

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Esther Chapter 6 — The Sleepless King and the Sovereign Hand

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Esther Chapter 6 contains one of the greatest reversals in the Book of Esther.

At the end of Chapter 5, Haman had built a seventy-five-foot gallows for Mordecai. Haman believed he was about to destroy the man who refused to honor him.

But Chapter 6 begins with a seemingly ordinary event:

The king cannot sleep.

That sleepless night becomes the turning point of the entire story.

The king orders the royal records to be read. The records remind him that Mordecai once exposed an assassination plot against him. The king discovers that Mordecai was never rewarded.

At exactly the right moment, Haman enters the palace.

The king asks Haman what should be done for a man whom the king wants to honor.

Because of his pride, Haman assumes the king is talking about him.

He describes an elaborate public ceremony.

Then comes the great reversal:

“Excellent! Do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew.”

The man Haman intended to kill is honored.

The man who wanted honor is forced to give it.

And Haman's downfall begins.

I. THE KING'S SLEEPLESS NIGHT

Esther 6:1 — God Works in the Night

Verse 1

“That night, the king couldn’t sleep. So he ordered the book of the records—the chronicles of his reign—to be brought and read to him.”

The timing is extraordinary.

Haman has just built the gallows.

Mordecai is apparently in danger.

Yet the king cannot sleep.

Instead of sleeping, he asks for the royal records.

This seemingly insignificant event becomes the instrument through which Mordecai's forgotten service is remembered.

Cross References

Psalm 121:4

“Indeed, the Protector of Israel never slumbers or sleeps.”

God never becomes tired or unaware.

Daniel 6:18

“Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating. He refused entertainment, and he could not sleep.”

This shows another biblical example of a king experiencing a troubled and sleepless night.

Ecclesiastes 5:12

“The sleep of a working person is pleasant, whether they eat little or much, but the abundance of the rich gives them no sleep.”

Earthly wealth and power cannot guarantee peace or rest.

Crawford Commentary

The king's sleeplessness appears accidental.

But in the larger story, it is providential.

God did not need a dramatic miracle.

He simply needed a king who could not sleep.

Spiritual Principle

God can use the smallest interruption to accomplish His greatest purposes.

II. MORDECAI'S FAITHFULNESS IS REMEMBERED

Esther 6:2 — The Forgotten Deed

Verse 2

“As they read, they found the account of how Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s guards who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus.”

The royal records contain the story of Mordecai's faithfulness.

Back in Esther Chapter 2, Mordecai discovered the assassination plot and reported it through Esther.

The conspiracy had been investigated and confirmed.

Yet Mordecai apparently received no immediate reward.

Now his forgotten act is brought back to the king's attention.

Cross References

Esther 2:21

“During this time, while Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officials who guarded the entrance, became angry and plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus.”

Esther 2:22

“But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who then told the king, giving Mordecai credit for the information.”

Esther 2:23

“After the matter was investigated and confirmed to be true, the two men were executed by hanging. This was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.”

Crawford Commentary

Mordecai's good deed had not been forgotten forever.

Human beings may overlook our faithfulness.

God does not.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness may go unnoticed for a season, but it is never wasted.

III. THE KING DISCOVERS THAT MORDECAI WAS NEVER REWARDED

Esther 6:3 — “Nothing Has Been Done”

Verse 3

“The king asked, ‘What honor or reward has been given to Mordecai for this?’ The king’s attendants replied, ‘Nothing has been done for him.’”

The king is surprised.

Mordecai had saved the king's life.

Yet nothing had been done for him.

The timing is extraordinary.

The king discovers this fact precisely when Haman is preparing to destroy Mordecai.

Cross References

Genesis 40:23

“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”

Joseph also experienced a period when someone who could have helped him forgot him.

Malachi 3:16

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord listened and heard them. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name.”

God remembers those who honor Him.

Nehemiah 13:14

“Remember me for this, my God, and do not erase my faithful deeds that I have done for the house of my God and its services.”

Nehemiah asks God to remember his faithfulness.

Crawford Commentary

There is a major difference between **being forgotten by people** and **being forgotten by God**.

Mordecai may have been overlooked by the palace.

But the time had come for his faithfulness to be recognized.

Spiritual Principle

Delayed recognition does not mean forgotten faithfulness.

IV. HAMAN ENTERS THE COURTYARD

Esther 6:4 — Haman Comes to Ask for Mordecai's Death

Verse 4

“The king said, ‘Who is in the courtyard?’ Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared.”

This is one of the great ironies of the chapter.

The king is thinking about **honoring Mordecai**.

Haman has entered the palace to ask for **Mordecai's execution**.

Both men are moving toward the same person, but with completely different intentions.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:9

“A person may plan his own course, but the Lord directs his steps.”

