

Such a Time as This

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Esther 4: 13, 14 – *And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews, for if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

The Bible is full of amazing stories. The great thing is that, apart from the parables, these are true stories; real happenings in the lives of real people who did not know that the things happening in their lives would be written in the Bible and that we would be reading about them hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years later. The story of Esther is one of the best-loved Bible stories. It is full of high drama that makes some soap operas seem tame: royalty, beauty, position and power, treachery, conspiracy, intrigue, and the favourite theme of good over evil.

But these stories are not just for interesting reading and Christian entertainment. In **Romans 15: 4** we are told that “*whatever things were written before, were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*”. And again in **1 Cor. 10: 11**, the apostle Paul emphasizes, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*”. These stories are instructive. God’s people are to learn from the experiences of those who have gone before. And the lessons are especially important for those living at the end of time; that is, you and me.

The year is 474 BC and the setting is the Kingdom of Persia. King Ahasuerus, otherwise known as Artaxerxes, rules over one of the largest empires in history. He is powerful, fabulously rich and lives in his extravagantly beautiful palace in Shushan, his capital city. If you remember, God's people, Judah, had been unfaithful to God and He had allowed the Babylonians to carry them away to Babylon as captives. After several years, while Belshazzar was king, Babylon was invaded by the Medo-Persians. Belshazzar was killed and the Medo Persians took charge of the Kingdom of Babylon, all its possessions and all its people, including the Jews who lived in Babylon.

Some time later, the king of Persia permitted the Jews to go back to re-build Jerusalem and re-establish the Kingdom. However, thousands of Jews still remained as permanent residents in what was now the Kingdom of Persia. Among them was Mordecai, who worked at the royal palace and who was guardian of his beautiful cousin, Hadassa. We know her as Esther. The name Esther means "star" and she is the star of this drama.

When the king divorced his wife for not obeying his commands, he began to look for a new queen. His officials knew they had to find one that was as beautiful or even more beautiful than the ex-queen. They gathered the finest young women of the Kingdom, each one outstanding in her own way; women of Persia, Babylon, Lydia, Egypt, Judah and other countries that had been conquered by the Persians. Hadassa was one of those young women and after they were put through all kinds of training and all kinds of tests, she was chosen as the best of the best and became Esther, queen of Persia.

As a young Jewish orphan girl growing up in the great city of Shushan, she probably had dreams of what she would like to become. She perhaps dreamed of a good job, maybe in the palace where her cousin Mordecai worked, maybe she

would marry an official, or a soldier. Maybe she dreamed of going back to Judah to help re-build Jerusalem. It is very unlikely that it ever occurred to her that one day she would be queen of the greatest nation on earth, but God had a plan for her life, a plan that would be crucial to the survival of His people and a plan that would write her name in history, making her an example to people over 2,500 years later!

In **Jeremiah 29: 11**, God speaks to each of us saying, “I know the plans I have for you”. God has a plan for each life. No birth takes God by surprise. The Psalmist David declares:

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be*

Ps. 139: 13 – 16

If there is one thing that people, and especially Christians, should never forget, it is that we are at war. There is a constant fight going on between good and evil. We are right at the centre of that battle and we cannot ignore it. As we live our lives, we are going to be either contributing to victory for God and for the right, or victory for Satan and the wrong. The devil tries to hurt God by hurting His

people. When human lives are damaged or destroyed, whether through physical hurt, or spiritual disaster, God feels the pain. In **Is. 63: 9** we are told, “*In all their affliction, He was afflicted*”; and again in **Ps. 103: 13, 14**, “*As a Father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him*” (NIV). This story tells of the devil’s effort to wipe out God’s people and of the intervention of God who says He will fight for His people (Ex. 14: 14).

Haman, a high-ranking and extremely powerful official in the king’s government got offended, because Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and guardian refused to bow down to him, as the people of Persia were required to do. Mordecai was a naturalized citizen of Persia and a civil servant employed to the king, but he did not forget that he was first and foremost a Jew, one of God’s chosen people and a representative of the God of Heaven wherever he may be. And God did not forget Mordecai or the other Jews living in Persia. They were still His people.

Mordecai remembered that God had said, “*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them...*” (Ex. 20: 5) and he remained true to God’s command even though it would get him in trouble. Every day we are under pressure to bow down to idols, to put our possessions, or the wishes of persons above the expressed will of God. We are often reluctant to displease those who have power or great influence in our lives, whether if is the power of governments and institutions, or just the power exercised over our lives by loved ones and friends. We should always remember that no matter the circumstances, our first and most important loyalty is to God, to His word, and to His claims on our lives.

Haman, in his pride, anger and maliciousness, decided to destroy, not only Mordecai, but all Jews. This was truly Satan at work through Haman. When Mordecai heard of Haman’s plot, he called on Esther to intervene on behalf of the people of the Jews. He told her to go in to the king and to use her influence,

intelligence and her faith in God to destroy Haman's plan. This was a dangerous proposition. The law in Persia was that anybody who went into the king's presence uninvited would be put to death. There was a mantra in the kingdom which said "the laws of the Medes and the Persians which changeth not". In other words, when the king made a law, it had to be obeyed – even by the king himself! The previous queen had been divorced for being disrespectful to the king. He wouldn't want to be seen as a weak man when queen number two could also disrespect him and break his laws. If she obeyed Mordecai, Esther's life would be in great danger.

