

Lesson 6 Commentary

Day 7: Pride and Prejudice

Esther 5-7

Esther Seeks an Audience with the King

After fasting for three days, Esther put on her royal robes and went before King Ahasuerus. When the king saw Esther he was pleased and extended his scepter, accepting her. The king promised to give her whatever she requested “even to the half of my kingdom.” So Esther made a simple request. She invited Ahasuerus and Haman for a banquet. She prepared it for them that same day.

During the banquet, Ahasuerus asked Esther what he could do for her. She was not ready to tell the king. Instead she invited the king and Haman for another banquet. We do not know if delaying her request was part of her original plan, or if she lost courage to ask. Either way, God was in charge. His timing of when Haman would be exposed was brilliant.

Haman left the banquet “joyful and glad of heart” ... until he met Mordecai at the gate. Mordecai “neither rose nor trembled before him,” and Haman went home enraged. That evening he boasted to his family and friends about the honors the king had given him. Yet seeing Mordecai spoiled his joy.

His wife and friends advised Haman to build gallows for Mordecai’s execution. They told Haman that if he had Mordecai hanged the next morning, he would be able to fully enjoy the banquet. He gave orders immediately for a gallows 75 feet high—approximately as high as the city wall—to be built.

Everything Changes

“That night the king could not sleep.” Scripture teaches us that God holds the hearts of kings in His hand. He turns them where He wants them to go (Proverbs 21:1). The king’s lack of sleep resulted in events turning in favor of the Jews. Unable to sleep, Ahasuerus asked his servants to read the royal diary to him. They read through the night until they came to Mordecai’s report of the two guards who plotted to kill the king (2:23).

The Persians kept detailed records of all the affairs of state and the royal family. Exceptional service to the king was recorded and rewarded, but Ahasuerus could not recall what had been done for Mordecai. The next morning he asked: “What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai?” His officials told him that none had been given. So he asked for suggestions on how to honor Mordecai. Not rewarding one who had saved the king’s life was a serious matter.

Haman had just entered the court. Ironically he was hoping for the king’s permission to have Mordecai hanged. When he came before the king, the king asked his advice. Haman assumed the king wanted to honor *him*, so he proposed an extravagant plan. The honored man should wear a royal robe and ride on the king’s horse. One of the king’s most noble princes should lead the man through the streets of Susa, shouting, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.”

Imagine Haman’s shock and horror when the king ordered Haman to honor Mordecai in this way! After this humiliating parade through the streets, Haman returned home. He covered his head in mourning. He realized how dangerous his situation was. He told his wife and friends about the turn of events. His friends were not helpful. They had known Mordecai was a Jew when they advised building the gallows for his hanging. Now they said, “If Mordecai ... is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him.”



Think about how prejudice hurts. When Mordecai did not give Haman the honor he arrogantly thought he deserved, he became angry. His anger quickly turned to prejudice. He hated Mordecai and drew false conclusions about him. To make it even worse, Haman’s prejudice turned to revenge—against an entire people group. Every Jew in Persia suffered the effects of Haman’s prejudice.

In Jesus' day, Jews were prejudiced against Samaritans. They often walked many extra miles to avoid contact with them. Jesus, however, walked straight through their country. There He showed loving acceptance of a despised woman. Not only was she a Samaritan, but she was also a social outcast among her own people (John 4).

Have you felt the sting of prejudice against you? Consider Jesus' example. Jesus is never prejudiced. No matter what injustice you suffer from others, Jesus sees you as important. He values who you are—His beloved creation.

Esther Appeals for her People

The king and Haman dined again at Esther's banquet. Ahasuerus once more asked about her request. He addressed her as Queen Esther, a sign of royal favor. Esther was encouraged and bravely made her request: "Let my life be granted me ... and my people For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated."

Esther's plea shocked the king. He was unaware of her Jewish identity. She continued by saying that she and her people were being sold for annihilation. She may have even quoted the exact price Haman had paid (4:7).

King Ahasuerus asked who dared to do such a thing. Esther pointed to Haman. Enraged, Ahasuerus left the room and strode out to the palace garden. Haman sensed his fate was decided. He threw himself on Esther's mercy, literally "falling on the couch where Esther was." How ironic that Haman, furious when the Jew Mordecai refused to bow down (3:2), now fell down before the Jewess Esther! When Ahasuerus returned, he reacted to the scene. He exclaimed, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" There were strict rules concerning the royal harem. Kneeling even a foot away from Esther's couch was punishable by death.

Attendants quickly covered Haman's face before the raging king. Harbona, an attending eunuch, said that gallows had been erected at Haman's house for the execution of Mordecai. The king ordered that Haman be executed on his own gallows. "Then the wrath of the king abated."



Think about God's principle of sowing and reaping. Haman sowed anger against Mordecai. He reaped the king's wrath. Haman made a gallows to execute Mordecai. He was hanged on his own gallows. When we plant anger and destruction, we reap anger and destruction. But when we plant justice and mercy that is what we will reap—sometimes in this life, but always in the

next.



Personalize the TRUTH!

Haman craved power and respect. He promoted himself in his workplace and in his home. Mordecai, on the other hand, didn't seem concerned with personal advancement. Instead he humbly performed his duties at the king's gate. He overheard the plot to kill the king and saved Ahasuerus's life (2:19-23). His act was recorded in a book and forgotten—until God revealed it at just the perfect time.

By their opposite attitudes, Haman and Mordecai illustrate the truth of Proverbs 18:12: "Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor." Is there a situation in your life now where God is calling you to have more of a Mordecai attitude? Tell God what it feels like to seem forgotten and overlooked. Pour out your heart to Him and lean on His care. Ask Him to help you wait for Him to give you the affirmation and recognition you need.