**“Fur Such A Time As This” (SR: Esther 4:1-17)**

 Our lesson will center around a young Jewish woman who saved her nation. The book of Esther shows the providence of God in preserving the Jews (Note: the book of Esther does nto mention the name of God even a single time; yet, His hand undeniably guides the narrative each step of the way!).

**I. The Background of Esther, the Queen**

 A. Esther became queen of Persia after Vashti was deposed (478 B.C.). Married to Ahasuerus (Xerxes). It seems that Vashti was deposed before Xerxes left on his campaign against Greece (e.g. Battle of Thermopylae), the beauty contest took place during the few years he was gone, & married Esther upon return.

 1. She was unaware of the malignant hatred of Haman against all Jews. Haman cunningly devised a plan whereby all Jews would be slain. When Mordecai learned of the plot, he sent word to Esther urging her to act.

 2. Her action would be critical to the life of the queen. The revelation she was a Jew would put her life in jeopardy and the act of approaching the emperor without being summoned could incur death (4:11).

 3. Would she be willing to lay down her life for others? Would you? At first she refused to act. Her first reaction was self-preservation.

 B. Mordecai immediately brought her face to face with reality (4:14).

 1. Mordecai pleads with Esther to seize her opportunity. If she does not, her house will perish & be disgraced. But God’s work will be done (4:14).

 2. Relief would arise from another place. The question was would Esther share in the blessings.

 C. Notice the argument Mordecai made.

 1. We fail in our duty by being silent when we should speak out. If we fail, God will still get His will done. But we will suffer for not acting.

 2. She chose the unselfish way & 5 years into her reign, saved Israel (30 years before Nehemiah rebult the wall in Jerusalem after release by Cyrus).

 D. The impact of her decision:

 1. “If the Hebrew Nation had been entirely wiped out of existence 500 years before it brought Christ into the world, that might have made some difference in the destiny of mankind; no Hebrew Nation, no Messiah: no Messiah, a lost world. This beautiful Jewish girl of the long ago, though she herself may not have known it, yet played her part in paving the way for the coming of the world’s Saviour.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook, 237).

 2. It is speculated that she remained queen mother during her stepson’s reign (Artaxerxes I) and remained an influence during the days of Nehemiah and Ezra.

 3. Her, and Mordecai’s, influence is comparable to Joseph’s in Egypt and Daniel’s in Babylon.

**II. In the Kingdom for Such A Time As This**

 A. The challenge that faces the child of God today is no less.

 1.It is difficult to imagine greater challenges than those facing Christians now. Christians must exert every effort to assure the life of the church.

 2. Any hesitancy will see retreat and defeat of the forces of righteousness, but God will ultimately triumph. Will we share in it?

 B. We are confronted by a wicked, corrupt, permissive society.

 1. There is graft, misappropriation & immoral behavior in high places. Sexual promiscuity rages like wildfire. Atheism is openly taught in schools. Some of these things seem far away as if they presented no threat.

 2. Consider only one item that influences 99% of the members in this church – television. What is normal on TV is abnormal to God.

 3. Some claim TV does not have a bad influence. Studies prove otherwise. Advertisers would not spend millions if TV weren’t influential.

**III. Other Darkening Clouds Threaten Our Existence**

 A. An ominous cloud of apostacy hangs over the church of the Lord.

 1. Half-converted members want every new fad to hold up failing interest. Study of the Bible at home is almost a forgotten practice.

 2. Individuals lack evangelistic zeal. The individual saint is not taught.

 B. Ignorance of the Word is accompanied by an infiltration of worldliness.

 1. The two almost invariably go together to destroy the church. Lack of moral integrity and basic honesty are often exposed in members.

 2. Too few remember Christ’s purpose for the church (Eph. 5:25-27). It is becoming difficult to set forth what God has spoken (Gal. 4:16 – “Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?”).

 3. Sectarianism seems to be more acceptable to many (2Cor. 6:14, 17). God does not want His own trying to fellowship false religions.

**IV. Shall We Answer the Challenge?**

A. Esther faced the possibility of being destroyed yet decided to act.

 1. We face the possibility of the church dying as a righteous group.

 2. We can raise our voices in protest to evil. We can be more effective by refusing to participate or imbibe the evil.

 B. How can we help this church?

 1. We can cry out and oppose any departure from the truth. We must openly oppose and keep the church pure and holy.

 2. We can oppose every sectarian doctrine. We must call for “back to the Bible.” We can decry the “social gospel” (1Pet. 4:11). “Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

 The challenge facing the church is as great now as the challenge facing Esther. Will this church survive? Will you survive? Will you survive spiritually? God gives victory to those who faithfully serve Him. If you are not in the kingdom, be added (Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16).