



Esther - Chapter Six

II Esther 3:1-9:17 - Main Action (continues)

Summary of Chapter Six

Events now move so tellingly in favour of Esther and Mordecai that a presumption of God's providential involvement becomes unavoidable. The king was having a sleepless night and so looked through some of the royal records, coming across the account where Mordecai had foiled an assassination attempt on the king. The king wished to reward Mordecai for his faithfulness at which point Haman arrived in court. The king sought Haman's opinion without identifying who would receive the honour. In his vanity Haman immediately thought the king was referring to him and suggested high praise through public honour. The king then dispatched Haman to honour Mordecai as he had suggested, which he did but was mortified in having to do so.

II.e Esther 6:1-13 - The King Honours Mordecai

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ That night the king could not sleep, and he gave orders to bring the book of records, the annals, and they were read to the king. ² It was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ³ Then the king said, 'What honour or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?' The king's servants who attended him said, 'Nothing has been done for him.'

Esther 6:1-3

That night the king could not sleep. King Ahasuerus did what many do when they cannot sleep. He brought out a book and used it to fill the sleepless night, hoping that the reading would make him sleepy again. The timing of this episode of royal insomnia is exquisite – another strong indication that something more than chance is involved.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a sleepless night following dreams that troubled him: *<<In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him>> (Daniel 2:1), and King Darius had a similar sleepless night after condemning Daniel to death not knowing that the Lord would intervene to save him: <<Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him>> (Daniel 6:18).*

The book of records, the annals were the chronicles and record of memorable deeds kept by officials; refer to the comment made on Esther 2:22-23. Again, the request for this book and the reading of the passage about Mordecai can hardly be mere chance.

It was found written. This was a remarkable example of divine providence in action. King Ahasuerus could not sleep and he could have chosen twenty different diversions to fill his sleepless night, but he commands that a book be brought to him and read. The one commanded to bring the book could have brought any of the many books of the chronicles, but he brought one particular book. The book could be opened to any page, but it was opened to the exact page telling the story of Mordecai and how he had saved the king from assassination. God guided every step along the way.

Even as King Ahasuerus had a book of the records, literally a book of remembrance, so God also has a book of remembrance: *<<Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name>> (Malachi 3:16).*

What honour or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this? Showing rare concern for a common subject, King Ahasuerus considered a reward for Mordecai. When the reply came, 'Nothing has been done for him,' the king determined to do something to rectify the situation.

Prior to this Mordecai's actions which saved the king were almost forgotten: *<<I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed important to me. There was a little city with few people in it. A great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege-works against it. Now there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the*

city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. So I said, 'Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded'>> (Ecclesiastes 9:13-16).

⁴ The king said, 'Who is in the court?' Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ So the king's servants told him, 'Haman is there, standing in the court.' The king said, 'Let him come in.'

Esther 6:4-5

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace. It was no coincidence that Haman entered the king's court at just that moment; it was no coincidence that Haman came at that moment to ask for the execution of Mordecai; it was no coincidence that king Ahasuerus wanted to honour Mordecai at just that moment.

Haman is there. Haman now waited just as Esther had done in Esther 5:1, although there would be no trepidation on his part as he believed he was the king's favourite. Again, the timing was perfect. Invisibly, and without explicit comment in the text, God is at work to protect his people.

If the Book of Esther reveals anything, it shows that God manages the affairs of people, even without their knowledge. God knows what he is doing and in the courts of heaven there are no coincidences or surprises. Esther was not lucky to be queen; Mordecai was not lucky to have overheard the assassination plot; it was not luck or chance that made Haman enter the royal courts at this time with this heart of evil intent. All of these events were orchestrated by God and not by chance. This type of argument becomes difficult, of course, when bad things happen to Christians or to 'innocent' people in general. It is easy to see God's management of all things when good things happen. But what about the bad? Even then, people can and must trust God's total plan, realising that *<<all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose>> (Romans 8:28)*. Christians understand that Paul says all things work together; any one event, taken in isolation may seem to make no sense but when all things are seen working together then the ultimate wisdom of God's plan can be seen too.

⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said to him, 'What shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour?' Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?'

Esther 6:6

What shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour? Neither Ahasuerus nor Haman was aware of the heavy irony involved in the question. The events now unfolding were completely out of their control for it is God who arranges all things, so that not only will all the Jews be ultimately protected, but also so that both Mordecai and Haman would get their just rewards.

Whom would the king wish to honour more than me? God often allows fallen man to set his own trap; allowing Haman to make his pride and arrogance become the cause of his ultimate humiliation: <<*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*>> (Proverbs 16:18).

⁷ So Haman said to the king, ‘For the man whom the king wishes to honour, ⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and a horse that the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its head. ⁹ Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble officials; let him robe the man whom the king wishes to honour, and let him conduct the man on horseback through the open square of the city, proclaiming before him: “Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.”’

Esther 6:7-9

So Haman said to the king. Haman’s response shows both the extent of his vanity and his total unawareness of the trap he is walking into.

Let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn. Haman, in his childish desire to be praised and honoured by all, asked for things that really mattered very little, except to puff one up with pride.

A horse that the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its head are even greater honours than those bestowed on Joseph by Pharaoh: <<*Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph’s hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of him, ‘Bow the knee!’ Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt*>> (Genesis 41:42-43).

Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour. Haman was a tragic man who could only believe he has done well when he heard applause. It is a good and sometimes appropriate thing to have applause here on earth, but it is tragic to live a life seeking for it. Christians should instead seek and be satisfied with the applause from heaven.

¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, ‘Quickly, take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to the Jew Mordecai who sits at the king’s gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned.’ ¹¹ So Haman took the robes and the horse and robed Mordecai and led him riding through the open square of the city, proclaiming, ‘Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.’

Esther 6:10-11

Do so to the Jew Mordecai. Haman belatedly realises the fate he has brought on himself. It would have been something to see the face of Haman at that moment; to see that the king took his advice completely, but gave the honour to his arch enemy - the man that Haman had come to ask for his execution.

This statement also shows that Ahasuerus was aware of Mordecai’s ethnicity and was still happy to honour him. The king may have been many things but he was not a racist, unlike Haman.

So Haman took the robes and the horse and robed Mordecai and led him riding through the open square of the city. The ultimate humiliation was for Haman to honour Mordecai in such a public way; humiliation is only really humiliation when it is public.

¹² Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³ When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, ‘If Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him.’

Esther 6:12-13

Mourning and with his head covered. This means that Haman acted as if someone dear to him had died. In fact, his pride had been dealt a death-blow. Now it is Haman’s turn to do as his intended victims had done when the decree of destruction was first published. Refer to Esther 4:1-3 and the associated comments.

His advisers are literally called wise men. These are normally associated with kings, refer to the comment made on Esther 1:13, and therefore serve as a subtle reminder of the heights from which Haman has begun to fall: <<***They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it themselves***>> (Psalm 57:6), <<***Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling***>> (Proverbs 26:27),

and: <<*One who walks in integrity will be safe, but whoever follows crooked ways will fall into the Pit*>> (Proverbs 28:18).

If Mordecai is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him. Even Haman's wife and advisers sense that an irresistible power or person protects the Jewish people. Haman's wife and his advisers could see the future well enough. Haman would not prevail against Mordecai, but Mordecai would prevail over Haman.

Verse 14 is part of the next section and will be included in Chapter 7.