

# **Esther: For Such a Time as This (Ch. 4)**

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## **Verses 1-3**

As a result of the decree, Mordecai tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth and ashes, both of which were common reactions to grief and mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34; Jos. 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27).

Mention is made of fasting and weeping, but no praying, though it has a close relationship with fasting (cf. Ps. 35:13; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 17:21). It therefore seems likely that prayer was taking place.

## **Verses 4-9**

For some reason, Esther was not aware of the decree, otherwise she would have understood why the Jews were so upset. It seems odd that the queen of the land would not be aware of such a thing (though it also seems like the king was not very clear on the details either).

Esther likely sent clothes to Mordecai so he could enter the king's gate to speak with her, but his refusal told her something was very wrong. Somehow, Mordecai obtained a copy of the decree, and was also aware of Haman's offer of ten thousand talents (3:9). Perhaps this was through his position within the king's gate.

Mordecai then does the only thing he can possibly do to help the situation, and that is to ask Esther, who is in the best possible position, to use her influence with the king (2:17) to try to save the Jews.

## **Verses 10-12**

Unfortunately, Esther first responds with an excuse. Though it may have been legitimate (given the law she cites), it was an excuse nonetheless. She doesn't think she should even try because she might be killed. Then again, she might not! Sadly, we often make excuses based on what might happen. Even men like Moses struggled with this (Ex. 3-4).

Obviously the relationship between Esther and Ahasuerus was not ideal (cf. Eph. 5:25, 28), otherwise she would have no problem speaking to him. It is interesting too that Esther had approached the king before about his own life (2:22), but is hesitant about the lives of every Jew in the empire.

## **Verses 13-14**

Mordecai doesn't hold back in his response to Esther, but succinctly reminds her of who she is, where she is, and what is at stake.

He reminds her that she too is a Jew, and she was no more exempt from this decree than anyone else. Perhaps Esther was thinking along these lines. After all, she had been queen for about 5 years now, and apparently had not mentioned her Jewish heritage to anyone as Mordecai had charged (2:20). Maybe she had temporarily forgotten who she really was, that is, a Jew first and queen second. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the world, whether its our job, recreation, or whatever, and lose sight of the fact that Christ comes first (Col. 1:18; Matt. 6:33).

He reminds her also that even if God raised up relief and deliverance from another place, she would still perish by choosing not to participate in His plan. The very existence of the Jewish people was at stake. Had the Jews not survived this situation, all hope of a coming Messiah (Christ), and with Him salvation of the human race, would have been lost. With that much on the line, what would she think would happen, at least to her, if she

chose to remain silent?

He lastly reminds her, though in the form of a question, that she is in a position like no other. If any Jew can help save the race, certainly she could. And maybe, just maybe, she was put in this position for this very reason. It is evident Mordecai had faith that God's providence was at work, and that He would act in some way, but the uncertainty was in whether or not Esther would be a part of it. Likewise, we today have opportunities to do what God wants us to do by working with His plan rather than against it.

Whether it be evangelism, benevolence, or simply fulfilling our duties as good spouses, parents, friends, and employees, we must not draw back from these chances to let our light shine (Matt. 5:16) when we have the power to act (cf. Pr. 3:27).

When presented with an opportunity, be it a great blessing or a time of trial, we should all ask ourselves whether we have come to this point in our lives for such a time as to do something for God. Chances are, the answer is yes.

This is the key passage of the entire book, describing perfectly the theme of God's providence. Just as His name is written no place in nature, yet His hand is everywhere (Rom. 1:20), so it is with the Book of Esther. It's a good exercise to start at the end of the book and trace back through the chain of events that led to that point, and be amazed at the foreknowledge and power of God (cf. Rom. 11:33).

See *Providence* handout.

### **Verses 15-17**

Esther finds courage in Mordecai's words and decides to approach the king, though she is careful not to be too hasty, and requests all the Jews to fast for her. Three days and nights of fasting would give time to focus on the situation and petition God for help, while enabling action to take place quickly.

Though she initially made an excuse, when confronted she faced up to her responsibility as the only person in a position to do something, and was even willing to risk her life (though her life was on the line anyway as Mordecai pointed out).