

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ESTHER 1-4

Have you ever heard the expression, “**fish out of water**”? It’s a phrase used to describe people outside their natural habitat.

Here’re a few examples: *a truck driver at a poetry recital – a vegetarian at a barbecue – an anti-gun activist at a turkey shoot – Mark Richt at a Georgia Tech booster club meeting...* These are all “*fish out of water...*”

Here’s another example... **the Jewish community in Persia.**

In 535 BC the Babylonian empire fell to the Persians, and King Cyrus issued an edict allowing the Jews to return to Judah to rebuild their homeland. Jerusalem was the city of God. Judah and Samaria the land God chose for His people.

Judah was home. It’s where the Jews belonged, but few wanted to return.

While in exile, many Jews had prospered, and rose to prominent positions.

Isaiah 6:13 implies that 90% of Jewry remained in Persia. They became known as the *Diaspora*, or *Dispersion*. The New Testament book of James is addressed “**to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad**” - or to *the Diaspora Jews*.

In a sense, these Jews were *fish out of water!* They belonged in Judah, but lived in a foreign land, under Gentile rulers, surrounded by a pagan culture.

Sadly, many of these Jews compromised their faith in God... yet God remained faithful to them. His providence supernaturally protected these displaced Jews, and insured their survival. **The book of Esther is a monument to providence.**

Providence is God's overarching intervention in the affairs of man. It's His means of accomplishing His purposes with or without man's cooperation.

The word "*providence*" is a combination of two words - "*pro*" means "*before*", "*video*" means "*to see*". God sees life before it unfolds. He sees the end from the beginning, and He orchestrates circumstances to produce the outcome He desires.

The prevailing of God's will in all situations is what we call *providence*.

Esther proves that God is sovereign over life. He really is in control.

One other point, Esther and Ruth are the two books in the Bible named after a woman. Ruth was *a Gentile married to a Jew* - Esther *a Jew married to a Gentile*.

The book opens by introducing us to the man Esther married...

Verse 1, "**Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia)...**

The Persian Empire stretched from Mesopotamia to North Africa.

King “**Ahasuerus**” is known by secular historians by his Greek name *Xerxes*. And we know a lot about him... Xerxes was famous for his wars with Greece.

His father, Darius, had died in battle at the hands of the Greeks and he wanted to avenge his death. His army numbered 2 million men, and his navy consisted of 1200 warships. He fought the Spartans and launched an attack on Athens. After several initial victories, Xerxes was ultimately defeated and returned to Persia.

John Phillips provides an unflattering summation of Xerxes' life. “(He was) a tyrannical despot, domineering in temper, ruthless in the exercise of his power, grandiose in his schemes and ambitions, derelict in his sensuality.”

The Greek historian, Herodotus, called Xerxes “**incompetent and corrupt.**”

The story of Esther begins in the year 438 BC, which chronologically places it between Ezra 6 and 7 – between the return of Zerubbabel and that of Ezra.

“**In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel** (Susa was about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf)

In the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants - the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him... This was probably a skull session with his generals.

King Xerxes was organizing for war “when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, 180 days in all.”

Warren Wiersbe makes an interesting point. Xerxes was able to display all his wealth and glory in 6 months - whereas Ephesians 2:7 tells us that it'll take eternity for God to unfold “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Riches that can be exhausted in 180 days *ain't real riches*.

At the end of the 180 day exhibition King Xerxes threw a party...

Verse 5, “And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting 7 days (literally a drinking feast) for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.

White and blue were the royal colors of ancient Persia.

“And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.”

Xerxes was quite a boozier. Herodotus said he made important decisions while he was soused. No wonder he was defeated. This must've been one *drunk cat*.

Verse 8 “In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.” Xerxes was all about pleasure...

“Queen Vashti (her name means “*beautiful*” and indeed she was) also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.”

“On the 7th day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine (he'd been drinking nonstop for a week). A state dinner turns into a drunken orgy.

