute to Mordecai

After these events, King Ahasuerus paid tribute to Mordecai by recording the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had advanced him in the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia* (see Reference 1). Mordecai was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his kinsmen (fellow Jews). He was one who sought the good of his people and spoke for the welfare of his whole nation (Esther 10).

The Book of Esther

This closes the account of the book of Esther, with many details left out. Hopefully, it provides enough information to adequately address the intent of the book. As stated before, I encourage you to read the book for yourself. In the next lesson I will provide what I consider to be takeaways that came to mind as I studied this book. What came to your mind?