

Watch and Fast

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Last week, I wrote an article titled "Watch and Pray" (which focused on Matthew 24, Matthew 25 and Luke 21:34-36). This week, I want to write about a similar topic that I called "Watch and Fast" (which will conclude in the book of Esther).

Before we read from the book of Esther, let's notice four sections of scripture in the New Testament.

Recognizing liars

Christ's words to the congregation at Ephesus (Revelation 2:2) mentioned that it is appropriate to recognize evil and to recognize lying. While the subject of the verse is religious leaders, the same view would also apply to civil leaders.

Revelation 2:2—"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars."

Identifying bad leadership

The apostle Paul's words to the congregation at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:20) mentioned it is appropriate to recognize negative leadership traits. In fact, he mentioned five negative leadership traits.

2 Corinthians 11:20—"For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you*, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face."

Identifying a death threat

The book of Acts (Acts 9:23-25) describes a situation where Paul recognized that people were plotting to kill him. Notice that he successfully avoided them in a basket.

Acts 9:23-25—“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

Another death threat

The book of Acts (Acts 23:12-23) describes another situation where Paul recognized that people were again plotting to kill him. Notice how he escaped from this messy situation.

Acts 23:12—“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket.

Acts 23:16—“So when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

Acts 23:20-21—“And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.”

Acts 23:23—“And he called for two centurions, saying, ‘Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night.’ ”

Mordecai's problem

Notice the situation that confronted Mordecai.

- Esther 3:1-2—King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, and the servants were required to bow down and pay homage to Haman.
- Esther 3:2—Mordecai (a Jewish man) would not bow down.
- Esther 3:5-6—Haman was angry and sought to kill all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom.
- Esther 3:13—A letter was prepared giving a decree to kill the Jews.

Notice how Mordecai reacted when he learned about the contents of the

letter.

Esther 4:1-2—"When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."

Notice how the Jewish people reacted when they learned about the contents of the letter.

Esther 4:3—"And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

Esther's problem

Notice the situation that confronted Esther.

- *Esther 4:4-7*—Esther was obviously concerned for Mordecai.
- *Esther 4:8*—Mordecai wanted Esther to discuss the matter with the king.
- *Esther 4:9-11*—Esther replied that the law prohibited her from approaching the king.
- *Esther 4:12-14*—Mordecai reminded Esther that she was also in danger from Haman's decree.

How did Esther and the people address the challenge?

Esther 4:15-16—"Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!' "

- *Esther 7:1-10*—As it turned out, God spared the Jewish people and Haman received the consequences for his evil.

Two reminders

- Watch to discover which people are trying to hurt you.
- Turn to God with fasting for His deliverance.