

Esther 4:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

Analysis

All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. Esther's response explained the risk: Persian law mandated death for anyone approaching the king unbidden unless he extended the golden scepter. The phrase "all the king's servants and the people...do know" indicates this was common knowledge, emphasizing the law's strictness and enforcement. The detail "I have not been called...thirty days" suggests the king's affection had cooled—making her approach even riskier. This excuse shows Esther's understandable fear while setting up Mordecai's powerful challenge (v. 13-14). The conversation demonstrates how God positions His servants in places of both opportunity and risk, requiring faith to act.

Historical Context

Persian royal protocol's strictness is documented in classical sources. Herodotus and other ancient historians describe elaborate Persian court ceremonies and harsh penalties for protocol violations. The golden scepter practice appears in Esther and parallel ancient sources, serving both practical purposes (controlling access, preventing assassination) and ideological ones (demonstrating absolute royal power). The thirty-day gap since the king summoned Esther suggests either his attention had shifted to other concerns (possibly the Greek campaign referenced in 2:16) or simply the vagaries of harem rotation among multiple wives and concubines. This detail makes Esther's eventual approach even more courageous.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the death penalty for unbidden approach illustrate the real cost of obedience when God calls to risky action?
2. What does Esther's candid expression of fear teach about honest wrestling with danger before faithful obedience?

Interlinear Text

וְיִדְעָ יְמִים	בְּמִלְחָמָה	עַבְדֵּי	כָּל	מִדְיָנִים וּתְהִימָּנִים	בְּמִלְחָמָה	יְדָעָ יְמִים
H3045	H4082	H5971	H4428	H5650	H3605	H3605
do know	provinces	and the people	All the king's	servants	All the king's	servants
H3045	H4082	H5971	H4428	H5650	H3605	H3605
אֲלֹהָיָהּ וְאֲלֹהָיָהּ	כָּל	אֲשֶׁר	כָּל	אֲשֶׁר	כָּל	אֲשֶׁר
H935	H3605	H802	H376	H834	H3605	H834
shall come	or woman	whether man	that whosoever	or woman	whether man	that whosoever
H935	H802	H376	H834	H3605	H834	H834
לֹא	בְּמִלְחָמָה	בְּמִלְחָמָה	אֲלֹהָיָהּ	בְּמִלְחָמָה	בְּמִלְחָמָה	לֹא
H3808	H6442	H2691	H413	H4428	H413	H4428
into the inner	court	court	into the inner	All the king's	All the king's	into the inner
H834	H834	H259	H834	H4428	H4428	H259
דְּתַוְתָּה	אֲמֵת	אֲמֵת	דְּתַוְתָּה	נָקָרָא אֶתְתִּי	נָקָרָא אֶתְתִּי	לְבַד
H1881	H4191	H7121	H1881	H905	H7121	H905
of his to put him to death	law	there is one	but I have not been called	except	of his to put him to death	but I have not been called
H4191	H1881	H259	H7121	H905	H4191	H7121
פְּזַבְּבָה	שְׁרֵבְבָּה	שְׁרֵבְבָּה	בְּמִלְחָמָה	בְּמִלְחָמָה	בְּמִלְחָמָה	לְבַד
H2091	H8275	H853	H4428	H853	H8275	H4428
the golden	sceptre	at	to	to	to	the golden
H2091	H8275	H853	H4428	H853	H8275	H2091
אֲלֹהָיָהּ וְאֲלֹהָיָהּ	נָקָרָא אֶתְתִּי	נָקָרָא אֶתְתִּי	לֹא	אֲלֹהָיָהּ וְאֲלֹהָיָהּ	אֲלֹהָיָהּ וְאֲלֹהָיָהּ	אֲלֹהָיָהּ וְאֲלֹהָיָהּ
H413	H7121	H589	H3808	H7121	H589	H3808
shall come	but I have not been called	that he may live	but I have not been called	that he may live	that he may live	shall come
H413	H4191	H2421	H7121	H2421	H589	H3808
יְמִים	יְמִים	יְמִים	יְמִים	יְמִים	יְמִים	יְמִים
H3117	H7970	H2088	H2088	H2088	H2088	H2088
days	these thirty	these thirty	days	days	these thirty	days

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 2:9 (Word): But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

Esther 8:4 (Kingdom): Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

Esther 2:14 (Kingdom): In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

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