

Life Lesson 98

Esther - part 1

Text: Esther

Introduction

Everyone feared King Ahasuerus, the mighty king of Persia. He ruled from Ethiopia in Africa all the way to India. That's a big kingdom! His subjects didn't just fear him because he was a great king, though. He was a cruel and wicked man. If someone displeased him, he ordered an execution – and that was that! It was his temper that started the great beauty contest and led to a great battle with the Israelites who were captives in the land of Persia.

The Story

Queen Vashti made the king mad, so he decided to throw her out and find a new wife. All through the kingdom a search went on to find the most beautiful girls. They were brought to the palace so the king could choose from among them the one who would be the new queen.

One of the young beauties was a Hebrew, or Israelite, girl named Esther. Can you imagine how frightened and unhappy she must have been to leave her home and go with hundreds of other girls to the palace? If the king didn't choose her, she would have to stay shut up in a special house for the rest of her life with the other rejects. She could never marry anyone else. She had to stay there until she died. If she were chosen, she would be

married to a cruel and brutal man. If she wasn't careful about everything she said and did, she could be killed.

Perhaps Esther wondered why the Lord allowed her to be taken away from her home to be part of this terrible beauty contest. Why did she have to go through such a frightening ordeal? Esther had no way of knowing that God had planned this very situation so that the lives of His people might be saved.

Esther came to the special house on the palace grounds where the women were to stay while they waited for their turn to see the king. She was an orphan, so she wasn't homesick for her parents, but she must have missed her cousin, Mordecai. He was much older than she and had raised her like a daughter. Mordecai came to the court of the palace every day to make sure that Esther was all right. He probably couldn't see her or talk to her, but she was able to send messages by the servants.

While he was waiting at the palace court to hear from Esther, Mordecai made a serious enemy. Haman, the king's most trusted advisor insisted that everyone bow down to him. Mordecai wouldn't do it! He knew it wasn't right to give a man the honor due only to God. That made Haman mad, but he couldn't do much about it.

At last the day came for Esther to go and meet the king. She was so beautiful and so sweet and kind that Ahasuerus decided right away that she would be his new queen.

Even though she was queen, Esther still was little more than a prisoner. It was even against the law for her to go and see the king unless he called for her. If she approached him, she would be killed unless he held out his scepter, showing he pardoned her.

Every day Mordecai came and checked on her. On the day he overheard a plot against the king. Two of the king's servants were planning to kill him! Mordecai sent word to Esther, and she was able to send a warning to the king. The servants were caught and king's life was saved.

The king forgot all about the good deed that Mordecai did, though. And Haman was so mad at Mordecai that he was miserable.

“Why don't you go ahead and build a big gallows?” Haman's wife said. “Then ask the king if you can hang Mordecai. He'll say 'yes.' Then you can be rid of him.”

That sounded like a good plan to Haman, and he started building a gallows, or scaffold, on which to hang Mordecai.

Haman didn't know that the king couldn't sleep that night. He had his servants read aloud from the court records to make him sleepy. He was reminded by the records of the favor Mordecai had done in saving his life.

“I forgot all about rewarding that man,” the king exclaimed. “I'll have to think of some way to honor him.”

When Haman came in, the king asked, “What should I do to show honor to someone I appreciate?”

The king must want to give me some special reward, Haman thought. “Why, I think you should dress him up in your royal robes and put your jewels on him and put him on

your horse. Then have one of your most important men lead him through the city, crying, “This is how the king honors faithful men.”

“Good idea,” said the king. “Have Mordecai dress in my things and you can lead him through the city honoring him.”

Think how Haman must have felt, leading his enemy around and shouting, “Here’s a man the king honors.” Worst of all, he couldn’t very well ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai when it was obvious that the king was pleased with him.

Haman still had plans for getting rid of the Jews. He didn’t know that the queen was a Jew. He also didn’t know that they were God’s special people -- and he would be fighting against God, Himself. You can’t fight against God and win!

The Life Lesson

Mordecai didn’t have any reason to like King Ahasuerus. The king was a cruel, heathen man. Mordecai was loyal, though, and saved the king’s life. We may not agree with our leaders, but we should still show respect for their position, even if we can’t respect their actions.

We also see from this lesson that God takes care of those that are His. Haman was an important man and a bad enemy -- but God made him give honor to Mordecai. Our business is to do right and obey God. He will take care of our enemies. As for Esther -- we’ll learn about God’s plan for her in our next lesson.

Review Questions

Where were the Jews living in our story today?

Persia

Did they have a good, kind ruler?

No, the king was cruel and bloodthirsty.

How did the king pick a new queen?

He had a beauty contest. The winner would be queen.

Who did the king choose?

Esther

How was Mordecai related to Esther?

He was her cousin, but he had brought her up as a daughter.

What did Mordecai overhear?

Two servants plotted to kill the king.

What did Mordecai do?

He sent word to Esther and she told the king about the plot.

Who was Mordecai's enemy?

Haman, the king's advisor.

What did Haman plan to do to Mordecai?

Hang him.

What did Haman have to do instead?

He led Mordecai on the king's horse, shouting, "Here is how the king honors faithful men."