FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther 4:14b “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

The Back Story

Esther is chosen as queen to replace Vashti. Esther 1:1-2:18

Her uncle Mordecai uncovers a plot to assassinate King Xerxes and tells Esther who warns the king. Esther 2:19-23 (Ahasuerus is the transliteration of his Hebrew name, Xerxes of Greek name.)

King Xerxes promotes Haman the Agagite above all the other nobles. Saul, according to I Samuel 15:1-35, although told to totally destroy the Amalekites for what they had done to Israel, had spared Agag, king of the Amalekites. Haman is almost certainly an Amalekite, a descendant of the royal family of Amalek and someone with an ancient hatred for all Jews. Esther 3:1&2

Esther’s uncle Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, which infuriates him. When Haman finds out Mordecai is Jewish, he plots to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire, practically speaking, almost all the Jews in the world. Esther 3:2d-9

Haman talks Xerxes into issuing a decree to “destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews…and to plunder their goods.” Esther 3:10-14 He does this without identifying those he wants destroyed as Jews to Xerxes.

The decree is issued in the citadel of the capital Susa and throughout the Persian empire. The people of Susa are bewildered. Esther 3:15

The Response of the Jews

Esther 4:1-3 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king’s gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Mordecai Tells Esther to Go to the King

Esther 4:6-8 So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

The Problem

Esther 4:9-11 Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law; that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”

Esther 4:12-14 When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s palace you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:15-17 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.

God Begins to Answer

Esther 5:1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

Esther 5:2&3 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.”

A God-given Strategy and Timing

Esther asks that the king and Haman come to a banquet she has prepared for the king. At the banquet, the king asks again what she wants, and she says she wants the king and Haman to come to a second banquet the next day and then she will tell the king what she wants. Esther 5:4-8

On his way home from the banquet, Haman sees Mordecai who does not bow to him. He goes home, boasts about how the king and Esther have honored him, then expresses his anger at “that Jew Mordecai.” His wife and friends suggest he put up a 75-foot pole and impale (hang) Mordecai on it, not hang by the neck until dead, but kill and then affix to the pole. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:23 in Galatians 3:13, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree,” referring to Jesus’ crucifixion. Esther 5:9-14

Esther 6:1-3 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered.

Esther 6:4-6 The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him. His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there the king would rather honor than me?”

Esther 6:7-9 So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and the horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor.”

Esther 6:10&11 “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.” So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!”

Haman goes home, tells his wife and friends what has happened, and they basically tell him it’s all over. The king’s eunuchs arrive and rush him to Esther’s second banquet. Esther 6:12-14

Esther 7:1&2 So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”

The Rest of the Story

Esther pleads for her life and the life of her people. The king asks, “who is…the man who dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” The king orders that Haman be impaled (hanged) on the pole he had prepared for Mordecai and an order goes out giving the Jews the right to defend themselves.

What Happened When God’s People Fasted?

Esther received the courage to go to the king.

God prepared the king to receive her favorably.

God gave Esther a strategy and the timing to make it work.

God kept the king from sleeping so he had the chronicles of his reign read and realized that Mordecai had never been rewarded for saving the king’s life.

Haman’s pride led him to suggest an extreme way of honoring the man the king delights to honor.

The king tells him to do that for “Mordecai the Jew.” (Which really must have bewildered the people in Susa.)

Then Esther exposes Haman’s plot against Mordecai, herself and all the Jews and Haman is executed and God’s people spared.