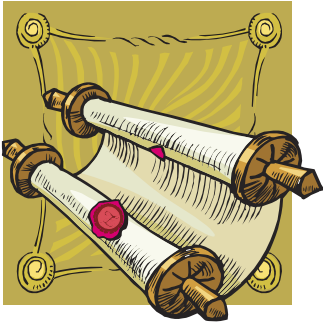




Esther's Choice

Esther 2:19 - 5:2



Esther was chosen to be queen. But that was just the beginning of Esther's story. This week we see that God arranged all the events in Esther's life to carry out His plan and keep His promises.

Day #1: Plot Uncovered

Everyone hates a tattletale. "Tattling" is when a child runs to tell his parent or teacher every little thing that another child does wrong. A tattletale almost always tattles in order to get the other child in trouble. This is NOT a good reason to tell on another person. Today we will see one man tell on others for the right reason - to save a life.

One day Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was near the palace gate. He overheard two of the king's guards talking. They were very angry with King Xerxes and they came up with an evil plan. The two guards were planning to kill the king! Mordecai knew he must do something.

† *(Mordecai) told Queen Esther. Then she reported it to the king. She told him that Mordecai had uncovered the plans against him. Some people checked Esther's report. And they found out it was true. So the two officials were put to death. - Esther 2:22b-23a*

Mordecai certainly did the right thing. By reporting the plot to Esther, he saved the king's life. All of these events were written in the king's official record book. **God is always at work!** God had Mordecai at the gate at the exact right time for him to overhear the plan. On what seemed like an ordinary day, God used Mordecai to do something extraordinary.

* God is always at work. We must be willing to be used by Him every day. Remain close to the Lord, and listen for His leading. He may be planning to use you in an amazing way - even today!

Day #2: Haman Scorned

King Xerxes had a high-ranking official named Haman. Haman was from the family line of Agag who was a great enemy of the Jewish people. The king made Haman the most powerful official in the kingdom. King Xerxes even gave orders for everyone in the kingdom to bow down to him. Every time Haman rode through the palace gate, all the other officials bowed down to him.

Day #2 continued:

† *But Mordecai refused to get down on his knees. He wouldn't give Haman any honor at all. - Esther 3:2b*

Haman did not notice Mordecai's actions, but the other officials at the gate did. They asked Mordecai why he did not bow down as the king had ordered. Mordecai told them he was a Jew. The officials went to tell Haman about Mordecai's refusal to bow down. The Bible says they went to Haman just to see if Mordecai would get away with his behavior (Esther 3:4). No one's life was at stake; they were tattling. We can be sure that the next time Haman came through the gate, his eyes were locked on Mordecai.

Haman noticed that Mordecai wouldn't get down on his knees. He wouldn't give Haman any honor. So Haman burned with anger. - Esther 3:5

Why would Haman burn with anger? Haman was full of pride. Haman was sure he deserved the praise of all the king's subjects. In this instance, Mordecai followed God's command. Deuteronomy 6:13 says to worship God ONLY. Mordecai was right not to bow down to Haman, even though he went against the orders of the king. Mordecai chose to obey God's command instead of the king's.

* There are times when people want you to do things that are opposite of the commands of God. Discuss some of these times. (Examples may be peer pressure, schoolwork contrary to Biblical doctrine.) Discuss how you can obey God in each situation. We must ALWAYS choose to obey God above any person (Luke 12:4-5).

Day #3: Haman's Plot

Haman was so full of pride that he became furious when Mordecai would not bow down to praise him. Haman was so angry with Mordecai that he wanted to destroy not only Mordecai, but all the Jews in the entire kingdom (Esther 3:6).

† *Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "Certain people are scattered among the nations. They live in all of the territories in your kingdom. Their practices are different from the practices of all other people. They don't obey your laws. It really isn't good for you to put up with them. If it pleases you, give the order to destroy them." - Esther 3:8-9a*

Sadly, the king trusted Haman. Without even asking who the people were, he told Haman to do whatever he wanted to the people. Little did the king know that his own wife was one of those people. King Xerxes gave his royal ring to Haman. Having the royal ring was just like having the king's signature. Haman had orders drawn up for the people in the kingdom to kill every Jewish person in the Persian Empire on one single day. The date

Day #3 continued:

was set for eleven months away. Haman used the king's ring to stamp the royal seal on the orders. Once the orders were sealed, they could never be taken back - not even by the king.