“He commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, 7 eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus...” Eunuchs were employed as servants in an oriental court so the king could be assured no hanky-panky would be going on behind his back with the women of his harem.

He sent the eunuchs “to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.” Ahasuerus is drunk and he wants to show-off his good-looking woman. The implication is he wanted the beautiful Vashti to do a little X-rated, hoochy-coochy dance to tease the men with her beauty.

“But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.”

Vashti's refusal was a real credit to her character. She must've not only been beautiful on the outside, but also on

the inside. Her dignity prohibited her from parading around and titillating a bunch of smashed sheiks. **Vashti was a lady - a person, not an object.** *Oh, that all young ladies had this kind of self-respect.*

It's also possible she was pregnant which would've added to her humiliation. Her son was named *Artaxerxes* - the Persian that cooperated with Nehemiah.

Queen Vashti's refusal was a noble act, but that's not how Ahasuerus and his counselors saw it. We eavesdrop in on their pow-wow in verse 13...

"Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked highest in the kingdom) ..."

Notice the king's counselors **"understood the times,"** but had no clue as to what counts for eternity. It's sad, but today's church is getting the same kind of counsel.

We can become so relevant to the culture we're of no use to God.

He asks, "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?"

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the

princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.'

"This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen.

Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath." They interpret Vashti's refusal as a potential, widespread uprising - a first strike for women's rights.

They need to make an example out of Queen Vashti.

Verse 19 "If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she." They can't take away Vashti's dignity, so they take away her crown. She's banished from the royal court.

Vashti retained her integrity, but her stand caused her to forfeit her privileges.

Hey, **virtue always comes with a price tag**. *It's costly - that's why it's valuable*. Anybody can cave in and be a slut. It takes courage to be a person of honor.

In verse 20 Ahasuerus' counselors make an interesting comment, "When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small..."

As I mentioned, in oriental courts the king's top advisors were usually eunuchs.

I have no doubt these guys were eunuchs, since it's obvious they know very little about women. Men, if you think you can force your wife into honoring her husband I've got some swampland I'll sell you. A husband doesn't demand his wife's respect - *he earns it*. Bully her, or intimidate her, and she'll rebel.

It's been said, "He is a fool who thinks by force or skill he can turn the current of a woman's will." Only love softens a wife's heart and gains her allegiance.

If you want your wife to support you, and trust your leadership - love her with the sacrificial love of Jesus. Love will melt her will, and earn her respect...

Sadly, the counselors' call for more macho manipulation "pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people."

Chapter 2, "After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

Between chapters 1 and 2 four years elapse. And they're tough years for King Ahasuerus. He goes to battle with the Greeks and returns home in defeat. At the Battle of Marathon

the Spartans stop his troops, and sink 200 of his ships.

He returns to Shushan battered and beaten. He looks forward to forgetting his miseries, and cuddling with his wife – when he remembers what he did to Vashti.

He's full of regret. He was angry and drunk at the time. He wasn't thinking... This is why it's a good idea not to drink.

"You're never thinking when you're drinking..." How many people regret a decision made under the influence?

And in Persia when a king uttered a decree it was irrevocable. Even the king himself couldn't recant an order once given. This is why Xerxes' father, Darius, had to throw Daniel in the lion's den. He couldn't revoke his own decree.

Ahasuerus can't bring back Vashti, so he decides to remarry...

"Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

This thing pleased the king, and he did so."

Ahasuerus holds a beauty contest to replace Vashti. He sends out his servants on a fox hunt. They comb the countryside in search of beautiful babes.

The idea was to create a huge harem. The king could

sample the girls, and pick the one he liked best. It was an ancient version of **“The Bachelor.”**

Verse 5 introduces a key character in the story. **“In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.”** He was a descendent of Israel’s first king, Saul.

Mordecai’s great-grandfather, **“Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.”**

“And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.”

The older man, Mordecai, and the younger girl, Esther, were cousins. Of course, Esther’s Hebrew friends called her **“Hadassah”** which means **“myrtle.”**

I’ll bet you didn’t know Esther was a southern girl... just call her *Myrtle*.

