

For Such a Time as This

A study in the book of Esther

Lesson Four

“For Such a Time”

Prayerfully read through Esther, chapter four.

We read in verse one that when Mordecai had learned all that had taken place he responded by tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes. “Renting” or tearing your clothes was a symbol of **remorse, sorrow, repentance** and **mourning**. There is no doubt that Mordecai was not only grieving for his people because of Haman’s horrible decree, but he may have been feeling partly to blame because of his refusal to bow down to Haman, which ignited Haman’s wrath.

This chapter has so much to speak to us as we go through each verse. Right here in the beginning, we see in this first verse, the reality that doing the right thing often brings hard consequences with it. We can be faced with decisions in life, where we know what we ought to do, but knowing the consequences that might follow can cause us to hesitate to do so. Mordecai may have been overwhelmed by a heavy burden of guilt for what his actions caused. Fear of consequences has kept many a person from doing what is right.

- 1) Has there ever been a time in your life when you were called to do what you knew was the right thing to do, in spite of the possibility of heavy consequences? If so, how did you respond?

- 2) The last part of **verse 1** tells us that Mordecai goes out into the middle of the city and cries out with a loud and bitter cry. What do you think may have been his motive for going out into the middle of the city to do this?

3) As we look at **verse 2**, we see that Mordecai goes as far as the king's gate, but does not enter. What is the reason given?

a. Can you think of any reasons why this would be so? Why do you think such a rule was made?

4) Often, those who plan out agendas that cause harm and suffering to others, refuse to listen to or see the results that those plans and agendas have brought about. They don't want to look at the reality of what their agenda has resulted in. I can think of no greater example than that of the abortion movement. The pro abortionists refuse to look at those little lives they have fought so hard to destroy. Even with the confirmation of technology and science that reveal the reality of that human life in the womb, they refuse to look at the evidence. They choose to believe what they know is a lie; that the life in the womb is insignificant, that it doesn't matter, that it isn't really viable, therefore can be disregarded. Can you think of any other examples in today's world where this kind of mind-set can be seen?

5) As we move to **verse 3**, we find that every Jew in every province where the decree has gone out is reacting in the same way as Mordecai is. The grief is wide-spread across the land. One of the factors adding to their grief is found back in **Esther 1:19**. What does this verse say about a royal decree that goes out from the king?

6) As we look at **verse 4** we see a very “**unaware**” Queen Esther, who receives word from her maids and her eunuchs concerning her uncle’s attire and his behavior. What is her immediate response to this news?

a. What is Mordecai’s response to her offering?

7) We need to remember that Esther has been living within the isolated grounds of the palace for quite some time by now. She has servants and staff to take care of her every need and she is protected from any of the unpleasant concerns and issues of the common people. She is living a life of pampered luxury. She hears of her uncle’s present attire, and she immediately wants to solve the problem by giving him new clothes to wear. This is evidence of how much her life of royalty has affected her. Do you think that sometimes, we too, can be affected in the same way, completely unaware of the suffering taking place outside our own little world? Have you experienced that personally? How so? Share your thoughts.

8) Upon Mordecai’s refusal to accept the garments she has sent to him, we read in **verse 5** that she finally figures out that there must be something terribly wrong, so she sends Hathach, one of the eunuchs attending her, to go to Mordecai and find out what was going on and why. In **verses 6 & 7**, where does Hathach find Mordecai, and what is the message Mordecai gives him to bring back to Esther?

- 9) In **verse 8**, what else does Mordecai give to Hathach, as further proof of the situation, and what is the request he adds to the message?
- 10) Looking at **verse 11**, what is Esther's **initial response** to this news? Write down the message she tells Hathach to bring back to her uncle, Mordecai.
- 11) We can often trick ourselves into thinking that what isn't directly affecting us at the moment, isn't something we need to be concerned with.

Even with all its flaws and the changes we see happening in our country, we are still living in a place of protection and prosperity, if we look at things in the light of so many other people in the world. Many of the reasons why we are seeing such drastic changes in our culture and in our families, and are appalled by things that we never imagined, are because, for so long we've either failed to acknowledge the dangerous influences all around us, or when we did acknowledge them, we failed to do anything about them. Now here we are, shocked by what the culture is accepting as normal behavior and appalled by the curriculum being pushed into our educational system and what the public schools are teaching our children. What do you think should be our response to these things as Christians? Share your personal thoughts.

a. What are some of the excuses we often make to stay silent?

12) Mordecai's words back to Esther in **verses 13 & 14** are probably the most important words recorded in this book. Write down **verse 13** below.

