The Book of Esther

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Queen Esther provided leadership in the Persian Empire, as consort to King Xerxes. Saving her own people from death, she was a type of Christ, and prevented the Empire staining itself with innocent bloodshed.

This is what happened during the time of Xerxes ... who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. The king's personal attendants proposed, "Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring ... beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen ... ." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it. [1:1 - 2:4]

Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features ... . When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa ... . Esther also was taken to the king's palace ... . Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more ... . So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen ... During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate ... two of the king's officers ... became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king ... [2:6 - 2:22]

After these events, King Xerxes honoured Haman ... giving him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honour to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour. Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people ... among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them ...". [3:1 - 3:9]

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly ... . When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape ... . And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me ... . When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." [4:1 - 4:16]

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne ... . When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. [5:1 - 5:2]

Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it." [5:9 - 5:14]

So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, and ... the king ... asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? Then Queen Esther answered, "... grant me my life - this is my petition. And spare my people - this is my request." ... King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?" Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." ... So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. [7:1-10]

The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. ... Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe... . For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honour. [8:2-16] *These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family ... .* [9:28]