

4 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. 5 Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was*. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. 7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. 9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." 12 So they told Mordecai Esther's words. 13 And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?" 15 Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" 17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

1. Anguish in the streets

- a. Mordecai received the edict of Haman & publically mourned
 - a1. The edict had the details of Haman's payment to the king's treasury
 - a2. Mor. put on sackcloth & cried out loudly to the king's gate (no one in sackcloth was allowed in the palace)
- b. By revealing that he was a Jew, Mordecai jeopardized all Jews
- c. When Esther heard of Mordecai's distress, she was puzzled
 - a1. She had not heard of the decree (quite isolated)
 - a2. She could not be seen in the public square
 - a3. She might have been embarrassed by Mor.'s display
 - a4. Esther sent Hathach, her attendant, to give Mor. new clothes to put on, but he refused them
- d. Esther had found out about Mor.'s distress by her handmaids, who knew that Est. & Mor. had some relationship

2. Esther's dilemma

- a. Hathach was sent back to Mor. to find out why he mourned
 - a1. Mordecai showed the decree to Hathach & explained the plight of the Jews
 - a2. Hathach now learns that Mor. is a Jew & he probably suspects that Esther is a Jew as well
 - a3. Mor. gives a copy of the decree to Hat. to give to Est. to explain to her its meaning
- b. Mor. instructs Hat. to tell Esther to go to the king to plead for the lives of the Jews
- c. When Esther receives Mor.'s decree copy, she is disturbed
- d. No one could enter the king's presence without his bidding
 - a1. The Greek historian Herodotus tells us that people could petition the king for an audience by letter, but Esther did not use this approach
 - a2. Esther had not been summoned by the king for over a month & she probably wondered if he had lost interest in her
- e. Esther sends a message back to Mor. telling him that the king had not summoned her for over 30 days
 - a1. Anyone appearing before the king uninvited was subject to death unless the king held out his scepter to the person
 - a2. Est. was genuinely fearful for her life

3. Mordecai's admonition

- a. Mord. reminds Esther that she also would fall under this death sentence & would perish if it were enacted
 - a1. Even though God is not named, Mord. indicates his belief in providence when he states that if she did not act, deliverance would come from another place
 - a2. Who knows *if you were not raised for a time such as this* (a clear indication that he believed God had placed her in her position for the deliverance of Jews)
- b. Esther accepts the challenge
 - a1. She commands that Mord. gather the Jews of Sushan for a 3 day fast (implied prayer, though not stated)
 - a2. Esther & her handmaids would also fast for 3 days
- c. Esther states that if she perishes, then so be it
- d. Mordecai left the palace gate to obey Esther's command
- e. Mordecai knew that God had promised to fulfill his plan for the Jews, so they could not perish as a people
 - a1. Mord. & Esther were in a position to intervene
 - a2. Mord. felt that providence was at work in his life & was confident that deliverance would come
- f. Even though Mord. precipitated some of this action, God was working behind the scenes to save his people & to destroy the enemies of the Jews
- g. Satan has tried many ways to thwart God's plan