Proverbs 19:21

“Many plans are in a person’s heart, but the Lord’s purpose will prevail.”

Psalms 37:12

“The wicked plot against the righteous and grind their teeth at them.”

Crawford Commentary

Haman has a plan.

But God has a greater plan.

Haman thinks he is walking into the palace to secure Mordecai's death.

He does not realize he is walking into the beginning of his own humiliation.

Spiritual Principle

Human plans cannot overturn God's sovereign purposes.

V. HAMAN IS SUMMONED

Esther 6:5 — “Bring Him In”

Verse 5

“The attendants answered, ‘Haman is standing in the courtyard.’ ‘Bring him in,’ said the king.”

Haman is brought into the king's presence.

He probably believes the king is about to approve his request concerning Mordecai.

Instead, the king is about to ask him a question that will completely change the situation.

Cross References

Proverbs 21:1

“The king’s heart is like a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He directs it wherever He chooses.”

Psalms 33:10

“The Lord frustrates the plans of the nations and stops the purposes of the peoples.”

Job 5:12

“He frustrates the plans of the crafty, so that their hands cannot accomplish what they planned.”

Crawford Commentary

Haman believes he is entering the room to control events.

Instead, events are about to control Haman.

VI. HAMAN ASSUMES THE HONOR IS FOR HIM

Esther 6:6 — Pride Takes Over

Verse 6

“So Haman came in. And the king asked him, ‘What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?’ Haman thought to himself, ‘Whom would the king want to honor more than me?’”

This verse exposes Haman's heart.

The king does not mention Haman's name.

He simply asks what should be done for a man he wants to honor.

Haman immediately assumes:

“He must mean me.”

Cross References

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goes before destruction, and a proud spirit comes before a fall.”

Proverbs 18:12

“Before a downfall the heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.”

Obadiah 1:3

“The pride of your heart has deceived you. You live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights. You say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’”

Crawford Commentary

Haman's greatest enemy is not Mordecai.

It is his own pride.

His pride has distorted his understanding of reality.

He assumes that everyone sees him as highly as he sees himself.

Spiritual Principle

Pride can deceive us into believing that we deserve honor that God never promised us.

VII. HAMAN DESCRIBES ROYAL HONOR

Esther 6:7 — Haman Gives His Advice

Verse 7

“So he replied, ‘For the man the king delights to honor—’”

Haman now begins describing the honor he believes he deserves.

Cross References

Genesis 41:42

“Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in fine linen and placed a gold chain around his neck.”

1 Kings 1:33

“The king said to them, ‘Take your lord’s servants with you and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule and take him down to Gihon.’”

Daniel 5:29

“Then Belshazzar commanded that they dress Daniel in purple, place a gold chain around his neck, and proclaim that he would be the third highest ruler in the kingdom.”

Crawford Commentary

Haman's suggestions reveal how deeply he craves recognition.

He wants the king's robe.

He wants the king's horse.

He wants public recognition.

He wants everyone to know how important he is.

VIII. THE KING'S ROBE AND HORSE

Esther 6:8 — Royal Symbols

Verse 8

“Let the royal robe the king has worn be brought, and the horse the king himself has ridden, with the royal crown placed on its head.”

Haman's proposed honor is extravagant.

He wants the honored man to be publicly associated with the king.

Cross References

Genesis 41:43

“He had Joseph ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ So Pharaoh placed Joseph over the whole land of Egypt.”

2 Kings 9:13

“They quickly took their cloaks and spread them under Jehu on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, ‘Jehu is king!’”

Zechariah 3:4

“The angel said to those standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then he said to Joshua, ‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.’”

Crawford Commentary

The irony becomes increasingly powerful.

Haman is designing a ceremony that will soon be performed on the very man he hates.

IX. PUBLIC HONOR

Esther 6:9 — Proclaiming His Honor

Verse 9

“Then let one of the king’s most noble princes dress the man in these garments and lead him on horseback through the city square, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’”

Haman wants public recognition.

He wants everyone to hear the announcement.

But God is about to give this exact honor to Mordecai.

Cross References

Genesis 41:43

“He had Joseph ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ So Pharaoh placed Joseph over the whole land of Egypt.”

Zechariah 3:5

“Then I said, ‘Put a clean turban on his head.’ So they put a clean turban on his head and dressed him in clean clothes while the angel of the Lord stood by.”

1 Kings 1:38

“So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Kerethites and Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David’s mule and escorted him to Gihon.”

Crawford Commentary

Haman has unknowingly written the instructions for Mordecai's honor.

This is divine irony.

Spiritual Principle

God can turn the plans of the proud into instruments of their own humiliation.

