Esther Saves Her People

Esther 2–9

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Esther Becomes Queen of Persia

Xerxes, the Persian king, wanted to replace his queen, whom he'd banished from his presence because she had disobeyed one of his commands. Esther was one of many young virgins brought into Xerxes' harem to be considered for the position. Esther didn't reveal to anyone that she was a Jew. Chosen by the king as the most attractive of all the women brought before him, Esther was made queen.

Commercial and legal affairs were conducted at the king's gate. The fact that Esther's cousin Mordecai sat at the king's gate indicates that he held a high position in Xerxes' government. In his station there, he overheard the plot to assassinate the ruler. After reporting the plot to Xerxes through Queen Esther, Mordecai definitely attained a position of favor with the king, but apparently he was given no reward at the time.

Haman's Evil Plot

Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman probably stemmed from his insistence on worshipping God alone. He wasn't about to let Haman, an Amalekite and a descendant of ancient enemies of the Jews, take the place of God. Haman apparently hated all Jews and loved to wield the power of his high position in Xerxes' government. When Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman decided to wipe out all the Jews in the kingdom.

Esther and God's People Fast

When Esther realized what the king's decree meant, her response was to fast and to have all the Jews in the city fast as well. Though prayer isn't mentioned here, the intent of the fast was to seek God's favor and direction.

It may seem an easy task for Esther to stand up and tell the king of Haman's plot, but she risked her life by approaching the king uninvited. After Haman was hanged, there was still a problem: The edict to kill all the Jews couldn't be withdrawn. However, Xerxes commanded Esther and Mordecai to write a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves. Esther was obedient in serving God where he had placed her, and God used her actions to preserve his people.

The Jesus Connection

Jesus said that he came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). And he wants us to do the same! How is God calling you to serve him? In what ways do you feel ill-equipped for the role? Talk to God about your calling to serve, and ask him to help you clearly see that everyone—including you—can serve God. You can write your prayer here.