Haman's pride caused him to want to destroy an entire race of people. However, the Bible says that pride will lead to *our own* destruction. Proverbs 16:18 says, "If you are proud, you will be destroyed. If you are proud, you will fall."



Ask yourself, "Am I proud, or do I consider others better than myself? (Philippians 2:3) Do I find fault in other people, or do I encourage others? (Hebrews 3:13) Do I want to be served, or do I want to serve others? (Galatians 5:13) Make a plan to serve one person this week. (For example, do one of your brother's chores, or take out the trash without being asked.) Ask God to show you if you have an attitude of pride at any time.

Day #4: God's Promise

There is a strange creature called an alligator snapping turtle. This freshwater turtle has a tongue that looks just like a worm. The turtle lies at the muddy bottom of a river with his mouth wide open. When a fish comes to make a meal of the "worm," the turtle snaps its mighty jaw down on the fish. The foolish fish thinks he is attacking a helpless worm, when in truth, he is attacking a part of something much larger than himself. This is very similar to what happened in Haman's life. Just like the foolish fish, Haman did not know Who he was messing with when he threatened the Jews.

Haman had devised a wicked plot and he believed he had enough power to carry it out. After all, he had all the power of the king behind him. But there was one thing Haman did not count on. His plot was against God's chosen people - the Jews.

God had made some very important promises concerning the Jewish people. Way back at the beginning of Genesis, we read the promises God made to Abraham, the ancestor of all the Jews:



I will make you into a great nation.

I will bless you.

I will make your name great.

You will be a blessing to others.

I will bless those who bless you.

I will put a curse on anyone who calls down a curse on you.

All nations on earth will be blessed because of you." - Genesis 12:2-3

Haman would have done well to know these promises, made by the Creator of the universe. These promises were NOT "if - then" promises. They were "no matter what" promises. There was nothing Abraham's people could do to earn these things. And there was nothing that anyone could do to stop God from keeping these promises. God had promised to make the Jews a great

Day #4 continued:

nation. That meant they would be very important and large in number. God also promised to curse anyone who cursed them, and curse them is exactly what Haman did.



Start a notebook called, "The Promises of God." Each time you learn one of God's promises from the Bible, write it in your notebook. (Some promises to start with are Philippians 4:19, Romans 8:28, and John 3:16.) Learn the promises and share them with others. Remember that nothing and no one can stop God from keeping His promises (Psalm 33:11).

Day #5: Esther's Choice

Mordecai and all the Jews in the kingdom were very sad. They had heard about the royal order. They had only eleven months to live. Desperately, Mordecai sent a message to Queen Esther. He told her to go to the king and beg for the lives of her people. Esther was afraid to go before the king because there was a very strict law about visiting the king. Anyone who went to the king without being called for would be killed, unless the king held out his royal scepter, or golden rod. Mordecai warned Esther that she, too, was in danger because she was a Jew. Mordecai said, "Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14b NLT)

Esther asked Mordecai to have all the Jewish people fast for three days on her behalf. Fasting is going without food. The purpose is to focus on the Lord and spend time in prayer. After those three days, Esther put on her royal robes and approached the king's court. Imagine the fear in Esther's heart as she walked toward the thrown room. If King Xerxes did not hold out his royal scepter to her, she would be put to death. Not only would she die, but also then she could not beg for the lives of God's people. Thousands of lives hung in the balance. Esther walked, no doubt, trembling, toward the king.



The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall. He was facing the entrance. He saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard. He was pleased with her. So he reached out toward her the gold rod that was in his hand. - Esther 5:1b-2a

Once again, Esther found favor in the eyes of the king! She was allowed to approach King Xerxes, and she began the journey toward rescuing God's people.



There was great wisdom in Mordecai's words, "Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" How right he was! God had arranged for Esther to be the queen at exactly the right time - the right time to save His people. When you are in a difficult situation, draw strength from knowing that **God is in control of all things.**

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. - Romans 8:28