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The Book of Esther

In the Book of Esther, we witness the hand of God orchestrating a series of events and characters that tell the story of a humble young orphan, Esther, who becomes the Queen of a powerful nation, and saves the Jewish people from annihilation. Nothing in the story is a coincidence, or just happens by chance; even in the smallest details, we see God's intervention and presence, as well as his perfect timing.

Esther is a young Jewish orphan, adopted by her relative Mordecai. They both live in exile in the Kingdom of King Xerxes I. When the King repudiates his Queen, he sets off to find a new wife. Esther is taken to the palace to be groomed and is presented to the King as a prospective new wife. She appears to be not only of great physical beauty, but she is also kind, gracious, and honorable. With all those qualities, she gains the King's favor and trust; she becomes his wife, and consequently his new crowned Queen. Here we see how God puts Esther in a position of power, privilege, and favor, not only for herself but, as we will see later, for the greater good of God's people; She courageously intervenes to avoid the destruction of the Jewish people at the hands of Haman. Esther is one of the heroes in the story, because when the appointed time comes, she overcomes her fear, and selflessly risks her life, by approaching the King unannounced- in those times an offense punishable with death- to plead on behalf of the Jewish people. In the story, she also appears to be very intelligent. She envisages a plan to

expose Haman's plot to kill the Jewish people by inviting him to a banquet before the King. When Haman's wicked intentions are revealed, the King does justice by Esther; he executes Haman, stops the decree to have all the Jewish people killed in his kingdom, grants Esther protection for her nation, and dotes her with Haman's estate.

The other hero in this story is Mordecai. He adopts Esther when she loses her parents and treats her like his own daughter. He takes care of her, and mentors her through life, never leaving her side. Even when she becomes Queen, Mordechai visits her every day and is always there to provide sound advice and moral support. Esther respects and trusts Mordecai, and follows his instructions. God also uses Mordecai in the story and places him at a place and a time where he overhears King officers' conspiring to kill him. Mordecai does the right thing and tells Esther; she in turn tells the King and gives Mordecai credit; the culprits are impaled. It is at a most critical time, when Mordecai hears of Haman's wicked plot to have all the Jewish people killed, that Mordecai urges Esther to take action to save their people from death by asking the King to spare their people from death. Esther fears for her life, but Mordechai persuades her to do the right thing even if this costs her her life. He speaks words of wisdom: "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14. Mordecai plays his part too, and through his faithful mentoring to Esther, his integrity, honesty, and love for his people, he too contributes to saving the Jewish people from annihilation.

As for Haman, he is the villain of the story. He is an officer of the King who is full of pride, prejudice, jealousy, and hatred. Just because Mordecai would not bow down to him. Haman comes up with a revengeful plan to kill not only him but also all his people in the land. He goes to the King and manipulates him to approve a decree to destroy a group of people who, as he puts it, do not follow the King's law. Haman thinks he will also gain more favor with the

King by appearing to be watchful of these “unruly people”. He does not know that Esther is Jewish, and is in a much higher position of favor before the King. Haman proceeds with his wicked plan, he even builds a pole to have Mordecai impaled. God’s divine intervention shows once more when he turns what was to be used to harm Mordecai against Haman. This pole ends up being the instrument of Haman’s execution, as ordered by the King when his wicked plot is finally revealed, and before Haman’s fateful end, he is put through the humiliation of having to lead Mordecai on horseback through the city proclaiming Mordecai is a hero because he saved the King from an assassination plot.

In conclusion, there is much to be learned from the three characters in the story. Firstly, from Esther, we learn we must be prepared to take action when the time to fulfill God’s plan is presented to us, we must be courageous, commit selflessly, and be ready to act “for such a time as this”.

Secondly, we must identify a Mordecai in our lives. Somebody who is there as a mentor, that will act as a stern conscience to guide us and encourage us when we falter and urge us to be bold and act with integrity and courage, regardless of the consequences.

In third place, let’s be aware of the Hamans in our lives. They too have a part to play, and when we encounter them, or when we suffer from their spiteful actions, it is important to trust that God will eventually turn what is done to harm us to our favor. “ No weapon forged against you will prevail” Isaiah 54:17.

Finally, a word of caution, let us be very vigilant that we do not become Haman, led by pride and hatred. It is easier than we might think.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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