

Esther 4:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Analysis

Mordecai's warning opens with a conditional threat: **"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time"** (ki im-hachareish tacharishi ba'et hazot, כִּי אִם־הַחֲרֵישׁ תַּחַרִּישִׁי בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת). The Hebrew uses an emphatic construction with the infinitive absolute (hachareish tacharishi) meaning "keeping silence you keep silence"—deliberate, stubborn refusal to act. The phrase "at this time" emphasizes the critical nature of the moment. Esther's silence would not be mere neutrality but culpable failure to act when action was required.

The phrase **"then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place"** (revach vehatzalah ya'amod laYehudim mimakom acher, וְרֵוַח וְהַצְלָה יֵעָמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר) expresses Mordecai's confident faith in God's covenant faithfulness. Though Esther never mentions God's name explicitly, this phrase implies divine providence—deliverance will come from "another place" (a circumlocution for God, similar to Jewish reverence that avoided pronouncing the divine name). The word revach (רֵוַח, "enlargement") suggests breathing room, relief, or space to recover, while hatzalah (הַצְלָה, "deliverance") indicates rescue from mortal danger. Mordecai trusts God's promises to preserve Abraham's seed regardless of human faithfulness or failure.

The warning **"but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed"** reminds Esther that refusing to help her people won't save her—she'll perish with them. Royal position provides no immunity from Haman's decree against all Jews. The climactic question—**"who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"** (umi yodea im-la'et kazot higa'at lamalkhut, וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם-לַעֲתָהּ בָּרוּחַ הַגָּדוֹל לְמַלְכוּת)—proposes divine providence behind Esther's unlikely rise to power. The rhetorical question suggests that God orchestrated circumstances to position her precisely for this crisis. Her royal status isn't for personal advantage but for redemptive purpose. This principle applies universally: God positions believers strategically for kingdom purposes, and privilege brings responsibility to serve others sacrificially.

Historical Context

This confrontation occurred during the Persian Empire under Xerxes I (486-465 BCE), when Haman had secured an empire-wide decree to annihilate all Jews on a specific date (Esther 3:13). Esther had concealed her Jewish identity when selected as queen (Esther 2:10), and now faced the dilemma of whether to reveal her ethnicity and risk the king's displeasure by approaching him uninvited (punishable by death, Esther 4:11) or remain silent and perish with her people.

Mordecai's confidence that deliverance would come "from another place" reflects Jewish theology of divine providence and election. God's unconditional covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:7-8) guaranteed that the Jewish people would survive to produce the Messiah. Though human agents might fail, God's purposes cannot be thwarted. This assurance sustained Jews through centuries of persecution, from Babylonian exile through Roman occupation to modern pogroms and Holocaust.

The phrase "for such a time as this" has become proverbial, expressing the conviction that God sovereignly positions people in strategic places for critical moments. Esther's story demonstrates several truths:

1. apparent coincidences often reveal divine providence
2. suffering and difficulty may be preparation for future service
3. privilege and position carry responsibility to serve rather than merely enjoy

4. God works through human agency—He could deliver without Esther, but chooses to work through her obedient action.

Church history shows repeatedly that God raises up leaders precisely when needed—Athanasius defending Trinitarianism at Nicaea, Luther sparking Reformation, Wilberforce ending slave trade—ordinary people positioned for extraordinary impact.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What position, relationship, or opportunity has God given you that might be "for such a time as this"—requiring you to act courageously for kingdom purposes rather than personal comfort?
2. How does Mordecai's confidence in God's sovereignty (deliverance will come regardless) paradoxically increase rather than decrease human responsibility to act?
3. In what areas might you be "holding your peace" when God is calling you to speak or act, and what risks must you take to obey?
4. How do you balance trust in God's sovereign control with recognition that He typically accomplishes His purposes through human obedience?
5. What does Esther's story teach about the relationship between privilege/advantage and responsibility to serve others sacrificially?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אִם	תַּחֲרִישִׁי	תַּחֲרִישִׁי	לְעַתָּה	הַזֹּאת
H3588	H518	For if thou altogether	For if thou altogether	at this time	H2063
		H2790	H2790	H6256	
כֵּן		וְהַצֵּלָה	יָעֹמֶד	לְהוֹדִים	מִמָּקוֹם
then shall there enlargement		and deliverance	arise	to the Jews	place
H7305		H2020	H5975	H3064	H4725
מֵאַחֵר	וְאָתָּה	וּבֵית	אָבִיךָ	תֵּאבֵד	וְיָ
from another	H859	house	but thou and thy father's	shall be destroyed	H4310
H312		H1004	H1	H6	
וְיֹדֵעַ	אִם	לְעַתָּה	כֵּן	הֲגַעְתָּ	
and who knoweth	H518	at this time	H2063	whether thou art come	
H3045		H6256		H5060	
לְמַלְכוּת:					
to the kingdom					
H4438					

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 12:22 (Parallel theme): For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

Isaiah 54:17 (Resurrection): No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Deuteronomy 32:36 (Parallel theme): For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

Jeremiah 30:11 (Parallel theme): For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will

I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

Jeremiah 46:28 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

Matthew 16:18 (Parallel theme): And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Ezra 9:9 (Kingdom): For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 49:23 (Kingdom): And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Esther 2:15 (Kingdom): Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

Matthew 24:22 (Parallel theme): And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.