

## **July 25–31: Esther, “Thou Art Come.... For Such a time As This”**

### Esther Becomes Queen of Persia

Esther lived while the Jews were in exile in Babylon. Her mother and father died so she had been adopted by her uncle Mordecai, who served in the king's court

The Persian emperor Ahasuerus held a 7 day feast for leaders of his kingdom

Esth 1:1-3,7-8

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

7 And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

8 And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

The Queen was summoned by the king after he and his court had spent 7 days drinking but she refused his command

Esth 1:10-12,20

10 ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

Queen Vashti's refusal to obey a direct summons of the king - an emperor had absolute power over life and death, her stubbornness is surprising. If Vashti's rebelliousness (as viewed by these men) were to go unpunished, they knew it would inspire similar responses in their wives. Therefore they pushed Ahasuerus for action, and particularly asked for a decree that could not be altered. The king agreed, the decree was made, and Vashti lost her place as queen, setting up the opportunity for Esther to be selected as one of

the king's wives. (Old Testament Student Manual Kings-Malachi, Esther: Queen of Persia and Advocate for Her People)

King Ahasuerus now needs to choose another queen. Mordecai, who served in the king's court, pushed for Esther to take advantage of this opportunity

Esth 2:8-11

8 ¶ So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Why do you think that Mordecai charged Esther to not make it known that she was a Jew?

Esther was shown respect and deference because, in obedience to Mordecai's charge to her, she had not admitted her Jewish lineage. A Jewish maiden would not have experienced such friendly treatment. (Old Testament Student Manual Kings-Malachi, Esther: Queen of Persia and Advocate for Her People)

### Proclamation To Have All Jews Killed

Haman was appointed the principal minister of the king Ahasuerus, all of the king's servants were required to bow down to Haman. But Mordecai refused to do so

Esth 3:2-5

2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

3 Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Haman didn't have the authority to punish Mordecai so he devised a plan to have all

the Jews killed.

Esth 3:6,8

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

8 ¶ And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

What did Haman say to the king that would allow him to put a plan in place to destroy all the Jews?

(There is a certain people scattered abroad  
dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom  
their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws)

Esth 3:11,13

11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Thomas S. Monson

“Haman, the chief prince in the king's court, became increasingly angry with Mordecai because Mordecai would not bow down and pay homage to him. In retribution, Haman convinced the king—in a rather devious manner—that there were ‘certain people’ in all 127 provinces of the kingdom whose laws were different from others’ and that they would not obey the king's laws and should be destroyed. Without naming these people to the king, Haman was, of course, referring to the Jews, including Mordecai.

“With the king's permission to handle the matter, Haman sent letters to the governors of all of the provinces, instructing them ‘to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, ... [on] the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.’” (CR, April 2009)

Esther is Instrumental in Saving the Jews

The news of the king's edict was devastating to Mordecai and the Jewish community

Esth 4:1-3

1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

2 And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Esther sends Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, to ask Mordecai what can be done to stop the killing

Esth 4:7-9

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

What did Mordecai ask Esther to do to help her people?

(charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people)

But Esther could not just go talk to the king. She was not allowed to approach him unless she was summoned. The penalty of doing so was death.

Esth 4:11-16

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 ¶ Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I

perish, I perish.

What did Mordecai say to Esther that helped her recognize that she could potentially save her people?

(who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this)

Spencer W. Kimball

“We fancy God can manage His world only with great battalions, when all the time He is doing it with beautiful babies.

“When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering, God sends a baby into the world.” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, pg. 323)

Bruce R. McConkie

“We are quite well aware that Joseph Smith and Jeremiah and the apostles and prophets, the wise, the great, and the good were foreordained to particular ministries. But that is only a part of the doctrine of foreordination. The great and glorious thing about foreordination is that... millions of people were foreordained.” (Making Our Calling and Election Sure, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 25 March 1969)

How did Esther demonstrate her loyalty and faith?

(fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day:  
I go in unto the king... and if I perish, I perish)

Mary Ellen W. Smoot

“Consider Esther’s dilemma: It was against the law to approach the king without being summoned. Such an act was punishable by death. If she were to remain quiet, she would likely enjoy a life of luxury and ease. She could live the life of a queen or risk her life to save her family and her people. She counted the cost and chose to heed the longings of her people and of her heart.

“She asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast three days for her, and she and her handmaids would do the same. Then she said, ‘I [will] go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.’

“Everywhere I have traveled... I have witnessed the gospel of Jesus Christ in action and the radiant light of the gospel in the countenances of courageous and faithful sisters. The Spirit has borne witness to me that we each have been born ‘for such a time as this.’” (CR, Oct. 1997)

Esther approaches the king to make her request

Esth 5:1-4

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

How did the king respond to Esther?

(when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight  
it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom)

Barbara B. Smith

“With every step [Esther] must have wondered, ‘Will he hold out the royal sceptre?’ ‘Will he condemn me to death?’ ‘Will he drop me into poverty and oblivion?’ She stood before him... [knowing] that she had appealed to God for help and that there was a great moral wrong about to be committed. She had to be responsible to God who made her, no matter what the mortal consequences.

“Each woman in today's world has responsibilities akin to those which Esther faced.... Each woman faces the challenge of being true to the principles of the gospel if she would improve the quality of her mortal life and make herself worthy of the opportunity of eternal progression.” (CR, Oct. 1979)

At the feast Esther asks the king to ignore the lies told by Haman and spare the Jews

Esth 8:3-7,16-17

3 ¶ And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

7 ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Thomas S. Monson

“Esther, through fasting, faith, and courage, had saved a nation.

“You will probably not be called upon to put your life on the line, as did Esther, for that which you believe. You will, however, most likely find yourself in situations where great courage will be required as you stand firm for truth and righteousness....

“You are some of our Heavenly Father's strongest children, and He has saved you to come to the earth 'for such a time as this.' With His help, you will have the courage to face whatever comes. Though the world may at times appear dark, you have the light of the gospel, which will be as a beacon to guide your way.” (CR, April 2009)