

The Queen and I: Enter Haman

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from **Jerry Vines Ministries**
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Let's Begin

The book of Esther probably shows us clearer than any other place in the Bible the truth of the providence and sovereignty of God. Although God's name is never mentioned, His hand of protection for His people is seen throughout the book. The story of Esther begins with Vashti the Persian queen losing her throne because she refuses to come to her husband King Ahasuerus' (or Xerxes') drunken party. As chapter 1 details what happens to Vashti, we see "Kingly Corruption" (1:1-9), "Queenly Character" (1:10-12), and "Worldly Counsel" (1:13-22). Esther, the heroine, enters the narrative in chapter 2. This chapter details for us "The Proposal" (2:1-4), "The Procedure" (2:5-18), and "The Protection" (2:19-23), as Esther is chosen to be the new queen of Persia.

It is easy to read the first two chapters of Esther, especially when Esther is chosen to be the new queen, and say we believe in God's providence and sovereignty. There is little

doubt that God was behind Esther, a young orphaned Jewess brought up by her older cousin Mordecai, being chosen to be the next queen of the Persian Empire. But what about when circumstances do not go the way we want them to go, or think they should go? Or what about when ungodly decisions are made in high places? When these things happen, is God still in control? Using the outline below, let's focus our attention primarily on chapter 3 as we begin our study of Esther and find out the answer to these questions. We are going to find out that God is in control when things are going the way we think they should go, and when they are not. God is always sovereignly in control over the affairs of mankind.

I. Haman's Honor (3:1-4)

II. Haman's Hatred (3:5-11)

III. Haman's Hardness (3:12-15)

I. Haman's Honor (3:1-4)

At the close of chapter 2, Mordecai, who worked for the king, uncovers an assassination plot against him (2:19-23). Mordecai tells Esther about the plot, and Esther in turn tells the king. The king's life is saved, and Mordecai's deed is recorded in the king's chronicles. We would think we would next read about

Mordecai being rewarded or honored for his noble actions, but that is not what we read. Instead, we are told about another man who is promoted and honored. It is the man Haman. We read, "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his

seat above all the princes that were with him" (v. 1). Isn't that amazing? Mordecai saves the king's life, but the king does nothing for him. We read of nothing Haman does for the king, yet the king promotes him. In fact, Haman becomes the most powerful person in the kingdom next to the king.



Mordecai's "dishonor" and Haman's "honor" remind us that life is not always fair. Too often when people receive unfair treatment, they become bitter. They then go through life complaining about how unfair life is and become negative about almost everything. This is not what God wants for His children. Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us the secret things belong to the Lord. He wants us to trust Him and accept the fact that there are some things we will never understand until we are with Him.

Reflection Connection:

Read Psalm 73 and discuss why verses 17 and 23 can encourage us when we do encounter injustices in life.

It will only take us a few more verses to see Haman's true character. His entrance into this narrative is an entrance of evil. Just as the devil is a destroyer (Rev. 9:11) and walks around seeking whom he may devour (1

Pet. 5:8), Haman will soon seek the destruction of the Jewish people. Nothing good can be said about him. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists

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seven things the Lord hates: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among the brethren. Almost every statement is a description of Haman.

Haman's life is a total abomination, yet he is not only given rule, he is also given reverence. Because the king commands it, the government officials begin bowing down to Haman whenever he passes by (v. 2). But he is also given rejection (v. 2c). Mordecai refuses to obey the king's command. The other officials ask him why, and he tells them it is because he is a Jew (vv. 3-4). Haman was an Amalekite, one of Israel's oldest enemies. In fact, King Saul had been commanded to destroy the Amalekites but had disobeyed God's command (1 Sam. 15:1-33). Mordecai knew God was the only One the Jews were to bow before (Ex. 20:4-6). There was no way he could bow before and reverence a man he knew was an enemy of his people.

II. Haman's Hatred (3:5-11)

Haman finds out about Mordecai, and we are told he becomes "full of wrath" (v. 5). His response tells us a lot about his character. He is furious because Mordecai will not bow down or show him respect. Haman is one of those people who say, "I demand to be respected." These types of people do not understand that true respect is not something we

can demand from others. It is something we must earn.

Haman is not content with just killing Mordecai. The hatred in his heart moves him to want to get rid of Mordecai's people also (v. 6). No doubt, just as Mordecai remembers their ancestors' hostility towards each other, Haman does too. His attitude is also one of anti-Semitism,

something we find throughout the history of the Jews. From Pharaoh who commanded all the boys two-years-old and younger to be thrown into the Nile (Ex. 1:15-22), to Hitler who was responsible for the deaths of over five million Jews not too many years ago, anti-Semitism has been a part of Israel's history. It is still with us today. Satan is



more than willing to put hatred towards God's chosen people, the Jews, into the hearts of those who are willing to receive it.

Haman thinks the solution to the hatred in his heart is a massacre. He begins his plan to get rid of the ones he hates. We should never let some injustice or indignity we have suffered to allow hatred to smolder in our hearts. Instead, we need to remember the words of Jesus, "... Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Why should we do this? "That ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven ..." (Matt. 5:45).