Remember, many of the exiled Jews were given Babylonian names.

Daniel’s three Hebrew friends had Babylonian names. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and *To-bed-we-go...*

No, no, that’s what Ahasuerus was doing with these *harem honeys*.

Verse 8 “So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women (the Jewish historian, Josephus, says 400 girls) were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.

Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance.” Something about Esther quickly won the favor of the harem supervisor. He gave her special treatment.

Extra allotments of Mary Kay... double the Estee Lauder and Clinique...

“Then 7 choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.

But notice the detail in verse 10, “Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.” Below her beautiful skin, Jewish blood ran through her veins – and anti-Semitic feelings ran high in Persia...

I love verse 11. Every father of a daughter can relate. “Every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.” Fathers of little girls have a protective instinct.

“Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: 6 months with oil of

myrrh, and 6 months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.”

Each woman got 6 months of Oil of Olay, and 6 months of Chanel #5...

“Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.” She was given whatever she desired... *fresh grapes to feed the king, a T-bone steak, a sexy nightgown, the CD “Love Songs from the 70s”, scented candles...* You name it she got it... She got all the romantic gear she needed.

And “In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.” Each girl had one shot to make an impression.

All the girls remained the king's concubine, but only one was made queen.

Single men let's make sure you know just because Ahasuerus' method of getting a wife is “*in the Bible*” it doesn't mean his method is “*biblical*”.

Jacob worked 14 years for a wife.

Boaz bought a piece of property, and got a wife as part of the deal.

David won a wife by clipping the foreskins off 200 of his father-in-law's foes.

Just because an event is recorded in the Bible doesn't necessarily make it God's will. The Bible also records the foolish deeds of mistaken people.

Rather than get a wife, in today's world, interviewing girls by taking them to bed is a good way to get an STD... or broken heart... or cheapened sense of dignity.

Hey, the biblical way to find a wife is to keep yourself pure, and trust God to bring you your mate. Trust me God will do a better job than you can.

Verse 15 “Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.” Esther wins the king's contest.

The name “Esther” means “star” - and Hadassah becomes the star of the king's harem. Imagine out of 400 gorgeous girls – the pick of Persia – an exiled orphan – the great granddaughter of a conquered Jew - ends up the Queen of the empire.

It's an example of God's providence.

Down through the ages, it's amazing how many Jews have been elevated to positions of prominence. Statistically, the world's Jewry is a small percentage of the total human population, yet their impact far exceeds their numbers.

Of the 4 most influential people of the 20th century - [Marx](#), [Einstein](#), [Freud](#), and [Darwin](#) – all were Jewish except Darwin. Over 100 Nobel Prize winners are Jews.

Here's a who's who list of Jewish celebrities: [Barbara Walters](#), [Larry King](#), [Woody Allen](#), [Sandy Koufax](#), [Henry Kissinger](#), [Mark Twain](#), [Barbara Streisand](#), [Kirk Douglas](#), [Jerry Seinfeld](#), [Bob Dylan](#), [Ben Stiller](#), [Judge Judy](#), [Dr. Laura](#), *etc...* And this isn't accidental. God has blessed the Jews even in their unbelief.

Verse 18, “Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.” Rather than *Christmas* it was *Esther-mas*.

The king had fallen in love and wanted to spread joy throughout his kingdom.

Verse 19 “When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her...” Again, she was afraid. Apparently, anti-Semitic sentiment was as great a threat then as it has been throughout history.

God's providential blessing on the Jews produces an envy and spite in non-Jews. Mark Twain called anti-semiticism, "the swollen envy of pigmy minds."

But it's more than that... Hatred for the Jews is not an ordinary, run-of-the-mill form of prejudice. The Bible tells us, Satan is the source of anti-Semitism.

If Satan can't harm God directly, he'll just assault God's chosen people.

