

The Persian Press

ALL THE NEWS FROM INDIA TO CUSH



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Teacher's Copy

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Created for use with young, unchurched learners
Adaptable for all ages including adults

The Persian Press

ESTHER 4:1-17

HELP WILL COME FOR THE JEWS

**HEAD-
LINES:**

- Mordecai asked Queen Esther to speak to the king about Haman's decree
- Queen Esther knew that going before the king, uninvited, could mean death
- God may have made Esther queen just for this
- Esther prayed and fasted

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EXTRA, EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

The entire Persian Empire is in mourning. They are terribly sad and they are not eating.

Even Mordecai, one of the king's attendants, is mourning. He changed into special clothes made of sackcloth. Sackcloth is rough black fabric made of goat's hair. Then, Mordecai entered the city, crying out loud. He made it as far as the palace gate, where he still sits. He hasn't gone any further because sad mourners aren't allowed past it.

Remember, all of this came about because Haman was angered by Mordecai when he refused to bow down to him because he is a Jew. Haman has lashed out at all Jews, decreeing their death within the year.

Mordecai has been communicating with the queen. We have a source inside the palace who carried the very messages they spoke. His name is Hathach and he is

an official of the king appointed to care for the queen.

Word came to the queen about Mordecai. The queen was very upset. She sent clothes so that Mordecai could change, but he refused them. That is when Queen Esther sent Hathach.

Mordecai asked Hathach to tell the queen about Haman's evil decree and the amount of money he offered. Mordecai even gave Hathach a copy of the decree to show the queen. Mordecai wants the queen to beg for mercy from the king, to make an appeal for her people.

Remember, Queen Esther is still guarding the secret of her nationality. No one knows yet that she is a Jew.

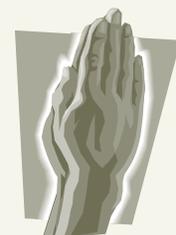
Hathach reported everything to the queen. She instructed him to tell Mordecai about a law concerning the king. Anyone who approaches the king without permission must die! The only way out is if the king holds out his golden scepter (rod); then

their life will be spared. Queen Esther even said that the king hadn't asked for her for 30 days now.

Mordecai received the message and responded, "Don't expect to be saved just because you live in the king's palace. Help will come for the Jews, but if you don't help, your family will die. Who knows, maybe God made you queen just for this."

The queen knew her cousin was right. She asked him to gather all the Jews in the capital city of Susa to fast and pray for her. She will also do the same. "Then I will go in to see the king, even if it means I must die."

Reporting from Susa: Fortress of the Persian Empire



WHAT IS FASTING?

What did Queen Esther ask Mordecai and all the Jews in Susa to do? (fast and pray) Do you know what it means to fast? To fast is to go without food for a while. When talked about in the Bible, it was not something done to lose weight. It could be done for a day or a week, and in Jesus' case, He fasted 40 days when He began His earthly ministry. Fasting was usually practiced along with prayer for a spiritual reason, specifically

for God, to focus on Him, to request something, before big decisions, to turn from sin, or to remove demons. Fasting is not to be for show. If you alone are fasting, no one else should be able to tell. "Comb your hair and wash your face. Then others won't know that you are going without eating. But your Father sees what is done in private, and he will reward you." (Matthew 6:17-18 CEV) Queen Esther had an im-

portant decision to make and she knew she needed God's guidance. That is why she, and all the Jews in Susa fasted for three days and prayed. Prayer (and fasting when needed) are an important part of our walk with God. Be sensitive to God so that you, too, will be ready when God needs you to stand up for what is right. Then one day maybe you can say, "God put me where I am just for this."



Queen Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews in the capital city of Susa to fast and pray for her.

*Be faithful,
even if it means
you must die.
Then I will give
you a crown.
The crown
is life itself.
Revelation 2:10b*

FROM THE EDITOR

What do you think about the law of the Persians that says anyone who approaches the king without permission must die?

I wouldn't want to go see the king, how about you?

You know, some people feel that way about God. But we read in the book of Hebrews, "So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God.

There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help." (4:16 CEV) God doesn't want us to fear coming before Him. That doesn't mean we should forget about the respect that He deserves. Instead we can come bravely, ready to share what is bothering us. Will God send us away without listening to us? No. We will find help.

How does that verse describe God's kindness? (As undeserved.) What does that mean? Do you remember talking about how all of us sin and how sin deserves to be punished with death? Any kindness we receive is something we don't deserve, starting with the gift of His Son, Jesus. Won't you accept God's gift of kindness today?

BEHIND THE SCENES

How could Mordecai be so sure that help would come for the Jews?

Well, history had been passed down since the time of Father Abraham (not Lincoln) about a promise God made. God promised to make a nation out of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12) and He promised that there would al-

ways be descendants of Abraham (Isaiah 11:11). You may be wondering how God could make that promise. We read over and over again, especially in the Old Testament, that He is God and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6) Everything exists by His power. (John 1:3) Nothing can happen to us unless He allows it (John

10:28). And in the book of Daniel (2:20-21) we read, "May God be praised for ever and ever! He is wise and powerful. He changes times and seasons. He sets up kings. He removes them from power. The wisdom of those who are wise comes from him. He gives knowledge to those who have understanding."

If you say "no" to God you will lose the blessing of God working through you, but what God wants to happen will be done.



ACTIVITIES



Hide God's Word in your heart!
Psalm 119:11

Memory Verse Activities for Revelation 2:10 - Run a relay race. As your students get ready to run the second time, place obstacle in the way. Talk about how life is full of obstacles and how God wants us to be faithful, no matter what. Review the memory verse.

Provide coloring sheets that include the memory verse.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

For older students: Dig a little deeper on the subject of fasting. Bring a concordance and look up all the references to fasting. Also look at how many times fasting happens in conjunction with prayer. Discuss what you learned.

Talk about the importance of standing up for what is right. Take time to watch a video about a "modern day Esther." Voice of the Martyr's *Torchlighters* series has an excellent selection.

Look at Hebrews 4:16 in several translations, especially the Contemporary English Version and the Amplified Bible. Discuss the implications of this verse.



A childish person believes anything. But a wise person thinks about how he lives.

Proverbs 14:15

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Make golden scepters from yellow balloons, paper tubes, or construction paper. Talk about the Persian law and the danger Queen Esther could face. (Be sure to save these for acting out the next lesson.)

Make prayer journals. Talk about the importance of seeking God in prayer.

Make finger puppets from large craft sticks/tongue depressors. Act out the story.



Queen Esther knew that appearing before the king could mean death. So, she prayed first.



**IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:
ESTHER 5:1-14**

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