

# One Nation Under God in Need of Prayer – For Such a Time as This™

Contributed by Wes Riddle  
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The National Day of Prayer is an annual event passed by joint resolution of Congress in 1952 and signed into law by President Truman. Of course the tradition of calling for special days set aside for prayer goes back much further, indeed to the American Revolution and to the First Continental Congress in 1775. The National Day of Prayer is observed on the first Thursday of May each year. Because our nation continues to navigate through extremely challenging days, the National Day of Prayer Task Force chose “One Nation Under God” as this year’s theme. It is perhaps something to remember moreover, that this year is a pivotal election year. The inspiration for the 2012 theme is found in Psalm 33:12, which offers this important reminder: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...”

Another verse worth referencing is Nahum 1:7 which states, “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” Indeed, the Book of Nahum is interesting, in that, it is actually a warning to Israel about God’s wrath and the destruction of the wicked, and a prophecy about the downfall of the city of Nineveh. There may be some allusion here to these United States! But then there are the words “for such a time as this,” taken from the Book of Esther. It is in Esther we find a message of hope and also of deliverance, and one may at least pray there’s an allusion to us in that Book as well.

Esther was a beautiful Jewish maiden. She was orphaned and brought up by her cousin Mordecai, who held office and served Xerxes the king of Persia. After dethroning his very difficult wife Vashti, the king chose Esther to take her place as queen. Mordecai and Esther did not reveal their relationship, however, probably because they did not want her Jewish parentage to enter in and become a point of contention or prejudice. Meanwhile another officer named Haman hated Jews almost pathologically, so much that he actually presumed upon the king’s authority and ordered their persecution throughout the kingdom. It is upon that occasion that Mordecai approaches Esther and asks her to intervene on their people’s behalf. At first she does not appreciate her influence, and she does not quite know the limits of her position. She is cautious at least, even afraid to broach the king on this subject knowing how hot tempered he could be. She might be viewed as being difficult like Vashti. She might blow her political capital so to speak, her query dismissed as mere nuisance or worse as a bald imposition.

Mordecai nevertheless persuades her to find courage and to persevere, by reminding her of the gravity of the situation and of greater purpose beyond her mortal self. He references the unlikely series of events that brought her to the throne and suggests to Esther that she may have come into her position just “for such a time as this.” It is a peculiarity of the Book of Esther that the name of God does not once occur in it, but the reality of God is clearly present. Esther obtains permission from the king to arrange a banquet and to invite Haman. She petitions the king at the banquet to stop all the outrages being committed against Jews in the kingdom. When asked by the king who is responsible for the terrible things she describes, she fingers none other than Haman who is there present. In an amazing turnabout, Haman is hung on the very gallows he had built and prepared for Mordecai. Talk about poetic justice! As for the Jews, they “rested from their enemies” and were allowed to take revenge—their desperate situation having turned in an instant “from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day” (Esther 9:22).

Today these United States of America face a desperate situation economically and politically, and the nation is in dire need of prayer. The people need Mordecai’s encouragement, in order to weather unemployment and a rapidly approaching debt crisis, taxes and overregulation; they need to be reminded like Esther, of their exalted position in the Republic. Americans have enemies around the world to be sure. They also have enemies within and our own share of officers in the government who presume upon the authority of the people and who subvert the written Constitution and intent of the Founders. It behooves us to remember, however, that turnabouts come quickly. Exposing evildoers in public can have a dramatic effect as it did with ACORN, and one single election can reverse four years of very bad policy practically in an instant.

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