What else can explain the relentless brutality against the Jewish people... from the Romans, to the Crusades, to the Pogroms in Russia, to Hitler's holocaust...

Last week we visited Yad Vashem – a Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. It was gut-wrenching to see the intense hatred the world has fostered toward the Jews.

The only explanation for history's relentless onslaught on the Jew is a satanic conspiracy. And the survival of the Jews is a direct result of God's providence.

What's amazing about the story of Esther is God's faithfulness despite Esther and Mordecai's unfaithfulness. Throughout the book our hero and heroine are guilty of numerous violations of God's Law. The most obvious was Esther's willingness to marry a pagan. Ahasuerus worshipped the god, Zoroaster.

As we move through the story we also find that Esther fails to keep the Jewish dietary laws, the Sabbath, the feast days. She felt none of the moral conflicts with the pagan practices that upset Daniel in Babylon. Queen Esther was quick to

compromise. Rather than be a witness, she covered up her godly heritage.

Understand Esther represents the Jews of the Diaspora – both then and now.

At the time, backslidden Jews lived all over Persia, but God providentially protected them. And for the last 2000 years this has been the plight of Jewry.

For the most part, the Jewish people have lived compromised lifestyles in foreign lands – yet God has been faithful to insure their survival.

It's interesting, the word “**God**” never appears in the book of Esther.

This is the only book in the Bible void of the name “*God*”. Yet that sums up the lives of Esther and Mordecai, and many of the Diaspora Jews. They were Jewish, but their Jewishness was more ethnic and racial - than religious and practical.

This describes most Jews today. They hold to their Jewishness with a patriotic fondness and fervor, without trying to keep the Law – or even a belief in God.

Bible commentator, Alexander MacClaren, writes along this line, “Patriotism is more evident than religion in the book of Esther... To the Jews in Persia national feeling was stronger than devotion...” They were what we'd call “*secular Jews*”.

And what better description of the modern Jewish state of Israel... they're *patriotic*, but not *pious*. They're loyal to their *race*, but not to their *religion*.

The book of Esther is a blueprint for how God has dealt with the Jews for the last 2000 years... and with how He's dealing with Israel at this moment.

Even though they've been unfaithful to Him, He's still faithful to them...

He's caused the land of Israel to prosper – turning a desert into a bread basket.

In numerous wars with the Arabs God has provided supernatural protection.

Most Israelis today fail to recognize their Savior, but that doesn't mean their Savior isn't watching out for them... just as He was in the days of Esther. The survival of the Jews, to this day, is evidence of God's wonderful providence.

At the end of chapter 2 Mordecai uncovers a plot to assassinate Ahaseurus.

Verse 21 **“In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.”** Secular history tells us the two men were planning to put a poisonous asp in the king's ale. Get him drunk - then drop a viper in his vodka. Talk about a drink with bite. Rather than *pass out* the he'd *pass away*.

“So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.” Mordecai was hoping to get some credit.

“And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was

written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.” The whole matter gets *recorded*, but not *rewarded*.

And I’m sure it disappointed Mordecai that the king didn’t acknowledge his life-saving snitch... but as we’ll see, *God had a purpose... there is always a purpose!*

In chapter 3, enter the evil villain, Haman... “After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.”

You can remember Haman’s name and nature by associating *Haman* and *Hitler* – the two go together phonetically and philosophically.

They both hated the Jews. Hitler killed 6 million Jews, and Haman would’ve killed several million himself if it weren’t for Esther and God’s providence.

“And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him.

But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.” Mordecai is a Jew *with hutzpah*, and he refuses to bow to anyone but God. His Jewishness won’t let him bow.

“Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told

them that he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.”

And Haman decides to retaliate, but notice the form his retaliation takes...

Verse 6 “But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus - the people of Mordecai.”

He doesn't just plan to eliminate Mordecai, but he wants to exterminate all the Jews. Haman realizes that Mordecai's defiance was typical of his people.

“In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the 12th month, which is the month of Adar.”

Haman decides the day of the Jewish genocide by casting “*pur*” or “*lots*”.

