

Esther 5:1-14

Esther 5:1-14 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. (2) So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favour in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the sceptre. (3) And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you; up to half the kingdom!" (4) So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him." (5) Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. (6) At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" (7) Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request is this: (8) If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said." (9) So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. (10) Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. (11) Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. (12) Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. (13) Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." (14) Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet." And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

Questions On The Text

What did Esther do?

Verses 1-2: On the third day of the fast, Esther dressed in her royal robes and stood in the king's inner court. Ahasuerus, who was sitting on his throne, saw Esther and extended his golden sceptre towards her, indicating that she could approach without peril to her life.

What was Ahasuerus' offer to Esther?

Verse 3: The king assumed that Esther had a request and, addressing her by her formal title of Queen Esther, asked her what it was. His promise of up to half his kingdom is not likely to be meant to be taken literally, but it is an indication that Esther can expect to be dealt with generously. (See Mark 6:22-23 where King Herod made the same offer to the daughter of Herodias because she pleased him with her dancing.)

What was Esther's request?

Verses 4-8: Esther had not gone thoughtlessly into the king's presence, but had already prepared a banquet to which she now invited him as well as Haman. Unlike chapter one, where Ahasuerus had to throw his own banquet to honour himself, this banquet was organised in his honour by someone else and this must have appealed to his considerable ego, not to mention piquing his curiosity.

The king accepted her invitation and sent immediately for Haman. Over wine at the banquet, the king renewed his generous offer. In reply, Esther invited him and Haman to yet another banquet the next day where she promised that her request would be revealed.

How did Haman feel about Esther's invitation?

Verses 9-10: Haman went out from the banquet totally self-satisfied, no doubt for having been the only one in the kingdom to have been invited to dine with the king and queen. However, his good mood was short-lived. When he got to the king's gate, Mordecai was there and still did not give him the respect he felt he deserved by standing or trembling (literally: quake with fear) before him. As in 3:5, Haman is again infuriated, but he again restrains his anger. When he arrives home, he sends for his friends and his wife.

What did Haman tell his wife and friends?

Verses 11-13: It would appear that the only reason that Haman summoned his wife and friends was to brag. He boasted of his riches, the number of his children (he had ten sons; see 9:13), his promotion by the king, his superiority of advancement over the other officials of the kingdom, as well as being the only person in Persia to be invited to dine with the king and queen. However, despite all his successes, Mordecai's disrespect still occupied his mind.

How did Haman's wife advise him?

Verse 14: Supported by Haman's friends, Zeresh advised Haman to get rid of Mordecai by having him hanged on a gallows more than twenty-two metres high. The suggestion would first have to be made to Ahasuerus, but highlights the arbitrary nature of justice as exercised by powerful persons in the kingdom of Persia.

Despite the fact that Mordecai was already to be killed, along with the other Jews, at the end of the year, Haman was delighted with the suggestion. So, in anticipation of the king's endorsement of his plan, he had the gallows erected immediately.

Further Questions For Discussion:

How might Esther have felt while waiting for Ahasuerus to notice her in the out court, and then when he extended the sceptre towards her?

When Ahasuerus offered Esther any request up to half his kingdom, what does that indicate about his feelings towards her?

Why did Esther invite the king and Haman to a banquet instead of immediately pleading for the lives of her people?

Why did Esther organise a second banquet?

Haman was initially filled with joy at Esther's invitation, but as soon as he saw Mordecai, his mood changed dramatically. Why would his joy be so easily sabotaged?

Haman gathered his wife and friends for the purpose of bragging. What motivates people to brag?

Zeresh, Haman's wife, suggested the gallows for Mordecai. What kind of wife was she?