

ESTHER CHAPTER 4

¹ But Mordecai, having perceived what was done, tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and sprinkled dust upon himself. And having rushed forth through the open street of the city, he cried with a loud voice, "A nation that has done no wrong is going to be destroyed!" ² And he came to the king's gate, and stood; for it was not lawful for him to enter into the palace, wearing sackcloth and ashes. ³ And in every province where the letters were published, *there was* crying and lamentation and great mourning on the part of the Jews: they spread for themselves sackcloth and ashes.

⁴ And the queen's maids and chamberlains went in and told her: and when she had heard what was done, she was disturbed; and she sent to clothe Mordecai, and take away his sackcloth; but he would not consent. ⁵ So Esther called for her eunuch Hathach, who waited upon her; and she sent to learn the truth from Mordecai.

⁶ (This verse omitted in LXX)

⁷ And Mordecai showed him what was done, and the promise which Haman had made the king of ten thousand talents *to be paid* into the treasury, that he might destroy the Jews. ⁸ And he gave him the copy *of the writing* that was published in Susa concerning their destruction, to show to Esther. And he told him to command her to go in and make supplication to the king, and to beg him for the people, "remembering," *he said*, "the days of your low estate, how you were nursed by my hand—because Haman, who holds the next place to the king, has spoken against us for death. Call upon the Lord, and speak to the king concerning us, to deliver us from death!" ⁹ So Hathach went in and told her all these words.

¹⁰ And Esther said to Hathach, "Go to Mordecai, and say, ¹¹ 'All the nations of the empire know, that whoever, man or woman, shall go in to the king into the inner court uncalled, that person cannot live. Only to whomsoever the king shall stretch out *his* golden scepter, he shall live; and I have not been called to go into the king, for these thirty days.'" ¹² And Hathach reported to Mordecai all the words of Esther.

¹³ Then Mordecai said to Hathach, "Go, and say to her, 'Esther, do not say to yourself that you alone will escape in the kingdom, more than all the *other* Jews.

¹⁴ For if you shall refuse to heed on this occasion, help and protection will be to the Jews from another quarter; but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows if you have been made queen for this *very* occasion.'" ¹⁵ And Esther sent the *man* that came to her to Mordecai, saying, ¹⁶ "Go and assemble the Jews that are in Susa, and fast for me, and do not eat or drink for three days, night and day. And I also and my maidens will fast, and then I will go in to the king, contrary to the law, even if I must die." ¹⁷ So Mordecai went and did all that Esther commanded him.

And he sought the Lord, making mention of all the works of the Lord; and he said, "Lord God, *great* King that rules over all *people*, for all things are in Your power, and there is no one that shall oppose You in Your purpose to save Israel. For You have made the heaven and the earth, and every wonderful thing in the *earth* under heaven. And You are Lord of all, and there is no one who shall resist

You, the Lord. You know all things: You know, O Lord, that it is not in the insolence, nor haughtiness, nor love of glory, that I have done this, to refuse to bow down to the haughty Haman. For I would gladly have kissed the soles of his feet for the safety of Israel.

"But I have done this, that I might not set the glory of man above the glory of God: and I will not worship anyone except You, my Lord, and I will not do these things in haughtiness.

"And now, O Lord God, O King, the God of Abraham, spare Your people, for *our enemies* are looking upon us for *our* destruction, and they have desired to destroy Your ancient inheritance. Do not overlook Your peculiar people, whom you have redeemed for Yourself out of the land of Egypt. Hearken to my prayer, and be propitious to Yours in gladness, that we may live and sing praises to Your name, O Lord; and do not utterly destroy the mount of them that praise You, O Lord."

And all Israel cried with *all* their might, for their death *was* before their eyes. And Queen Esther found refuge in the Lord, being taken, *as it were*, in the agony of death.

And having taken off her glorious apparel, she put on garments of distress and mourning. And instead of grand perfumes, she put dung and ashes on her head, and she greatly brought down her body, and she filled every place of her glad adorning with the *torn* curls of her hair. And she sought the Lord God of Israel, and said, "O my Lord, You alone are our king. Help me, *I who am* destitute, and have no helper but You, for my danger *is* close at hand. I have heard from my birth, in the tribe of my kindred, that You, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our fathers out of all their kindred for a perpetual inheritance, and have wrought for them all that You have said. And now we have sinned before You, and You have delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we honored their gods. You are righteous, O Lord. But now they have not been contented with the bitterness of our slavery, but have laid their hands on the hands of their idols, *in order* to abolish the decree of Your mouth, and to utterly destroy Your inheritance, and to stop the mouth of them that praise You, and to extinguish the glory of Your house and Your altar, and to open the mouth of the Gentiles, to *speak* the praises of vanities, and *in order* that a mortal king should be admired forever.

"O Lord, do not resign Your scepter to them that are not, and let them not laugh at our fall, but turn their counsel against themselves, and make an example of him who has begun *to injure* us. Remember *us*, O Lord, manifest Yourself in the time of our affliction, and encourage me, O King of gods, and Ruler of all dominion. Put harmonious speech into my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate him that fights against us, to the utter destruction of him and of them that consent with him. But deliver us by Your hand, and help *I who am* destitute, and have no one but You, O Lord. You know all things, and know that I hate the glory of transgressors, and that I abhor the manners of the uncircumcised, and of every stranger. You know my necessity, for I abhor the symbol of my proud station, which is upon my head in the days of my splendor. I abhor it as a menstrual cloth, and I wear it not in the days of my tranquility. And Your maid has not eaten *at* the table of Haman, and I have not honored the banquet of the king, neither have I drunk the wine of libations. Neither has Your

maid rejoiced since the day of my promotion until now, except in You, O Lord God of Abraham. O God, who has power over all, listen to the voice of the desperate, and deliver us from the hand of them that devise mischief, and deliver me from my fear."