

The Book of Esther

Lesson 5

In chapter 4 we read that Haman's plot to annihilate Mordecai's people caused great consternation, mourning and grief among the Jews. We also noted that according to Ecclesiastes 3:4 there is a time and a season for every activity under heaven, including a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.

We studied what it means to mourn and examined several Scripture passages, including "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). We also learned that a time will come when "God himself will be with his people. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things will have passed away" (Revelation 21:3, 4). From Paul's letter to the Romans, we saw that we are exhorted to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).

Upon hearing of and reading the king's edict to destroy the Jews, Mordecai challenges, inspires and motivates Queen Esther to intercede on behalf of her people by noting that perhaps she has been elevated to her position of honor "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). Even though she risks death if she appears before the king in the inner court without being summoned, Esther displays great personal courage by telling Mordecai she will plead the case for her people. She says, "If I perish I perish" (Esther 4:16).

However, before she appears before the king, she asks Mordecai and the other Jews in Susa to fast for three days and nights, consuming no food or drink. She indicates that she and her maids will do the same, these attitudes and actions implicitly seeking the hand and favor of God, while she prepares to appear before the king without being summoned.

In preparing to do this lesson, will you take a minute to pray and ask God for help in understanding His Word that you might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and His Christ, Jesus of Nazareth?

Esther's Request to King Xerxes

Esther 5:1-8

1. Besides fasting, that we might be led by the Spirit, what do the following verses suggest by way of principle or promise that we should apply to our own lives when facing a major crisis?
 - A. Psalm 145:18

 - B. Isaiah 55:6-8

 - C. Jeremiah 33:2, 3

 - D. Jeremiah 29:11-13

 - E. Lamentations 3:25, 26

 - F. Psalm 62:5-8

G. Psalm 37:5-7

H. Isaiah 40:30, 31

I. James 1:5

J. Proverbs 3:5,6

K. Psalm 128:1, 2

L. John 8:12

2. From your knowledge of the Bible or your own experience, can you think of any time where these principles or promises have been appropriated and/or applied? If so, please describe the circumstances and the outcome.

3. Read Esther 5:1-8.
 - A. After three days of fasting, what does Esther do?

 - B. What can we glean from her action?

 - C. From Matthew 6:16-18, what does Jesus say our attitude and demeanor should be when we fast?

 - D. What is the king's first reaction to the appearance of Queen Esther in the court?
 - (1) What does he say to her?

 - (2) Do you think he literally means what he says? Why or why not?

 - (3) How does Esther respond to the king?

(4) What happens next?

(5) From verse 6, what question does the king ask for the second time and what is Esther's reply to him? Why do you think Esther replied to the king in the way she did?

E. What principles are stated in Hebrews 11:1, 6 and 2 Corinthians 5:7?

Haman's Rage Against Mordecai

4. Read Esther 5:9-14.

A. How does Haman interpret Queen Esther's invitation to dine with the king and her?

- B. After the banquet, what one factor darkens his mind and heart as he returns home?
- C. From verses 10-13, how does Haman recall the day's events with his family and friends?
- D. From verse 15, what counsel does Haman receive from his wife Zeresh and his friends regarding Mordecai? How does Haman respond to his counsel?
- E. What do the following verses say in regard to the attitude and actions of Haman?
- (1) Proverbs 11:2
- (2) Proverbs 16:18

(3) Proverbs 21:4

(4) I John 2:16

5. By way of contrast, what does Philippians 2:3-11 indicate should be our attitude and action toward others? Why?

Mordecai Honored

6. Read Esther 6:1-14. In the providence of God, how do King Xerxes, Haman and Mordecai illustrate the principles in the following passages?

A. Romans 8:28

B. Galatians 6:7-10