Evidently, to help with his plans, Haman brings all his astrologers together. They were the decision makers of his day. They "cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day ..." (v. 7). "Casting Pur" is the same as our throwing dice when we want to make a decision. When we examine verse 7 carefully we find that they went over every day of the year. They cast lots for each day. It says, "... from day to day, and from month to month ..." Haman was premeditating a day that would be especially lucky and blessed by his gods for annihilating the Jews.

Even today, people turn to their horoscopes and astrology to find out their future. They do not realize that our destiny cannot be found in the stars. Our destiny can only be found in the Word

of God. We don't look to God's creation, but we look to God the Creator to find direction and destiny for our lives. God created us in His image. He has a purpose and a plan for our lives. Our lives are not to be decided by the whim of the throwing of a pair of dice.

Finally, Haman has his date for destroying Mordecai and his people. It is going to be in the twelfth month, Adar, the last month of the year. This was almost a year away, but he is willing to prepare and then wait for it to come. He knows he's going to see to it that the Jews

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are destroyed on that day.

In verses 8-11 Haman goes to the king with his proposal. He tells the king, "... There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people: neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will

pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries" (vv. 8-9).

Haman is telling the king that there was a group of people in his kingdom different from everybody else. His accusation against the Jews reminds us that Christians are to be different. Christians are to be distinct. That doesn't mean we're to be odd. That's not what it means. When the Bible says God's people are a peculiar people (cp. 1 Pet. 2:9), it means God's people are a special people. We are a chosen people. We're to be different. We operate on the basis of a different authority. Our authority is the Scripture. We operate on the basis of different standards and values. Our values are assigned to us from the Scriptures. We are different in our behavior. We are different in our outlook on life.

Haman's words to the king are also a mixture of truth, error, and exaggeration. The main thing is he doesn't tell the whole story. The reason he wants these people destroyed is because he hates them. The king thinks Haman is protecting him from a rebellion. He takes off his signet ring and gives it to Haman (v. 10). He is giving Haman the authority to do what he wants to do. In those days they would take wax and put the imprint of the king's ring into the wax. Once a document had the king's seal imprinted on the wax, the matter was official. The king basically



gives Haman “carte blanche” to do whatever he wants to do. He also tells him he can keep his money (v. 11). The king is not interested in Haman’s money. He is also not interested in knowing he has just given Haman the authority to destroy several

million people in his kingdom. He doesn’t even bother to ask who they are. It is important to remember at this point that the king does not know Esther’s nationality (2:10), nor does he realize the relationship between her and Mordecai (2:20).

Reflection Connection:

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and discuss what God promises for those who bless the Jews as well as those who curse the Jews. What does that say about anti-Semitism?

III. Haman’s Hardness (3:12-15)

The king’s scribes are called in to write out the proclamation for the destruction of the Jews over every province (v. 12). Think about it. There were 127 providences in the kingdom of King Ahasuerus (cp. 1:1). His kingdom included Africa, Egypt, Asia, Europe, and all of the nations around the Mediterranean Sea. There were all kinds of languages that were spoken. It was a mammoth project. With the death warrant written and sealed with the king’s ring, the proclamations are sent by posts or couriers (v. 13). In those days they had a mail system similar to the days of America’s Pony Express. They would ride horses to one post, get fresh horses, and move on to the next post. Copies of the proclamation are taken with haste and published in every province so everyone will be ready for the day of the Jews’ destruction (vv. 14-15).

The proclamation shows us just how hard Haman’s heart was. All Jews, young and old, including women and children, were to be annihilated on one

single day. Then to encourage the people to turn on the Jews, the proclamation states the Jews’ property will be given to their killers. Haman also wants to terrorize the Jews for a solid year. The proclamation is made

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almost one year before the date they are to be killed. They have all this time to worry and dread their fate. The last sentence of verse 15 is almost beyond belief, “... And the king and Haman sat down to drink: but the city Shushan was perplexed.” The king and Haman have just sent out a decree that meant death for millions of people. So, what do they do? They just go have a drunken meal, while the entire city of Shushan falls into confusion and panic.

Haman’s and the king’s actions are a reminder of Amos 6:6 where it talks about those who drink wine in bowls but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. All around us there are souls that are dying. They are souls under the sentence of death. We have to ask ourselves if we are like the king and Haman. Do we entertain and enjoy ourselves without giving the lost world a second thought? Fellowship is an important part of a church, but there is something wrong with a church and its Sunday school classes if the members are so busy entertaining themselves that they have no ears to hear the cry of a lost community. There’s something wrong with people who believe there’s a heaven and there’s a hell, but who can never have a broken heart for those around them who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

Reflection Connection:

Read Romans 9:1-3 and 10:1. Discuss Paul’s burden for his fellow Jews. How do we know his burden was real?



Wrap Up

For most of us, we have the advantage of knowing how the story of Esther ends. But let's not miss the lesson of this chapter. It is a reminder to us that when things look the darkest, God is still in control. Even when it seems like He is absent and confusion is everywhere, He is present. His will has always been done in heaven and in earth, and it always will be. So what do we do then when we are faced with injustices or things we do not understand? Proverbs 3:5 gives us our answer. We don't lean on our understanding, but we trust in the Lord. We remind ourselves that He is in control, and His will is being done and will be done.

