

Life Lesson 99

Esther -- part 2

Text: Esther

Introduction

Mordecai was the cousin and foster father of Esther, the Queen of Persia. He wasn't allowed to visit her, but every day he went to the court of the palace to make sure she was okay. While Mordecai was at the court he also made an enemy. The king had an advisor named Haman. He was a powerful man, an advisor to the king. Haman had ordered everyone to bow down before him to show reverence to him. Mordecai just wouldn't do it. Mordecai knew he shouldn't bow to anyone but God.

The Story

Haman was furious as he saw, day by day, that Mordecai refused to bow down to him. He learned that Mordecai was a Jew and decided to get even with him.

"Your highness," Haman said to the king. "I have just learned about some wicked, rebellious people that are living in your land. They won't obey your laws and they are terrible troublemakers. I think you should have them put to death."

"Go ahead and get rid of them," the king replied.

So Haman wrote up a declaration that all the Jews were to be murdered. They were to be slaughtered, even the women and little children. Those who killed them got to keep their goods. The Jews weren't even allowed to defend themselves. Haman signed the declaration with the king's special ring, making it official.

What a cry went throughout the land when the Israelites heard that they were to be murdered! The Jews began to pray and fast and to cry out to the Lord.

Mordecai sent word to Esther by a servant to tell her what had happened.

“Your cousin says that you must go and ask the king for mercy for your people,” the servant told Esther.

“But he knows that if I go to the king without being called I could be put to death unless the king holds out his scepter,” Esther said. “He hasn’t called me to come to see him in a month, so I don’t know when I’ll see the king next.”

The servant relayed her words to Mordecai, and he sent back another message.

“Don’t think that you will escape because you are queen,” Mordecai said. “The proclamation says that all Jews must be killed, and someone will tell the king that you are a Jew also. If you are afraid to do anything, God will raise up help from somewhere else. But, this may be the reason that God had brought you to the palace -- for such a time as this.” When Esther heard that, she resolved to speak for her people.

“Tell my cousin that I will go to the king,” she said: Have everyone pray and fast for three days. Then I’ll approach the king. If I perish, I perish.”

How brave Esther must have been to go before that terrible, bloodthirsty king. Would he be angry? Would he hold out his scepter?

When King Ahasuerus saw Esther walking toward him, he suddenly realized how much he loved his beautiful queen. He held out his scepter, granting her life.

“What do you want?” he asked her. “I’ll give you anything you ask, up to half my kingdom.”

Esther knew the time wasn’t right to tell the king the whole story.

“I would like you and Haman to come to a special banquet tomorrow,” she said.

The king was glad to grant her request and Haman was elated. He called his friends together to do a little bragging.

“The king has made me his chief advisor,” he said. “Even the queen invited me to a special dinner.” Then Haman’s face must have clouded. “But that Mordecai spoils everything for me. He still won’t bow down before me.”

“Never mind about him,” said Zeresh, his wife. “Just build a big gallows to hang him on. If you ask the king, he’ll surely let you hang him tomorrow.

The worst was yet to come for Haman. He went to the banquet expecting to have a good time. After the meal the king again asked Esther her request.

“I ask only for my life and the life of my people,” she replied.

“Who wants to kill you?” he asked. “Who dares to presume to do such a terrible thing?”
where is he?”

“Here he is” Esther cried. “Haman is the enemy who wants to destroy my people.”

The king was so angry that he had Haman killed right away. Haman was hung on the gallows he had made for Mordecai.

Ahasuerus would gladly have called back the order to kill all the Jews, but it had been signed with his ring. Not even the king could change a law that had been signed. He did the best he could by passing another law that said the Jews could defend themselves against the attackers. Perhaps the people were not so anxious to kill the Jews when they heard that their queen was also a Jew. At any rate, on the appointed day – the day that was to have been a day of slaughter – the Israelites fought against their enemies. They were able to defeat their attackers and won a great victory.

The king promoted Mordecai to Haman's place as chief advisor and from then on God's people fared well in the Persian kingdom.

The Life Lesson

Esther didn't know why God had allowed her to become the wife of a wicked king, but God knew. He planned all along to use her to protect his people.

Sometimes we don't understand why God puts us in situations that we don't like. God know what He's doing! He had a purpose for all the things He allows in our lives. We must be ready to give up to Him, as Esther did, and say, "I'll do what you say, Lord. If I perish, I perish."

Review Questions

Who was the queen of Persia?

Esther

How was Mordecai related to Esther?

He was her cousin, but had brought her up as her foster father.

Why did Haman hate Mordecai?

Because Mordecai wouldn't bow down to him.

What did Haman build?

A gallows so he could hang Mordecai.

What did Haman talk the king into doing to the Jews?

He signed a decree that all the Jews were to be killed.

What did Mordecai tell Esther she must do?

Ask the king to have mercy on the Jews.

Why was this dangerous?

It was against the law for her to go before the king unless he called her.

What did Esther ask the king?

For the king and Haman to come to a banquet at her house.

What happened when the king learned what Haman had done?

He had Haman hung on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.