

Esther: Esther Approaches the King (Ch. 5)

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May 2010

Verses 1-2

Esther has fasted (and likely prayed) and is now ready to approach the king, risking her life to save her people (cf. 4:11). She was possibly in mourning garments like the other Jews (4:3), and now changed into her royal attire before seeing the king (cf. 4:2).

Though she had not been called in 30 days (4:11), the king held out the scepter when he saw her in the court. Perhaps it was divine providence that kept them apart for 30 days so as to ensure the king's reaction upon seeing her. Also contributing to this reception must have been her prior conduct that initially made her queen (2:17) and likely her appearance in her royal apparel.

Interestingly, the Septuagint says things a little differently. It tells of the king being angry upon seeing Esther, but when she faints out of terror, he has a change of heart and comes to her and takes her in his arms.

Verses 3-8

Desiring to know what would motivate her to approach the throne when she had not been called, the king tells her he'll do whatever she wants "up to half the kingdom." This figure of speech is seen other places in the Bible, signifying that the king really would oblige to any request (which sadly got John the Baptist killed in Mk. 6:23ff.).

Rather than merely tell the king what was on her mind, Esther invites him, along with Haman, to a banquet she had prepared. Why did she do this? Perhaps after being apart from the king for so long she wanted to make sure she had his favor. We know the king enjoys his banquets (1:3-5; 2:18; 3:15) so this would be a good way to establish some rapport. Another possibility is that she wanted Haman to be at ease when accused, which certainly would have been the case after a banquet.

Another factor may be that she didn't quite have the courage when it came down to it and sought to buy more time. Still another possibility is that she was merely exercising patience in figuring out exactly how to make her request the right way. Whatever the case, waiting for the opportune moment proved very wise.

While the message of a Christian is very important, the way its presented is also extremely important. The right thing said in the wrong way does a great deal of harm.

Verses 9-13

Here we see even more of Haman's poor character. Though so many things were going his way, the fact that one man refused to honor him ruined everything. His pride and insecurity is demonstrated by his feeling the need to boast to his own friends and wife about how wealthy he is and how many children he has. He seeks reassurance from them that he lives up to his name ("magnificent") as he tells them that he alone was invited to dine with the king and queen. Haman is so focused on building himself up that he can't even fathom his impending fall (cf. Pr. 11:2; 16:18; 28:26; Jer. 17:5; Obad. 3-4; 1 Cor. 10:12).

Not only was Haman proud and insecure, but unthankful. We need to be careful about focusing on what we don't have, but rather be thankful to God for the blessings we do have. No matter if a person has a great amount or very little, they can be content in having God in their life (Phi. 4:11-13). Adam Clarke said "The soul was made for God, and nothing but God can fill it and make it happy." (cf. Ecc. 12:13)

Verses 14

Haman's wife and friends fail to do what a good wife and good friends should do, and that's put him in his place (Pr. 27:6, 17), but instead they encourage him (cf. Pr. 12:26; 13:20; Ecc. 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:33). They tell him not to wait until the twelfth month, but to just kill Mordecai as soon as possible by building a gallows 50 cubits (75 feet) high in order to hang him. Would that solve the real problem? Absolutely not. Without God in his life, Haman would have found another reason to be unhappy.