



# Unlocking the Bible (23)



## Stand Up for Jesus: Lessons from the Book of Esther

If Nehemiah's response was personal, so was Esther's, but in very different circumstances.

The Book of Esther is a touching story of a young girl's rise to prominence from being a poor Jewess to becoming Queen; and that of her faithful guardian Mordecai who, between them, were instrumental in ensuring the survival of God's people while in Captivity.

In the story, Esther is in exile in the palace at Susa. Through external events she finds herself, even though a Jewess, one of the king's retinue, favoured by the king and eventually made Queen. Significantly, she has access to the throne.

Outside the palace, her uncle Mordecai, the faithful Jew, is despised and hated by the wicked Haman who engineers a plan to have the Jews destroyed. Yet Mordecai, though a Jew in captivity, is a loyal subject who reports this act of treachery, thus saving the king's life in action that is almost forgotten but turns out to be pivotal in the end.

When subsequently this Mordecai hears of the existence of a plot to annihilate the Jews (neither the first nor the last of such schemes) he instructs Esther, as queen, to intercede with the king on their behalf. She does so - at great personal risk - and manages both to see Haman's treachery exposed and to overturn the plot. Haman, the perpetrator is then hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The outcome is triumph for the Jews and eventual reward for Mordecai for his vigilance and loyalty.

On the one hand it is a simple story but, on the other, it has great significance. What lessons are there in it for us?

Like Ezra and Nehemiah, there is serious and sinister opposition to the welfare of God's people and His kingdom. That is something the New Testament warns us about: Jesus faced it and warned His disciples; Peter and Paul warn the early believers that that is to be their experience, also. How are they to survive? While providence and circumstance play a part, the essence is integrity and diligence: that is God's answer and secret of success. Small, apparently insignificant aspects of dedicated faithful daily living, such as loyalty and careful behaviour are important; as is initiative in whatever role we find ourselves in. "*Stand up stand up for Jesus*" is not just a cliché: it is an important commitment. That is what both Mordecai and Esther did, with great effect. And so must we, for the welfare of God's people is paramount.