X. THE GREAT REVERSAL

Esther 6:10 — “Do It for Mordecai”

Verse 10

“‘Excellent!’ said the king to Haman. ‘Hurry and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not leave out a single detail of all you’ve suggested.’”

This is the great reversal.

Haman probably expected the king to tell him to carry out this ceremony for himself.

Instead, the king tells him to do it for **Mordecai**.

The very man Haman wanted to kill will receive the honor Haman imagined for himself.

Cross References

Psalms 7:15

“The wicked dig a pit and hollow it out, but they fall into the hole they have made.”

Proverbs 26:27

“Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them.”

Psalm 9:15

“The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug; their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.”

Crawford Commentary

This is the fulfillment of the principle introduced in Chapter 5.

Haman built a gallows for Mordecai.

Now Haman must honor Mordecai.

The enemy's plan is beginning to collapse.

Spiritual Principle

God can reverse a situation so completely that the very plan designed to destroy you becomes part of your deliverance.

XI. HAMAN HONORS MORDECAI

Esther 6:11 — The Proud Man Serves the Man He Hates

Verse 11

“So Haman took the robe and the horse, dressed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, proclaiming, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’”

Imagine Haman's humiliation.

He must personally carry out the king's command.

He must dress Mordecai.

He must lead Mordecai through the city.

He must proclaim Mordecai's honor.

And he must say the very words Haman wanted others to hear about himself.

Cross References

Isaiah 60:14

“The children of your oppressors will come and bow down before you; all who despised you will bow at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Proverbs 14:19

“Evil people will bow down before the good, and the wicked will bow at the gates of the righteous.”

Psalms 37:34

“Hope in the Lord and keep His way. He will lift you up to inherit the land; when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it.”

Crawford Commentary

Mordecai does not have to fight Haman.

He does not have to defend himself.

He does not have to demand recognition.

The king's command takes care of the matter.

Spiritual Principle

God can defend His people without requiring them to manipulate their circumstances.

XII. HAMAN RETURNS HOME IN SHAME

Esther 6:12 — From Pride to Grief

Verse 12

“Afterward, Mordecai returned to his place at the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, griefstricken and with his head covered in shame.”

Notice the contrast.

Mordecai:

- Receives honor.
- Returns to the king's gate.
- Remains steady.

Haman:

- Receives humiliation.
- Hurries home.
- Covers his head in shame.

The reversal is dramatic.

Cross References

Esther 4:1

“When Mordecai learned everything that had happened, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went into the middle of the city, crying out with a loud and bitter wail.”

Earlier, Mordecai was mourning.

Now Haman is the one experiencing grief and shame.

2 Samuel 15:30

“David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered, and he walked barefoot. All the people with him also covered their heads and were weeping as they went.”

Jeremiah 14:3

“The nobles send their servants for water. They go to the cisterns but find no water. They return with empty jars; they cover their heads in shame and despair.”

Crawford Commentary

God's providential reversal is becoming visible.

XIII. HAMAN'S WIFE AND FRIENDS RECOGNIZE THE DANGER

Esther 6:13 — “You Will Surely Fall”

Verse 13

“Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened. His wise men and Zeresh said, ‘If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not stand against him—you will surely fall before him.’”

Haman's own household recognizes that something has changed.

They realize that Mordecai's Jewish identity is significant.

Their statement is essentially a warning:

“You have begun to fall, and you will not be able to overcome him.”

Cross References

Exodus 17:16

“He said, ‘Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.’”

The Amalekites were historic enemies of Israel.

Numbers 24:9

“Like a lion they crouch and lie down; like a lion, who dares to rouse them? May those who bless you be blessed, and those who curse you be cursed.”

Genesis 12:3

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Crawford Commentary

Haman's family recognizes that his conflict with Mordecai is not merely a personal disagreement.

Haman has placed himself against God's covenant people.

The story is moving toward his complete downfall.

Spiritual Principle

Those who oppose God's purposes should never assume that power and position guarantee victory.

XIV. HAMAN IS TAKEN TO ESTHER'S BANQUET

Esther 6:14 — No Time to Recover

Verse 14

“While they were still speaking, the king’s eunuchs arrived and quickly brought Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared.”

Haman barely has time to process what has happened.

He has just suffered tremendous humiliation.

His wife and friends have warned him about his coming downfall.

Then the king's servants arrive.

Haman must go immediately to Esther's banquet.

Cross References

Proverbs 27:1

“Do not boast about tomorrow, because you do not know what a day may bring.”

Haman had been boasting about tomorrow.

Now tomorrow has arrived, and it is not what he expected.

Ecclesiastes 9:12

“No one knows when their time will come. Like fish caught in a net or birds caught in a trap, people are suddenly caught by disaster when they least expect it.”

