

Chapter 4

Verse 1

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

People mourn and express sorrow differently in the **west**. We are more **restrained**. In the east, sorrow and mourning are much louder and very vocal. Mordecai shows this mourning.

He is dressed in dark, coarse clothing made of goat hair to show his pain. He tore his clothing, which was a **symbol** of his broken heart. He rubbed ashes onto his head and beard, which was a custom for Jews (and others) **begging** God for repentance or deliverance.

Verse 3

And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

This mourning happened all over the Persian Empire when the Jews heard what Haman was **planning**. There is something else, the original readers would see something we don't- this verse and only one other place in the Old Testament are the verbs "fasting, weeping, and lamenting" in the exact same order (Joel 2:12).

*"Yet even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;*

Verse 2

He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.

Mordecai could not enter the king's gate because it **violated** Persian law. It is interesting to see Mordecai, a man who did not want anyone to know he was a Jew and worshipped the true God, now make a **stand** for God and now **wanted** everyone to know he was a Jew and was asking God for help.

Verse 4

When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

It would appear that Esther did not know about what was going on with the edict to **destroy** all the Jews until she heard about Mordecai dressed in rags weeping and wailing outside the king's gate. Esther sent clothing to comfort Mordecai but he **refused** them.

Verses 5-8

Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. 6Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people.

Esther sent Hathach, who was one of the king's eunuchs assigned to Esther, and asked him to find Mordecai and find out what was going on.

Mordecai was found in the open square which was used as a marketplace. Mordecai told Esther what was going on and gave her a **copy** of the edict and asked her to go and see the king to see if something could be done to **save** her people.

Verses 9-11

And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, 11“All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

Esther gets Mordecai's message but there are two large hurdles.

1. She has not been called to see the king for a **month** and if she goes to him without being asked for, she will probably die unless the king holds out his golden scepter. Something else should be noted. It would appear that Esther's hold on the king was **slipping** while the king's harem was growing. So as far as Esther was concerned, this was an almost impossible situation.

2. The second hurdle to seeing the king was a communication hurdle. If someone wanted to communicate with the king, they had to first go through the supreme commander, who was the king's prime minister, who was **Haman**. In other words, Esther has to tell Haman her secret before she could speak to the king. In other words, the deck was stacked against her.

Verse 13

Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews."

Mordecai is told what Esther said and then he tells her three things.

1. Don't think you will **escape**, they will come after you also.

Verse 14

For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

2. *Place* - This Hebrew word is a **reference** to God. The old rabbis referred to God as "the place". What Mordecai is saying is that God can be **trusted** and if you won't be God's instrument, He will raise up someone else because He is always planning.
3. God's master plan - God made it so you would win the beauty competition and gave me my promotion for one purpose - **to rescue** His people.

Two scriptures we need to remember:

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God is **inviting** us to join Him in building His church. He wants us to **join** Him. But we need to understand He is going to do this **with** us or without us.

Verses 15-16

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

Esther put a plan together and then worked on the plan.

1. Esther called the Jews to **fast** in Susa.
2. Esther and her attendants would also fast. It is **believed** that Esther surrounded herself with Jewish attendants.
3. Esther **surrendered** herself to God’s plan.

Chapter 5

When I get to chapter 5, a verse comes to my mind: **Proverbs 21:1**

*The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord;
he turns it wherever he will.*

Verse 1

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, in front of the king’s quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace.

The **third day** refers to the third day of the fast. The fast probably started on the afternoon of the first day and ran through the morning of the third day (40-45 hours of time).

Royal robes- these robes would have been very **beautiful** and showed her natural beauty.

And stood- this was an act of **breaking** the law, standing before the king without being called. It is believed that just below the throne stood a man with an **ax** and part of his job was to execute any *intruder* who appeared before the king.

Verse 2

And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

Esther’s presence could have gone **either** way. Remember Xerxes was a very volatile man. Esther was received by the king which was the **exception** to the rule.

Xerxes saw Esther and even though he had not seen her for over a month, he extended the gold scepter toward her. If not, she would have been **killed**.

Esther touched the scepter making a **connection** to the king.

Verse 3

And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom."

The king knew something was on Esther's mind because she **risked** her life. The literal wording is "what to you." The statement up to half my kingdom was a phrase indicating that Esther could expect **generosity** from the king.

Verses 4-5

And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king." 5Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.

When we read this we might think that Esther had lost her nerve because she had told Mordecai that she was going to petition the king on behalf of her people.

During the fasting period, God laid on Esther a **different** plan. That plan was to get the king and Haman away from the **court** so that Xerxes would not be embarrassed when he finds out that he was the one who signed his queen's death warrant.

Esther also makes it so the king cannot turn the request down because the feast was already prepared.

Verses 6-7

And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." 7Then Esther answered, "My wish and my request is:

After dinner, the king asks again for Esther to share her request. In verse 7, it appears she starts to tell the king and then **stops**. We are not sure why she stops. Perhaps to entice the king's curiosity.

Verse 8

If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

Esther asks the king and Haman to **come back** tomorrow for another feast.

Verses 9-10

And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. 10Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh.

Haman leaves the feast on cloud nine for **two reasons**. He had been drinking wine but also because He had been with the king and queen and himself. In other words, he was **important** and the queen wanted him back tomorrow.

We see Mordecai back at the king's gate. Remember when he was in mourning, he could not go into the king's gate. Mordecai is not mourning any longer. Why? I think Mordecai knew that God was **working** and God would take care of His people.

Haman came through the gate and everyone honored him except Mordecai who insulted him in front of all the other officials. Haman did not go after Mordecai but instead went home and called his friends and wife.

Verses 11-12

And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. 12Then Haman said, "Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king.

Haman was a **legend** in his own mind.

Verse 13

Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

None of the things that Haman had **satisfied** him as long as Mordecai was alive.

Verse 14

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast." This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

Haman's wife comes up with a plan; build a gallows. Back in the day, they did not use a rope. What they would do was **impale** the victim on a stake. The was a very painful and humiliating way to die.

After Haman killed Mordecai with the king's permission he could then **enjoy** the feast that Esther was putting on.