13) How often do we find ourselves in a mind-set that tells us, **if I just ignore this situation, maybe it will go away?** Or, **it doesn't really concern me, so I should mind my own business?** I think all of us have experienced that at times. How does the warning that Mordecai gives to Esther in **verse 13** speak to your own heart? Are there things you've been ignoring that you know you need to respond to, or act on? Are there things you've been ignoring, that you thought didn't affect you, only to wake up and see how much those things really are affecting you, and the lives and families of all of those around you? Do you have an example you can share with the group?

- 14) Within **verse 14** we find our **theme** for our entire study in the Book of Esther. As Mordecai continues his warning to his niece, we read wise words that we all need to consider and heed. Write out **verse 14** below.
- 15) We see that Mordecai, even in the midst of this present horrific decree, has an unshakable faith in the faithfulness of God. What indication do we see in **verse 14** that confirms that fact? Write out the words that **give evidence** to that below.
- 16) Mordecai isn't hanging his faith and hope on Esther. He believes if she won't come forward, that God will raise up "relief and deliverance" from someplace else. I think this is an important truth for us to remember. We should never think that the "salvation" or "rescue" or "deliverance" of someone depends entirely upon us. God doesn't need us. He desires to "**use**" us, in order to **ble**ss us. If we decide not to participate in that blessing, He will raise up someone else to carry out His plans and purposes, but we will miss out on the blessing of something He wanted to do in our lives. Do you have an experience like that; a time when you quenched the leading of God's Spirit, so that He raised up someone else to do what He was calling you to do?

17) Read **Psalm 31**. In this psalm we see David, crying out in desperation, in the midst of trouble, running from many enemies that are surrounding him. What realization hits him in the first part of **verse 15** of that psalm? What does he say? Write the **verse 15a** below.

18) Do we believe that? Do we believe in our hearts that God has placed us here, in this time, in the very place we are in, as part of His sovereign plan and purpose for our lives? Do you find yourself struggling with an attitude of discontent over circumstances you cannot change? Have you asked the Lord how He might want to use you in those very circumstances? How is this personally speaking to your heart?

19) As we read **verses 15 through 17**, we see that Esther has taken her uncle Mordecai's words to heart. Esther agrees to go, regardless of the consequences she might face. From **verse 16**, write down the conditions she gives to Mordecai before she will agree to go to the king.

20) **Prayer**, accompanied by **fasting**, is seen all throughout God's Word in times of urgent need and great distress. Read **Ezra 9:1-8**. Ezra is sickened and distraught over the things he has heard going on, not only amongst the common people, but "being led by" their leaders and rulers. The deep sorrow and grief he feels brings him to his knees, with his clothes torn, in prayer and fasting. I think this example in Ezra is so significant for us today, as we look around at the atrocities taking place, even within the church. As you read this passage in Ezra, what do you find significant to take note of about Ezra's prayer in **Ezra 9:6**? What does Ezra say to the Lord, and what does this say about **Ezra's heart**?

21) If you have time, look up and read a similar prayer by Daniel in **Daniel 9:3-5**. We see many other examples of this kind of heart attitude throughout God's Word as well. Another is in **Nehemiah 1:1-6**.

Part of the significance of fasting, along with our prayer is to come before the Lord in true **humility** and **repentance**. It also shows a sincerity of our hearts towards God, and it stirs faith in our hearts as we lift up our petition before the Lord. Read God's words to the people through Joel in **Joel 2:12-17**. What does He say to them in **Joel 2:12**?

a. What does He tell them in **verse 13** that shows He isn't interested in just their "actions?"

22) We know that God hears the prayers of our heart, that He sees our tears, and that the Spirit even intercedes for us with words that cannot be uttered. But is there a time when more is needed? What does Jesus say to His disciples in **Mark 9:29** concerning the demonic hold on the child they were trying to heal?

23) Esther does not go to talk to the king until all the Jews in Shushan are gathered together for three days and three nights of fasting and prayer. What indication do we see at the **end of Esther 4:16** that her heart has now become fully surrendered to the Lord and to His will? What does she say?

24) Record the words regarding hearts that are fully surrendered in the following Scriptures.

2 Samuel 10:12 -

Psalm 118:6 -

Philippians 1:20-21 -

Philippians 2:30 (*Concerning Epaphroditus*) -

25) What does Jesus tell us our heart attitude should be in **Matthew 16:24**?

26) As Esther has taken time to prepare her heart and surrender herself fully into God's hands, so we too, are challenged to take her example to heart with the same courage and faith. What is the greatest take-away for you from Lesson Four of our study in Esther?