

Mordecai said: "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

Faithful Lord, you give your servants the courage and faith to do what is right. We thank you for always being there, encouraging us, strengthening us, and giving us the words to speak in your name. Grant us confidence to trust that you will guide and protect us always. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

Esther had been chosen to become queen in Persia, but no one knew her identity as a Jew. When her uncle Mordecai informed her of a plot to kill all the Jews, Esther was faced with a choice. Would she obey the law, or would she take the risk to speak to the king in an effort to save her people?

Read: Esther 4:1-17

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.

However, even after the Edict of Cyrus in 538 B.C., many Jews remained in Persian lands. Some of them were wealthy citizens and had risen to positions of prominence. Though they may have kept their religious identity secret, the story of Esther shows how some Jewish people had become incorporated in Persian society and acquired mobility in the royal court.

The story of Esther is different from other historical books of Scripture in that it takes the form of a melodramatic tale. In such stories, heroes are brave, villains are evil, and princesses are kind and beautiful. This story is the basis for the Jewish festival of Purim.

Discussion Questions

1. At this point in the story, what position did Esther hold in the kingdom of Persia? How was she related to the man Mordecai? (See Esther 2:5-7.)
2. Just prior to Chapter 4, Mordecai had found out that Haman, the king's closest advisor, had conspired to have all the Jews in Persia arrested and killed. How did Mordecai respond? What did he do?
3. Who served as a "go-between" on Mordecai's behalf? How do we serve as a go-between before God on behalf of our neighbors?
4. According to verse 11, why couldn't Esther just go and tell the king about the danger her people were facing? What was the penalty for disturbing the king without permission?
5. In verse 13, what did Mordecai tell Esther? Taking this as an example of the Church, what does this say about us as a family of faith? In what sense are we "all in this together" — for good and for bad?
6. In verse 14, how did Mordecai express his confidence in God? What did Mordecai suggest was the reason Esther had become queen in the first place? Who was behind all this?
7. In verses 15-16, what did Esther ask Mordecai to do? Why is this a good example for us to follow when we are facing difficult times?
8. Read Matthew 10:16-22. In what way do Jesus' words here reflect the situation that Esther was facing? How is this true in our lives as well? In spite of this danger, what promises does Jesus give to us?