

Esther Goes Before the King



1 When Mordecai heard of Haman's plan to kill all the Jews, he wept and tore his clothing. Esther sent a servant to find out what was wrong with Mordecai.



2 Mordecai told the servant everything and gave him a copy of Haman's decree that the Jews be killed. He said, "Show this to Esther. Tell her to beg the king to have mercy on her people."



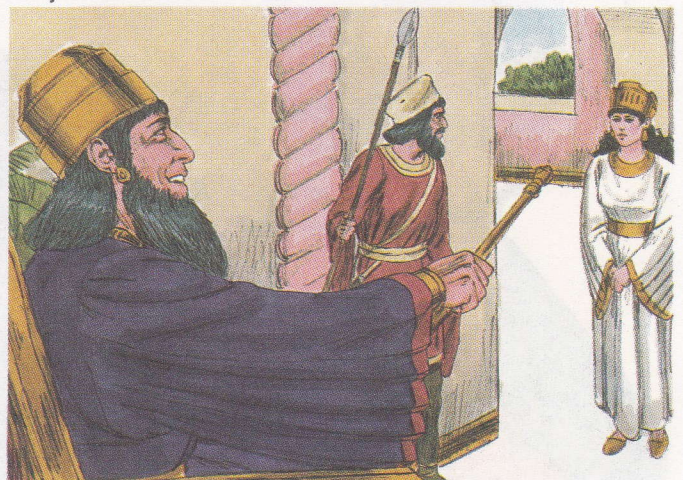
3 Esther answered Mordecai: "Anyone who goes to King Xerxes without being called by him will be killed! Only if the king holds out his scepter will that person be spared! Everyone knows this!"



4 Mordecai warned her, "Don't think you are safer than other Jews. If you keep quiet, you too will be killed. But it may be that you became queen for just such a time as this."



5 So Esther sent this message to Mordecai: "Have all the Jews of Susa fast and pray for three days and nights. Then I will go to the king. If I must die, then I will die."



6 On the third day of the fast, Esther went to the courtyard of the palace. King Xerxes saw her standing outside the door — and held out his scepter toward her!



7 So Esther went safely up to the king. "Tell me what you want," he said. "I'll give you anything you ask for — even half of my kingdom."



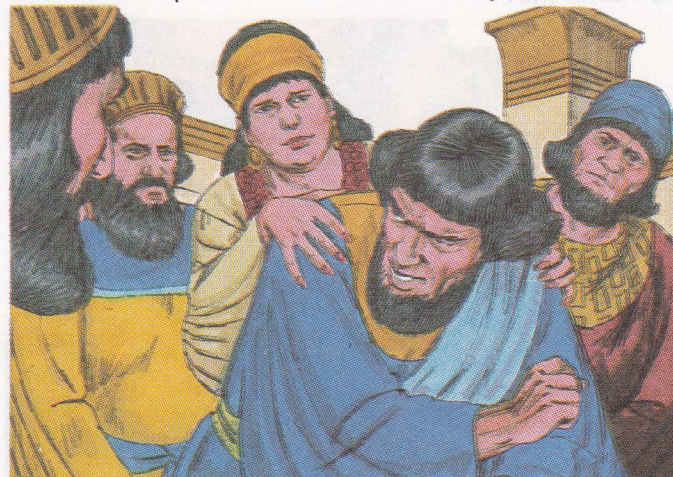
8 "If it please the king," she said, "I would like for you and Haman to be my guests at a banquet today." So the king called for Haman, and together they attended Esther's banquet.



9 Xerxes again said, "Tell me what you want, and you shall have it." But Esther said, "I'd like for you and Haman to be my guests again tomorrow at another banquet. At that time I'll tell you."



10 Haman left the banquet in a very good mood. But then he saw Mordecai near the palace. Mordecai didn't get up or show him any respect. Haman was furious, but he didn't say a word.



11 Haman called his friends together and boasted, "Tomorrow the queen is giving a banquet just for the king and me." But then he said, "As long as Mordecai lives, I can never be really happy."

12 His friends said, "Why not build a gallows and ask the king to hang Mordecai on it? Then you can enjoy the banquet." Haman liked this idea and made plans to hang Mordecai the very next day.