

Grievous Mourning in Persia

Esther 4: 1-9

As we continue our study in Esther, the tension and anxiety continue to increase for the Jews in captivity. Haman's hatred for Mordecai prompted him to persuade Ahasuerus to sign a decree calling for the complete annihilation of the Jewish population within the kingdom. The decree was signed and delivered to every province, prompting grievous mourning by the Jews.

Certainly this is a normal reaction following the reception of such news. Sadly this type of prejudice and genocide continues today. This text could be used to stir our hearts in compassion for the prejudiced abuse that many face physically today. As I considered this passage, I was drawn to a spiritual application that I hope to expound upon. The Jews were condemned and had no hope of deliverance. They needed someone to intercede on their behalf before the king. All are born in a body of flesh, prone to sin, separated and condemned before God. Our only hope was for someone to provide deliverance for us and intercede on our behalf. Following salvation, we ought to share the concern Mordecai had for those who faced certain death. Apart from Christ, humanity has no hope. We need a burden for the unsaved of our day.

Let's consider the [insights](#) of this despairing moment as we think on: [Grievous Mourning in Persia](#). First we discover:

I. The Reality of the Mourning (1-3) – Here we see the stark reality of the grief felt by Mordecai and the Jews within Persia. Consider:

A. The Expression of Grief (1) – [When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry.](#) Bear in mind, the king had signed a decree that called for the utter destruction of every Jew within the kingdom. The date had been set for 12 months in the future. That in itself would have been cruel and very difficult to handle. They had 12 months to anticipate and dread their demise. This caused Mordecai to rend his garments, adorn himself with sackcloth and ashes, and cry aloud throughout the city. These were all expression of the intense grief he felt.

- While we can't know the day or hour, we know the Lord has an appointed time when He will return to judge the world. All who remain at that time, apart from Him, will face righteous judgment and eternal separation. None are promised tomorrow. We live in a world of dying people. Once we pass through the gates of death, our eternal destination is sealed. We need to share the grief Mordecai had for those who are perishing! [Isaiah 58:1 – Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.](#)

B. The Extent of Grief (2) – *And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.* Mordecai's grief caused him to take desperate measures. It was unlawful to appear within the king's gate wearing sackcloth. These were garments of mourning for death, viewed as unclean. He was determined to express his grief in such a way that others noticed. Most agree he desired Esther to become aware of his grief, but it is entirely possible that he also desired Ahasuerus to notice. Mordecai refused to be silent about this atrocity. He wanted to raise awareness to this great injustice.

- While God's judgment is never an injustice, (none are worthy of His merciful grace,) we should share a burden for those who are perishing in their sin. We must not be content to pray for them within the walls of the church. We must be willing to cry aloud among society, proclaiming the saving grace of the Lord to a world that is lost and perishing. We must raise awareness for the pressing spiritual needs of our day!

C. The Expanse of Grief (3) – *And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.* The grief and mourning wasn't limited to Mordecai in Shushan. Every Jew, in every province had been condemned to death. The condemnation was universal throughout the kingdom. In every province the Jews reacted with fasting, weeping, and great mourning. This decree had touched every area of the kingdom.

- Sin and death are not limited to certain areas or only found within isolated pockets of society. All are born in sin and stand in need of a Savior. Everywhere people are found, sin and death reign. We must share a burden for the lost and perishing wherever they live upon the earth. Christ did not die for Israel alone. His great sacrifice was not made solely for the nations of western civilization. He died that all might be redeemed from sin and reconciled to God.

II. The Response to the Mourning (4-9) – Here we discover the response of Esther and Mordecai to the mourning being expressed. Consider:

A. Esther's Concern (4a) – *So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved.* Esther had been crowned queen and was living in the comforts of the palace, removed from everyday life within the kingdom, and yet she was extremely grieved over the decree Ahasuerus had made. Those were her people. She loved and cared for them even though she had been elevated to the position of queen.

- In this passage, Esther stands as a beautiful picture of Christ the Lord. He dwelt in the presence of the Godhead, separated from the physical lives of men on earth. He was God, possessing absolute sovereignty and control over humanity and yet He cared for our lost condition and great need. Sin grieved Christ so much that He was willing to leave the comforts of heaven to inhabit a body of flesh and die for the sin of humanity. His great love for sinners, including us, ought to motivate our love and care for others!

B. Esther's Care (4b) – *and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.* After hearing of Mordecai appearing in sackcloth within the gate of the king, she sent a change of raiment for him to wear. Esther didn't want Mordecai to be found of the king wearing unacceptable garments. In his commitment to the Jews, Mordecai refused the garments that Esther offered.

- While this is not a perfect picture of salvation, it does illustrate a beautiful truth. We were born robed in the rags of sin. Such garments are unacceptable before God. In order to be accepted of the Father, we must be clothed in the righteousness of the Son. He offers the garment of salvation to all who will receive it by faith. Some refuse it, but all who receive it are viewed in the light of the righteousness of the Son.

C. Esther's Commandment (5) – *Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.* As of yet, Esther was unaware of the king's decree. When Mordecai refused to be comforted, she called for a chamberlain to talk with Mordecai to discover what was wrong. She realized something was terribly wrong and she was determined to find out.

- Our Lord is never limited in knowledge or understanding. He knows exactly where we are at all times and what we face each moment. I am thankful for the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. In our moments of despair, the Spirit comes to comfort and guide us.

D. Mordecai's Confession (7) – *And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.* Mordecai shared the horrible news with Hatach. He told him how Haman had conspired and convinced the king to order the annihilation of the Jews, willing to bear the expense of this evil campaign. Things were desperate for the Jews and Mordecai confessed his great need.

- Many times we refuse to admit the severity of our need. Often we fail to be honest with the Lord about situations in our lives. He already knows, but we must be willing to do as Mordecai did

and confess our need before the Lord. We face a determined adversary who will stop at nothing to defeat us. We must seek the Lord in prayer and supplication. We cannot overcome in our own ability. We need the Lord to intercede on our behalf!

E. Mordecai's Charge (8-9) – Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. ^[9] And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Mordecai gave Hatach the king's decree. He told him to urge Esther to intercede on behalf of the Jews before the king. Mordecai knew Esther was their only hope. She was the only Jew who had direct access to the king. Hatach carried the decree to Esther and shared the plea of Mordecai with her.

- Again we discover an Old Testament picture of a New Testament principle. As I said, the Lord is sovereign and fully knows our lives. However, He alone stands as our Mediator and Intercessor before the Father. He stands ready and able to plead our case. Hatach stands as a picture of the Holy Spirit. Mordecai couldn't physically go to where Esther was, but Hatach had access to the palace. The Holy Spirit bears our prayers and concerns to the Lord who intercedes on our behalf before the Father. What a blessed privilege we have in prayer! [Heb.9:24 – For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.](#) [Rom.8:26-27 – Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.](#) ^[27] [And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.](#)

Conclusion: There can be no doubt we are living in desperate times. We face great difficulties in life and we are surrounded by those who are apart from Christ, yet unsaved. These are not issues that we should ignore, but we do not have to approach them without hope. We have a loving Savior who provided the means of salvation for all men. We can go to Him at any time for any need. We must do as Mordecai and cry out for the great needs in our day. Jesus is the answer for whatever need we may have!