

Esther's Brave Plan

Esther approaches the king and invites him and Haman to banquets, while God orchestrates events—including a sleepless night—to bring about Haman's downfall.

Esther 5:1-14 • Esther 6:1-14 • Esther 7:1-10

CHARACTERS: Esther, King Ahasuerus, Haman, Mordecai, Zeresh, Harbonah

THEMES: Courage, Wisdom, God's timing, Justice, Reversal of fortunes

ON THE THIRD day, Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house, opposite his hall. The king sat upon his throne in the royal house, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight. He held out the golden scepter in his hand, and Esther approached and touched its top.

'What is your wish, Queen Esther?' the king asked. 'What is your request? It shall be given you, even to half of the kingdom.'

Esther answered wisely, 'If it seem good to the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.' The king commanded Haman to come quickly, and they attended Esther's feast.

At the banquet, the king again asked, 'What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be performed.'

Esther replied, 'If I have found favor in the king's sight, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.'

Haman left that day joyful and glad of heart. But when he saw Mordecai at the gate, who neither stood nor moved for him, he was filled with indignation. Yet he restrained himself and went home. He called for his friends and Zeresh his wife, boasting of his riches, his many sons, his promotions, and his invitation to the queen's exclusive banquet. 'Yet all this avails me nothing,' Haman said, 'so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'

Zeresh and his friends counseled him, 'Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak to the king that Mordecai may be hanged on it. Then go merrily with the king to the banquet.' The idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

That night, the king could not sleep. He commanded the book of records, the chronicles, to be brought and read to him. There it was found written that Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthan and Teresh to assassinate the king.

'What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?' the king asked.

'Nothing has been done for him,' his servants answered.

At that moment, Haman entered the outer court to speak about hanging Mordecai. The king called him in and asked, 'What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?'

Haman, thinking the king meant to honor him, described an elaborate ceremony—royal robes, the king's horse, a crown, a public proclamation. 'Let this be done to the man the king delights to honor!'

'Make haste,' the king commanded, 'take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all you have spoken.'

Humiliated, Haman obeyed, leading Mordecai through the city and proclaiming his honor. Afterwards, Haman rushed home mourning, his

head covered. His wife and wise men said ominously, 'If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him.'

Before they finished speaking, the king's chamberlains arrived to bring Haman to Esther's banquet. At the feast, the king asked again, 'What is your petition, Queen Esther?'

Esther answered, 'If I have found favor in your sight, O king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish.'

'Who is he, and where is he, who dares presume in his heart to do so?' the king demanded.

Esther said, 'The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!'

Haman stood terrified before the king and queen. The king rose in his wrath and went into the palace garden. Haman, seeing that evil was determined against him, stayed to beg Queen Esther for his life. He fell upon the couch where Esther was.

The king returned and exclaimed, 'Will he even assault the queen while I am in the house?' As the words left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face—the sign of condemnation.

Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said, 'Behold, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, stands in Haman's house.'

The king said, 'Hang him on it.' So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath was pacified.