

For Such a Time As This

Esther's story begins with deep loss. As a young girl, she lost both of her parents and became an orphan. But she was not left alone- her cousin, Mordecai took her in and raised her as his own daughter.

Later, when King Xerxes sent out a decree to gather beautiful young women from across the empire to choose a new queen, Esther was among them. Before she left, Mordecai warned her not to reveal that she was a Jew. Her heritage had to remain a secret.

Esther's Hebrew name, *Hadassah*, means "myrtle tree." Myrtle produces a variety of colorful flowers- white, pink, red, lavender and orange red. Myrtle has long been a symbol of beauty, grace, and good deeds. Esther, like the myrtle, would become known for living a life full of quiet strength and deep purpose.

In Persia, being Jewish was not always safe. Although Jews were proud descendants of Abraham- God's chosen people- they lived in a land where their identity could put them at risk. No one knew where the king stood on this matter.

Imagine Esther offering comfort and courage to the other girls in the harem. Many of them were likely afraid and alone, taken from their families to live out their days in a place they could never leave, even if they were not chosen as queen. Esther's kindness and humility helped her find favor. She was given the best of everything during her preparation.

When her moment came to meet the king, she didn't dress herself in gold and gems as others surely did. Instead, she asked for only what Hegai, the king's eunuch and harem overseer, recommended. She trusted his wisdom and humbled herself. Her simplicity, combined with her grace, captured the king's heart. Esther was chosen as queen.

Not long afterward, Mordecai discovered a plot to assassinate the king. He told Esther, who quickly passes the warning to Xerxes. The would-be assassins were caught and executed. But a much greater danger was brewing. The king had recently appointed a man named Haman to a high position. Haman was full of hatred toward the Jews, especially Mordecai. Haman convinced the king to issue a terrible edict, that all the Jews in the empire should be destroyed.

Mordecai went to Esther again. He begged her to approach the king and plead for the lives of her people. Esther hesitated. The law was clear: anyone who went before the king without being summoned could be put to death- unless the king extended his scepter to spare them. Esther hadn't been called to the king in more than a month. She could lose everything... even her life. She sent word to Mordecai explaining her fear. His reply was powerful and convincing. "Do not think that because you are in the king's house that you

alone will escape. If you remain silent at this time, deliverance for the Jews will come from another place, but you and your family will perish. Who knows that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

Those words changed everything. Esther asked Mordecai and the Jewish people to fast and pray for three days. She then made her decision. “I will go to the king,” she said, “even though it is against the law. If I perish, I perish.”

She went boldly. The king received her with favor. Instead of making her plea immediately, Esther invited him and Haman to two private banquets. Whether it was courage or cleverness, her patience gave her the perfect opportunity. At the second feast, when the king asked what she truly wanted, Esther knelt and said, “If I have found favor with you, your majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life. This is my petition. Spare my people, this is my request. For we have been sold to be destroyed, killed, and annihilated.”

She then revealed the man behind the plot was Haman. The king, outraged, had him executed and gave Haman’s position to Mordecai. But Esther’s work was not finished. The original decree to destroy the Jews could not be undone, so Esther and Mordecai wrote a new one- the Jews were given the right to defend themselves. Esther even extended the edict by one more day, ensuring her people were fully protected.

The moment of deliverance became the Jewish holiday of Purim- a celebration of the time when darkness tried to destroy them, but one brave woman stepped forward and made all the difference.

Esther didn’t choose her life. She didn’t choose to lose her parents or to be taken from her home. She did choose how she responded. She chose courage, humility, and faith. We remember her still. Maybe your life right now isn’t what you would have chosen. Maybe you are facing challenges, losses, or uncertain circumstances. But maybe- just maybe- you are here for a time such as this. Take courage, dear heart. Be steadfast. Walk in humility. You never know the difference you might make just by being willing to say “yes” where you are.

Esther Tribute presented by Yvonne M. Holtz

Grand Esther, “Trust in the Lord” Grand Session

May 21, 2025