



As a hater of God, Haman is only one among many. In every era there are spiritual forces at work inciting people to despise God, hate his values, and eradicate worship or the very acknowledgement of his existence. In Haman's case, his hatred of God becomes personal when Mordecai refuses to acknowledge his authority. So he convinces King Xerxes that all of the Jews should be killed because their "customs are different" and they "do not obey the king's laws."

The first accusation is xenophobic and irrational in the context. Labeling the Jews as a threat to the Persians because they are different doesn't make sense in an empire that has conquered innumerable nations and cultures. Being different would describe a majority of the people in the empire. The second accusation, that they don't obey the laws, is simply untrue as a generalization. Haman takes the instance of Mordecai refusing to bow to him and overlays it on the entire Jewish people.

What Haman attempted to facilitate 2500 years ago has been repeated many times over the centuries. The Greeks later tried to force Jews to abandon their worship, Persian Zoroastrians slaughtered Christians in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and today regimes like Communist China and North Korea continue to persecute those who worship God. In the West we don't face persecution of that sort, but there are certainly people who hate God and want to remove religion from society. Consider the following two examples:

Man is free only if he owes his existence to himself. . . . Philosophy makes no secret of it. Prometheus' admission "I hate all gods" is its own admission, its own motto against all gods, heavenly and earthly, who do not acknowledge the consciousness of man as the supreme divinity. Karl Marx

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. — Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

Over 3 million copies of Dawkins' *The God Delusion* have sold since it was published in 2006. He also started the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science to advocate for atheism. Dawkins doesn't have the authority of a Kim Jong Un, but he and others like him influence people and policy, making public discourse on religious beliefs and values difficult. Quotes like this are not intended for polite dialogue, but to overwhelm those who believe in the God of the Bible with an appalling one-sided caricature of God and silence them. While Dawkins and others are not murderous, we still face people who hate God, create a hostile environment, and would lead us astray if given the opportunity.

### Discussion Questions

What do you think motivates people's hatred of God? How might "spiritual forces of evil" (Eph 6:12) influence them, and how can these influences leave us bewildered, anxious, and even despairing?

What authority do God-haters have over us who believe? If we believe that any authority they might have is under God's authority, why are we sometimes anxious or despairing over their hatred of God?

God only tolerates the wicked for a time even as he pursues the lost and grants us authority to influence them with the gospel. Why is prayer essential to living in this authority, experiencing hope, and living godly and peaceful lives in witness to the gospel (1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8)? Who are you praying for in this way?