

FOR SUCH A TIME

Esther, Mordecai, and their people were living a nightmare. The king declared a day when all Jews would be annihilated: men, women, children. All their goods would be plundered. All because Mordecai would not worship Haman, second in command. But "*the Most High rules the kingdom of men*" (Daniel 4:32). And Psalm 139 presents God as all-knowing, with every day of your life "*written in His book.*"

1- WILL FURIOUS ENEMIES TRIUMPH - or will God act? Chapter 4 of the book of Esther opens with all the Jews mourning and fasting, weeping and lamenting. They are powerless before their imminent demise, because people without God follow pagan values. But the sovereign God trumps even powerful leaders. Life crises create conflict and risk chaos, but God raises up courageous people. Every challenge is really an opportunity for faith, because God knows all things, and is working out His providential plan.

The narrative theme of "peripety" or reversal of expected outcome continues. Mordecai now instructs Queen Esther to tell King Xerxes the truth, as he reverses his commandment to conceal her identity as a Jew. But Esther is unable to see the king without invitation, on penalty of death.

Mordecai replies, "*do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish.*" Major dilemma. Esther could lose her life by going to the king. Yet if she does not act, all of her people will surely die. Mordecai utters these famous words, "*And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*"

2- FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS - will you act? Esther had always been obedient to Mordecai. As queen will she try to play it safe and hide her identity from the pagans? Or will she be obedient to Almighty God and be His witness, in word and deed? And risk her life to save Mordecai, her people, and her own life? Did she recall Joshua 1:5, "*as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. Be strong and courageous, being careful to do according to all the Law. Do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord God is with you.*"

Or Jeremiah 1:5, "*before I formed you in the womb I knew you, I appointed you; do not be afraid for I am with you to deliver you. I have put My words in your mouth and set you this day over kingdoms.*" What would YOU do? Prof KH Jobes notes, "God enabled Esther to become an agent in fulfilling His ancient promises, but she had to overcome herself in order to do what God had positioned her to do."

3- OBEDIENT HEARTS - take steps of faith. What will Esther do, as God works out His plans? Jobes observes, "Esther had been controlled by her circumstances. Then came the defining moment when she is faced with taking responsibility for the life God has given, by identifying with her people." Esther told Mordecai, "*Go gather all the Jews for fasting for three days and nights, then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.*" This incredibly brave response has inspired countless people over 2,500 years. The risk of faith trusts what God says is true, and acts, putting all your trust in Him.

So in chapter 5, against all odds Esther put on her royal robes and stood at the king's quarters when he was on the throne. Amazingly, without an invitation, he saw her and held out his hand to come, and promised to grant her request. God's favor was with her. Perhaps Mordecai taught her that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach, because Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet, already prepared (in faith). They loved it, and again the king asks her request. Another banquet!

4- WHAT YOU WANT - and what you get. The evil Haman went out joyful, glad of heart. Until he saw Mordecai. Then he was filled with wrath. He recounted all of his riches, promotions, honors, even the dinners with the king and queen. Verse 13, "*yet all this is worth nothing to me so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.*" Mordecai would bow only to God. Haman's wife and friends suggest he build a gallows and tell the king to have this enemy hanged. Then be happy, they said. So he did.

Another peripety turn of events? You'll find out next time! Meantime, are you troubled? Evil never stops and corruption weaves a web of crime and chaos. But God is at work, and His people are taking evil down at many levels. President Trump reportedly told President Putin, "either God wins or I die." Echoes of Queen Esther. Because believers are called to be light and truth amidst darkness and lies.

5- CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS - in your life. Consider that Jesus is the ultimate peripety! The Bible says at the right time the right one died for sinners. His death gives life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Then it is His new life that lives through you, all by the Holy Spirit's power. That's why Christians stand for the unborn and the infirm, those who cannot speak for themselves. We must influence all of the world, including the political, because we are salt and light in the world.

Prof M. Breneman notes, "Esther's '*I will go*' marked the momentous decision that risked her life. When she realized God' purpose '*for such a time as this*' she decided to act, committing herself to God. Many Christians are more concerned about their own security than about the desperate physical and spiritual needs of the world. If they understood their decision could make a difference, many would make the commitment God asks of them." Will you? God has raised you up at this time. If you remain silent, God will raise up deliverance, but you will suffer loss. He says, *be strong and courageous, trust and obey!* ☐