

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

“And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (Esth 4:14)

Esther, as you know, was a lowly Jewish girl who became the queen of Persia. Her husband, the king, was Ahasueras (also known as Xerxes). His grandfather was Cyrus the Great. Cyrus was the man whom the God of heaven appointed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2). Artaxerxes, who helped Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was the son of Xerxes, and great-grandson of Cyrus.

The striking truth of our text involves the strategy of God to partner with fallible human beings to achieve His eternal purpose. Obviously God did not have to use mortals, but He chose to do so. He not only used godly men like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, but He also used ungodly men like Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes to accomplish His purpose. Powerful earthly rulers like the Pharaoh of Egypt, Alexander the Great, and the kings of Babylon and Persia, became instruments in the hands of our Creator. The book of Proverbs puts it like this: “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.” (Prov 21:1)

Down through the ages there have been many wicked men who have tried to destroy the Jews and thus keep Jesus from being born. Each time there was a threat, however, God raised up some mortal to do what needed to be done. The task was often dangerous and never easy. Esther, the heroine of our story, was strategically placed by God “for such a time as this”. The fact that she was an orphan, and a disadvantaged victim of discrimination, makes her an even greater role model. If God can use Esther, maybe He can use me too!

Wicked Hamaan, the villain of the story, had obtained permission from the king to “kill and annihilate all the Jews -

young and old, women and little children - on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month" (Esther 3:13). Saving the Jews would not be easy!

Oriental kings were notorious for their cruelty. Cyrus was condemned to death by his own grandfather, Astyages, but providentially escaped death and defeated the demented old king upon the field of battle. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says this about Artaxerxes:

"This Artaxerxes was the third son of Xerxes and was raised to the throne by Artabanus, the murderer of Xerxes. Shortly after his accession, Artaxerxes put his older brother Darius to death; and a little later, Artabanus, who perhaps aimed to make himself king, was killed. Hystaspes, the second brother, who seems to have been satrap of Bactria at the time of his father's death, rebelled, and after two battles was deprived of his power and probably of his life. The reign of Artaxerxes was further disturbed by the revolt of Egypt in 460 BC, and by that of Syria about 448 BC".

Just as present leaders are paranoid about terrorists, these ancient despots were constantly expecting to be assassinated. This is, in fact, why Nehemiah was a cupbearer. The king was afraid of being poisoned. Esther was therefore justifiably concerned about entering into the presence of the king uninvited. She said: "I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." (Esth 4:16)

Before taking this risk, however, Esther did several things that all of us should do before taking a risk. She not only fasted and prayed, she also asked others to do so. Obviously, her prayers were answered. It was not an accident that the king extended to Esther his scepter and offered her anything she wanted up to the half of his kingdom. It was not an accident that he could not sleep and relieved his boredom by being reminded that Mordecai was a friend and hero who had never been rewarded. It was not an accident that wicked Hamaan was hanged on his own

gallows. It was not an accident that the Jews were saved. All of these providential things happened because God had called Esther into the kingdom for such a time as this.

Who knows but what you have also been called into the kingdom for such a time as this. Each Christian has been strategically placed in the Body of Christ for a purpose. You are no exception! May you discover your own special calling, rise to the occasion, and do the will of Christ.