

# ESTHER

For Such A Time As This

by

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE GREATNESS OF MORDECAI

IN THIS BRIEF CHAPTER of only three verses we have something more than an appendix to the Book of Esther. Commenting on the opening verse, A. T. Olmstead remarks in his *History of the Persian Empire* that “without a word of protest, the populous and wealthy Greek cities of Asia were surrendered to a monarch whom poets and orators never wearied of describing as the barbarian.” From that we gather that the laying of “a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea,” was no more popular in those days than a similar tax would be now.

The sea referred to here is probably the Mediterranean. That being so, we can see how far west the Persian Empire may have extended. Some think that the power of Ahasuerus extended beyond the coasts of Greece to Italy and even as far west as Spain. But the eastern and western limits named in the very first verse of this Book of Esther certainly give the actual extent of the empire.

One commentator takes the view that “**the isles**” mentioned here were islands in the Persian Gulf. But a glance at the map would hardly confirm that view. The few coastal islands shown there do not begin to compare in size and importance with such islands as Cyprus and Crete in the Mediterranean. But even though we may not be able to say with certainty which islands are here referred to, the fact remains that Ahasuerus was evidently in need of funds, and hence the tribute, or tax. According to secular history, he had projected an unsuccessful expedition into Greece, and as a result his treasury was badly depleted. But for all of that his scribes were diligent in recording “**all the acts of his power, and of his might . . . in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.**”

But the things that interest us even more than that statement is “**the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him . . . for Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus.**” The word here rendered declaration is found but twice in the Old Testament, and both times in this Book of Esther. The other reference is in Esther 4:7 where it is rendered sum. And strangely enough, even though it refers there to “**the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them,**” it was Mordecai who used the word. But here it is used to describe the measure of Mordecai’s greatness.

There is something ironical about that. It sounds as though the Lord was actually making a mockery of Haman's promise. Now it so happens that the word for stingeth in Proverbs 23:32 comes from the same root in the Hebrew. And one can see how the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai would sting those who had sought his ruin. It is another illustration of the turning of the tables, as it were.

But Mordecai was not only great in the court of Ahasuerus, he was also **“great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren.”** And that must have meant a great deal to him. Very often, as the Lord Jesus warns us, a man is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house. Happily, such was not the case here. And to say that he was accepted of the multitude of his brethren means that they were unanimously pleased with him; they were satisfied with him. And they had good reason to be. When we think of his defiance of Haman, we can see how some of them might question his wisdom at times. But no one could question his courage.

The greatness of Mordecai never inflated him. He never became a megalomaniac. On the contrary, he was most altruistic, ever **“seeking the wealth of his brethren, and speaking peace to all his seed.”**

Their wealth here must not be understood to refer merely to their material wealth. The word here used for wealth means their good in its widest possible sense. We may well suppose that by virtue of his high position and great authority, he would be able to initiate legislation which would promote the well-being of the people. But he was even more than a legislator and administrator, he was a counselor and a preacher, **“speaking peace to all his seed.”**

And so the book closes with a living man active in the best interests of all concerned. The fact that we have no record of his death is quite remarkable, because the history of most men concludes with some sort of obituary. Not so with Mordecai. Thus the impression is left in our minds of one who lives on and on. **“He that doeth the will of God abideth forever”** (I John 2:17).

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