
Honored and Judged

Esther 6:1-7:10

Russ Kennedy

Is God ever in a hurry?

Don't worry about the wicked...

¹ Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.

² For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.

⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD,
and wait patiently for him to act.

Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.

[Psalm 37:1-7, New Living Translation]

At this point in our story, we are beginning to wonder. Over and over again the wicked man is getting the upper hand. Should we worry? How do we trust in the Lord and He will help?

So, it is the night after the banquet the king, Ahaseurus, attended. It had been thrown for him and Haman, his viceroy, by his queen, Esther. She had been selected to be queen when Ahaseurus had been defied by his first queen and she had been deposed. Now, this man, Haman, has been promoted to the highest post in the Persian Empire. But the queen's cousin, who has reared her as his own child, has refused to honor Haman. In revenge, Haman has schemed to produce a royal edict to have all of Mordecai's people exterminated. Haman hates Mordecai and the Jews. He has built 75 foot high gallows on which he plans to hang Mordecai. Now, as the screw turns...

A Wrong Righted**(v.1-11)**

Watch the intricate dance of God's providences.

A Sleepless Night**(v.1-3)**

¹ On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. ² And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Good meal. Glass of wine. Interesting conversation. But still sleepless in Susa. The king is tossing and turning. Let's hear what we have accomplished. Bring the king's chronicles. Bring a reader. In reading they come upon the record of a great deed but no record of a great reward. Mordecai, the Jew, had saved the king's life by reporting on a plot to have the king assassinated. To Ahasuerus' credit he notes that no recognition, no honor, no distinction has been given. You can see the royal frown. This is a serious oversight.

A Timely Entrance**(v.4-5)**

⁴ And the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

It is probably very early in the morning. Remember that no one can approach the king uninvited. Queen Esther took her life into her own hands to approach the king and extend the dinner invitation. So is Haman. Esther came to save her people. Haman is here to murder a man. But the king extends the invitation so Haman may approach safely.

An Innocent Question**(v.6-9)**

⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" ⁷ And Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. ⁹ And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'"

Oh, this is delicious. Haman's prideful heart holds up the mirror of self-regard. If the king is going to honor me, let me make sure and get as much mileage out of it as possible. Haman's response is calculated to humiliate Mordecai. Haman intends for the king to choose Mordecai to carry this out. Ah Haman can already see it! Could it be possible that, since a queen has been chosen who is not royalty, that Haman is exploring the idea that Ahasuerus may appoint Haman as the heir and next ruler of all Persia?

A Satisfying Assignment

(v.10-11)

¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned." ¹¹ So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor." ¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate.

Ahasuerus does not seem to know what he has done. Imagine Haman's face! The author with dramatic power leaves totally to our imagination the devastating horror that must have enveloped Haman. Oh, and that first word, "Hurry..." Maybe the king does know. "Leave out nothing..."

What humiliation. To lay the royal robe on Mordecai's shoulders. To place the golden circlet on his head. To walk before the royal stallion as a common page and announce, "This is what it means to have the king's honor."

The enemy of our souls will know such a day!

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and **every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father. [Philippians 2:9-11]

All Satan's plotting and rebellion will come to a moment like this. That slithering, slimy liar will crawl up and kiss the feet of Jesus and along with every sentient being in the universe, acclaim that Jesus is Lord.

An Ominous Prediction

(v.12-14)

What would you do? Exactly what Haman does; go home in disgrace.

The Message of His Fall

(v.12-13)

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³ And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him."

Rushing home with his head covered. Humiliation. Embarrassment. Disgrace. When he relates what has happened it seems even his wife and friends can see something that he can't. In taking on Mordecai, he is taking on the God of Mordecai. Haman has already begun a slide that will end in his ultimate fall.

The Means of His Fall**(v.14)**

¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

As they are talking, at that very moment, the king's body guards come to escort Haman to the feast. He is supposed to have been there on his own. Now the king has sent his own eunuchs to collect Haman. It is time for the feast that Queen Esther has prepared. Little does he know that he is going to be served up as the meal.

An Enemy Defeated**(7:1-10)**

Putting on the best face he can, Haman joins the king at the queen's table.

The Request of the Queen**(v.1-6)**

¹ So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ² And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ³ Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. ⁴ For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king." ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?" ⁶ And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

I wonder what the conversation was like. But they are once again relaxing afterward. Ahasuerus repeats his offer and asks Esther to state what she wants. Her request is simple, "Please spare my life and the life of my people." She and her people will be exterminated. She uses the language from the edict: to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. The death of all these people will be a great loss to the king for he will lose his precious queen, Esther, the Jew.

Oh, the explosion! He realizes what this means. He knows what she is referring to. He has made the connection with Haman. In her accusation she presses the connection for him. And he is implicated as well. Queen Esther, in her great beauty and humble godliness points her finger at the dark form of Haman. Oh how he shrinks! In that moment his heart is terrified. He has been found out.

The Wrath of the King

(v.7-10)

⁷ And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. ⁸ And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." ¹⁰ And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.

Ahaseurus storms from the banquet room and paces the palace garden. Haman grovels before queen Esther seeking his life. In doing so, he falls on the couch where Esther is reclining just as the king reenters. The scene is ugly and horrible.

The body guards put a cloth over Haman's head, signifying that he has been condemned to die. Harbona suggests that a really nice set of gallows, 75 feet high have just been constructed and could be used. Ah, that pleases the king. Hang Haman on the tree, the gallows, of his own making. It is time to die, Haman. And he is lifted up above the city. All can see him, swinging there in the morning breeze.

Reflect and Respond

What an irony! "Haman had been furious because a Jewish *man* wouldn't bow down to him, and now Haman was prostrate before a Jewish *woman*, begging for his life!"⁷ God's judgments are often like this.

Great is the fall of the proud. There is the fall from where they are. But there is even the greater fall from where they think they are.

God is on the move. He is gathering and growing His people. The enemy is strong and wily and wicked. But God is moving in His great power to bring about His purposes.

In this chapter today we see another thread that takes us into the New Testament. Jesus will prepare, present and protect His people (represented by Mordecai) against the attacks of Satan (Haman). And God has defeated Satan through the very means Satan intended to destroy Christ. The tree of death on which Jesus hung has now become the tree of life for us.

And so the Scriptures tell us..

¹ Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.

² For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good.

Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Trust him, and he will help you.

Notes

⁷ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Committed. "Be" Commentary Series*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993.