Luke 12:20

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

Crawford Commentary

Haman thought he controlled tomorrow.

He did not.

He thought he controlled Mordecai's future.

He did not.

He thought he knew where his plans were going.

He did not.

Spiritual Principle

Tomorrow belongs to God, not to us.

XV. PERSONAL STUDY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question 1 — Why couldn't the king sleep?

Answer:

The passage simply says that the king could not sleep.

It does not give a specific natural or spiritual reason.

However, within the story, his sleeplessness becomes the circumstance God uses to bring Mordecai's forgotten deed back to the king's attention.

Question 2 — What did the king have read to him?

Answer:

He had the book of the records, or chronicles of his reign, read to him.

Question 3 — What did the records reveal?

Answer:

They revealed that Mordecai had exposed the assassination plot of Bigthana and Teresh against King Ahasuerus.

Question 4 — Had Mordecai received a reward?

Answer:

No.

The king's attendants said:

“Nothing has been done for him.”

Question 5 — Why is this important?

Answer:

Because Mordecai's forgotten faithfulness is remembered at precisely the right moment.

Haman is simultaneously preparing to ask for Mordecai's execution.

God's timing is perfect.

Question 6 — What did Haman assume when the king asked about honoring someone?

Answer:

Haman assumed the king was talking about him.

This reveals the depth of his pride.

Question 7 — What did Haman recommend doing for the man the king wanted to honor?

Answer:

He recommended:

- Bringing the king's royal robe.
 - Bringing the king's horse.
 - Placing the royal crown on the horse.
 - Having a noble official dress the man.
 - Leading him through the city.
 - Publicly proclaiming that this was done for the man the king delighted to honor.
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Question 8 — Who actually received this honor?

Answer:

Mordecai received the honor.

The king commanded Haman to carry out everything Haman had suggested.

Question 9 — Why is this one of the greatest reversals in Esther?

Answer:

Haman had planned to kill Mordecai.

Instead, Haman was forced to publicly honor Mordecai.

The man who wanted to destroy Mordecai became the instrument through which Mordecai was honored.

Question 10 — What happened to Haman afterward?

Answer:

He returned home grieving and humiliated, with his head covered in shame.

Question 11 — What did Haman's wife and friends tell him?

Answer:

They told him that if Mordecai was Jewish, Haman would not be able to stand against him.

They recognized that Haman was beginning to fall.

Question 12 — What does Esther 6 teach about pride?

Answer:

It teaches that pride can lead a person to make false assumptions about his own importance.

Haman believed the king wanted to honor him.

Instead, Haman was forced to honor the man he hated.

XVI. KEY LESSONS FROM ESTHER CHAPTER 6

1. GOD WORKS IN THE NIGHT

While the king could not sleep, God was working through circumstances.

Divine intervention can begin with what appears to be an ordinary interruption.

2. DELAYED HONOR IS NOT FORGOTTEN

Mordecai's service had apparently gone unrewarded.

But the right moment eventually came.

Faithfulness is never wasted.

3. PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL

Haman assumed the king wanted to honor him.

His pride caused him to misunderstand the entire situation.

Pride blinds; humility sees reality more clearly.

4. GOD CAN REVERSE THE PLANS OF THE WICKED

Haman built a gallows for Mordecai.

Instead, Haman was forced to honor Mordecai.

God can turn an intended weapon into an instrument of deliverance.

5. GOD'S TIMING IS PERFECT

The king's sleeplessness happened at precisely the right time.

Haman arrived at precisely the right time.

The records were read at precisely the right time.

Mordecai's forgotten deed was remembered at precisely the right time.

Crawford Principle

What appears to be coincidence may be providence working through ordinary circumstances.

XVII. CRAWFORD COMMENTARY PRINCIPLE

“The God Who Never Sleeps Can Work While We Wait.”

The king could not sleep.

But God never sleeps.

Mordecai had been forgotten.

But God had not forgotten him.

Haman had built his gallows.

But God was already preparing the reversal.

The lesson is powerful:

You may not see God working, but that does not mean God is not working.

Sometimes the greatest changes begin quietly.

A sleepless night.

A forgotten record.

A question from a king.

A proud man's assumption.

And suddenly, everything changes.

XVIII. CENTRAL TRUTH OF ESTHER

CHAPTER 6

God is sovereign over timing, circumstances, rulers, and outcomes, and He can reverse the plans of the proud while bringing honor to those who remain faithful.

Haman thought he was approaching the king to destroy Mordecai.

Instead, he was commanded to honor him.

Mordecai's faithfulness had been overlooked.

But it had not been forgotten.

Haman's plans seemed powerful.

But God's providence was greater.

And the man who built the gallows for Mordecai was now beginning to walk toward his own downfall.

The reversal has begun.