

THIS IS OUR TIME

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Esther 4:1-17

1. Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God even though God's presence and sovereignty are clearly demonstrated.
2. The events recorded here took place during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), who ruled the Persian Empire from 486 BC to 464 BC.
3. The book of Esther covers events that occurred between 483 BC and 473 BC and during the 59 year gap that is found in the book of Ezra between the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem in 457 BC.
4. Other than King Ahasuerus there are three main characters we are introduced to.
 - a. Mordecai, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, whose lineage traced back to Kish, who was also the father of Saul, the first Jewish king. 2:5
 - b. Esther, the daughter of Mordecai's uncle, who was being raised by Mordecai. 2:7
NOTE: We are told that Esther was beautiful in both form and face, (2:7) and that after a long selection process, she replaced Queen Vashti, who had been deposed for not obeying the king's command.
 - c. Haman, the Agagite, who King Ahasuerus promoted to the second most powerful position in the Persian Empire. 3:1
5. Problems were bound to occur because of long-standing animosities that existed between the Jews, particularly the Jewish descendants of Saul, and the descendants of Agag, king of the Amalekites.
 - a. Many years prior the Amalekites were dedicated by God to total destruction for attacking the Jews during the Exodus. Ex 17:8-16
Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "**Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.**" 15 Moses built an altar and named it The Lord is My Banner; 16 and he said, "**The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.**"

b. Years later King Saul was commanded to carry out God's sentence against the Amalekites. 1 Sam 15:1-3

Then Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the Lord. 2 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. 3 'Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

NOTE: Saul did not fully obey God, and even spared the life of Agag king of the Amalekites, who Samuel later executed. 1 Sam 15:32-33

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

c. These centuries' old animosities played an important part in this chapter of Jewish history.

I. A dire crisis.

A. When Haman, the descendent of Agag, became prime minister, everyone obeyed the king's command to pay homage to him except for Mordecai the Jew, who descended from Saul's family.

B. Chapter 3 details the series of events that led to an edict being issued that called for the total extermination of the Jews from the Persian Empire on a set day in the near future.

C. Like the Jews, I think we face a dire crisis today.

1. We are in the Laodicean period of the Church Age. Rev 3:14-22

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 'Because **you say**, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and **you do not know** that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; **if anyone** hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

2. We are living in difficult times. 2 Tim 3:1-8

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 **holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power**; Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

II. A direct challenge.

A. When the intent of the edict became known it powerfully impacted Mordecai and the Jewish people.

B. Mordecai provided Esther with the details of the deal Haman had made with the king, and provided her with a copy of the edict.

C. He also ordered Esther to go to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.

D. Esther's response pointed out that no one could enter the inner court without the king's summons, and that the penalty for doing so was death.

E. Mordecai's response was direct and to the point.

1. Esther's own life would be forfeited if she failed to act.

2. "Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

F. As followers of Jesus Christ you and I have attained royalty for the time in which we live. 1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

NOTE: Our own welfare, safety, and personal interests should not be our chief concern.

III. A determined choice.

A. Esther's response should be our response.

1. A call to prayer.

2. A commitment to act regardless of the personal implications.

"If I perish, I perish."

B. Esther's actions led to a glorious victory for the Jews, and the final chapter for the Amalekites (Agagites).

NOTE: Haman was hanged on a gallows he prepared for Mordecai, and his ten sons were also hanged at the request of Esther, and authorized by the king. 9:13-14

C. Regardless of what characterizes the lives of other professing Christians, you and I should be committed to prayer and to acting and living for God.

APPLICATION

1. We are living in the time Paul wrote about in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2. While not all of us are called to positions of church leadership we are all called to fulfill the ministry God has called us to and gifted us for. Ephesians 2:10

3. Esther rose to the occasion in her time.

4. This is our time; what are we doing with it?