**Lesson 4**

**Esther 4**

**A Day of Decision**

**Memory verse: “**He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8, NKJV).

There were perhaps 15 million Jews scattered throughout the Persian Empire. Because of Haman’s enmity and the king’s stupidity, all of them were now appointed to die, unless they pulled up stakes and left the kingdom. But if they did that, where would they go? Even their own land of Israel wasn’t safe because it was under the rule of Xerxes. Since the Persians ruled “from India to Ethiopia” (1:1), there were very few accessible places to which the Jews might flee.

In the empire, the responses to Haman’s decree were varied. Haman and the king completely ignored the plight of the Jews and sat down to a royal feast. Meanwhile, the people of the capital city were perplexed and didn’t know what to do (3:15). Secluded in the royal harem, Queen Esther knew nothing about the danger that she and her people faced.

In verse 3 of chapter 4, it says, “In every province where the king’s command and decree arrived there was great mourning among the Jews with fasting, weeping, wailing, and many lay in sack cloth and ashes.” A message stretched across the massive Persian Empire, very rapidly, that a date had been set for the people in all their own local areas to slaughter the Jews.

When Mordecai heard about this decree of genocide, he tore his clothes, dressed in rags, put ashes on his head and mourned openly. He mourned publicly at this horrendous act, the mass murder of the entire Jewish population.

Was this just simple payback by Haman? No, it’s much bigger than that. Satan’s involved in this. Satan is involved in efforts to obliterate the Jewish people and thus to bring to a halt God’s purpose of redemption on their behalf.

Well it didn’t take long for the news to reach Esther. She gets the message. Mordecai informs Esther of what Haman has succeeded in accomplishing and even gives her a copy of the royal decree. And he says to her, “Esther, you have to go to the king and plead for the lives of your people.” Isn’t that simple enough? Not so simple. In Persia no one, including the queen, went before the king without a personal invitation. Anybody who ventured to go into the presence of the king without being invited could be killed on the spot. Esther would not only be breaking royal protocol, but she would be risking her life.

Mordecai calls for courage in the famous verses of 13 and 14. “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews,” Mordecai warned his royal cousin. Look, you’re dead if you do; you’re dead if you don’t. They’re going to find out you’re Jewish and you’re going to be dead if you don’t do anything. Don’t think you’re going to escape. “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.” A wonderful confidence in the promises of God, that the covenant of God with Israel to bless and sustain and preserve them. Mordecai says, “Look, God will deliver them another way but you won’t survive.” And then he says this famous line, “Yet who knows whether you’ve come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Summary:

1) God has divine purposes to accomplish in this world. 2) God accomplishes His purposes through people. 3) God will accomplish His purposes even if His servants refuse to obey His will. 4) God isn’t in a hurry but will fulfil His plans in due time*.*

**Discussion questions:**

Q1 What was the motivation behind the actions of Mordecai in verses 1 to 9?

Q2 What lessons can we learn from the exhortation of Mordecai to the queen (verses 10 to 14)?

Q3 Esther requested the people to pray and fast for her before she approach the king, yet she said “And if I perish, I perish.” How should we interpret Esther’s words?