He rolls the dice and guess which month turns up? The 12th month - it's the first month at the moment and the 12th month is chosen. This was no accident. It gave the Jews a year to undermine Haman's plan, and prepare to defend themselves.

If the dice had pointed to the next day it would've been disaster, but God's providence had control the dice. God, not Haman, set the date. Proverbs 16:33 tells us, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”

“Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the

provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws.

Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain.

If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries." Haman will even pay the executioners from his own pocket.

“So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you." Tragically, the King Ahasuerus signs off on Haman's heinous plan.

“The king's scribes were called on the 13th day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded - to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language.

In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring. And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces...” As a side note, Persia had a postal service that was renowned throughout the ancient world.

Their couriers delivered the instructions “to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the 13th day of the 12th

month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.” A mass genocide of the Jewish race is ordered.

A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.

The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.” Ahasuerus and Haman have a *toast... the Jews are toast!* The king was probably drunk when he made the decree.

And it didn't take long for Mordecai to hear the news...

Chapter 4, “When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.” They couldn't believe the death sentence.

“So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her (that Mordecai was in sackcloth. Evidently, she didn't know about the death sentence on the Jews.)

“And the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.”

He wants Esther to know this not a situation that can just be glossed over.

Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate. And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.” The king’s court was last to get the news.

Mordecai “also gave (Esther’s messenger) a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.”

But Esther isn’t so sure Mordecai’s suggestion is a good idea.

“Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these 30 days.”

Ahasuerus was a powerful potentate with an ego as big as his

empire. He had a rule, *“Don’t interrupt!”* All overtures were *by appointment only*.

Enter the king’s chambers without observing protocol - and you could lose your head. If the king didn’t point to you with his scepter it was curtains for the intruder.

And besides it had been a month since Esther had even seen the king.

For all she knew he might be angry... or worse, *“Your highness”* might be *high*.

Vashti could tell you, when King Ahasuerus got drunk it didn’t fare well for his women-folk. Esther sends word to Mordecai a visit to the king is not a good idea.

Verse 12, *“So they told Mordecai Esther's words.”*

“Then Mordecai told them to answer Esther:” And his words to Esther have become immortal... *“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.”* *Esther, don’t forget you are also a Jew.*

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

In other words, **providence has a point!** God *positions* us for a *purpose*.

God worked out the circumstances to get you *the job* you currently enjoy. You didn’t think you had a chance, but the Lord in His providence opened the door.

There was no way you could get *financing for your house*, but God did it!

God got you *into the class* they said was full.

You made *the team*, and you know it was God who opened the door...

But now that *the door is open, the job is yours, you're now a neighbor, you're in the class...* now what are you going to do with the opportunity?

Hey, God put you where you're at *"for such a time as this..."*

There's a *person that needs to be loved - a stand that needs to be taken - an example that needs to be set...* and God has providentially positioned you to be the answer to that need. He's set you up to shine His light, and love, and truth.

Verse 15 *"Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"* What a display of true commitment.

As Esther goes back and forth with Mordecai she's been counting the cost.

At first she wanted to keep her head *in the sand* – finally she's willing to *lay it on the line!* She agrees to risk it all, and step up for her nation and her people.

Esther considers the worse case scenario, and she's ready.
If I perish, I perish!

And if Esther is this devoted to the Jews how much more should we be devoted to Jesus, King of the Jews? *How much do we love our Savior? Jesus died for you and me, are we willing to die for Him if need be? What about die for Him daily?*

So often we're intimidated by a sneer. We become the brunt of a joke and we back off in our witness. Someone mocks our faith, and we become timid.

This isn't *Esther's job on the line - or her popularity - or the boy she wants to date - or the impression she's wants to make on a customer...* her very life is on the line, yet she's willing to give it up... This should mimic our devotion to Jesus.

Verse 17 **“So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.”** He and the Jews in Shushan start to fast and pray...

And we'll find out what happens... next week... **To be continued...**