This is where Mordecai made that famous statement found in our scripture reading. We can still hear him saying, "Esther, we always wondered how you, a little orphan girl from among the Jewish captives could rise up to be Queen of Persia. Don't you see? This is the answer! The Lord has had His hand on your life. If you don't respond to this situation, God will bring deliverance to His people through some other means, but right now He is depending on you. Seeking to protect yourself does not mean you will be safe, because without God's protection you will also die along with all your relatives. You must act now. Who knows, but I think you have come to the kingdom for **such a time as this!**"

God rules in the affairs of men, in big things and in small things, but every one of His children has a special part to play in life. Ellen White puts it this way: *"Each actor in history stands in his lot and place; for God's great work after His own plan will be carried out by men [and women] who have prepared themselves to fill positions for good or evil"* (RH, June 12, 1900).

Esther was faced with a huge decision. The fact is, that if Haman's plan was to go through and the Jews were killed, because she was the queen perhaps her life would be spared. On the other hand, if she went to the king, chances are, she would lose her life. The temptation was there to save her own skin, to act in her own self-

interest, but she responded as God would want her to and the lives of the people of Judah were spared. Remember: “These things happen for our example, those on whom the end of the world has come.” What lessons does God expect us to learn from this account, and what is there that is important to us on this Education Day?

There are several things to consider. First, Esther showed the character and right attitudes to deal with the situation. She respected and took counsel from Mordecai, her guardian. She respected the guidance of Hegai, the king’s eunuch because it was in keeping with her Jewish principles. She had respect for her elders and knew when to accept advice. Although she had the intelligence, poise and personal attributes needed to attain the position of queen, she could not forget that these gifts were given to her by God. When our children are bright, talented and able, we sometimes think so much of their abilities that we consider them too good for God’s plan for their education. Do not forget that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from [God] above” (**James 1: 17**) and that God will one day “bring every work into judgment...whether it be good or whether it be evil” (**Eccl. 12: 14**).

Second, when Esther was born, nobody knew that one day there would be a man called Haman who would rise up against God’s people. No-one would have imagined that a law would be passed to kill all the Jews in Persia. But God knew. He knows the future and He could see ahead of time. He had a plan to save His people and that plan included Esther, but neither she nor her family members knew that. While she was growing up, God was making sure that she had the right training, the right influences, the right character development to do His will when the time came. Today, it is important that our children have the right training, influence and character development to respond to God’s call to service.

Point number 3: Remember, these things were written for the instruction, especially of us **who live at the end of time**. The war between good and evil, the great controversy, has not stopped. We are still at war. **Revelation 12: 17** tells us that God's Remnant people in the last days will be under severe and relentless attack from Satan, and **verse 12** gives the warning, *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*. As the One who sees the future God revealed these things through His prophets. If we really believe God's word we should be prepared for the battle.

We don't know what kind of education Esther got to prepare her for God's plan for her life. The Bible does not give details on this, but it does give details as to how we should educate our children for the crises now and in the future. As in the days of Esther, the principles of God are being disregarded. Many around the world, and even among God's people are bowing down to gods of money, material possessions, positions of power and the admiration of men. We are compromising our unique standards in favour of popular ideas and the wisdom of men.

People have become aggressive and cruel. Horrible acts of crime and violence are seen every day. There is dishonesty in business involving millions and billions of dollars, conspiracies by large corporations, oppression of the poor and powerless, and blatant injustice in the courts of law. In the meantime, standards of decency and morality are being torn down. There is disrespect for marriage and family principles. The most stupid and destructive ideas are elevated as truth and the leading thinkers in society have sold out to the devil's lies. While many Christians, like Mordecai, are refusing to bow, many others are compromising every day, telling themselves that when the most critical tests arrive, they will take

a stand; but the Bible clearly teaches that those who will be able to withstand the big tests then, are those who are being faithful in the smaller tests now.

We know that a day is coming when the very lives of God's people will be on the line – just as in the days of Esther; but **2 Thess. 2: 7** reminds us that the mystery of iniquity is already at work. This work includes a devilish scheme to steal the hearts of our children, to weaken the commitment and resolve of the Esthers, Daniels and Josephs that God has chosen from their births to stand up for Him in “such a time as this”. Our Only Wise God, knowing what the future holds, has instructed us as how best to educate and prepare the new generation of the faithful. To ignore His instructions is to endanger our children, put the cause of Christ at risk, strengthen the hand of Satan and dishonor the Lord, our God.

In **Is. 54: 13**, we are admonished: “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord”. Christ himself urged us, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me” (**Matt. 11: 29**). Only God who knows the future, knows the enemy, understands the nature of the warfare, and has “all power in Heaven and earth” can decide what is best in the preparation of our children. The schools that He has instructed us to put in place for the education and preservation of our children are neglected, underfunded, criticized and ridiculed, while our children are sent to places where the mystery of iniquity is having its way. Placing our own wisdom above the wisdom of God, we seek to justify this behaviour as Cain, the son of Adam did. But we too must take seriously the word of God when He says: “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matt. 7: 21)

People of God, members of God's Remnant family, it is time to heed the call and obey God's message to you today. Bring the Children home! Place them where

the blood is over the doorpost. Stop speaking and working against God's schools. Where there are weaknesses, fix them. Where they fall short of completely following God's plan, make the adjustments. Where there are those among us who weaken the resolve of our faithful education, who discourage and criticize our workers, rebuke them. Let us do the will of our Father in heaven and do it now. Save our children and prepare them to stand for the Lord in **Such a time as This**.