

"Haman and Herod" | Rev Jordan Griesbeck | June 14, 2020

OTestament Reading [Est 3:1-6, 8-9, 13-15](#)

3 ¹ After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. ² And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. ³ Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" ⁴ And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. ⁵ And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. ... ⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. ⁹ If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries." ... ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. ¹⁴ A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. ¹⁵ The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Epistle Reading [Rev 19:11-16, 19-21](#)

19 ¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. ...

¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against Him who was sitting on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown

Introduction

How do we live in a Godless world? How do we live in world that is filled with Hamans, where there is real evil; what do we do with the Hamans? Three points: We have to (1) Name the Hamans, (2) Protest the Hamans and (3) Laugh at the Hamans.

Background

1. Name the Hamans.

- Haman is most powerful in the kingdom but he does not use his power well; he is not a good person: he's prideful (demanding all bow to him), racist (hating Jews, via Mordecai), greedy (craving Jewish money), callous (to suffering; see [Est 3:15](#)).
- Because we like to consider others as being basically good, it can be difficult to identify the Hamans in our world or, even, in our own hearts (e.g., as in [William Golding's Lord of the Flies](#), where the evil beast being hunted by the boys was actually part of them. Sin and evil is part of us, not just in others. E.g., [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#): "the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."
- As Christians, the Good News is that sin and evil are not the only powers that dwell within us; God's Holy Spirit, also, dwells in us and He delivers us from the world, the flesh and the devil by giving us the power to change: to love not hate, to give not greed, to be humble not prideful.
- So we don't have to be afraid to name the Hamans, outside us and inside us, because we have Jesus who's driven out fear and death and given us the Holy Spirit.

2. Protest the Hamans.

- Mordecai protests Haman by refusing to bow to him because he is the enemy of Israel: anti-Jew, anti-God – Mordecai cannot bow to an enemy of God's kingdom.
- Being a Christian is an act of protest against all the kings, powers and Hamans of this world. Christians are part of a protesting people because (1) we worship a different king and (2) we obey different laws ([Est 3:8](#)). We are persecuted for that to which we refuse to bow. E.g., in the OT reading, Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman and in the Gospel reading, the wise men refuse to bow to Herod but to Jesus.
- As Christians, we are the wise men ... we bow to Jesus, not to worldly "kings." In our Call to Worship we say "... *blessed be His Kingdom, now and forever.*"
- If we follow God in this world, our lives will begin to seem like a protest to others. When we stand against racism and when we stand for traditional views of sex and gender, people stop listening to us. We do not fit in. This can feel scary but here is the Good News: When we protest the powers and kings of this world, and when we fight against pride, greed, and oppression, we're simply joining Jesus where He already is. Jesus' whole life was a protest and was why He was killed.

3. Laugh at the Hamans.

- Haman and Ahasuerus can begin to look like cartoon characters, so evil they're absurd, so horrible it's humorous. At the end of Esther, Haman becomes a joke and in the long run this is also true of all evil. In the short run there is so much about which to weep but in the long run, for Christians, sin, death and Satan are jokes.
 - [Ps 2](#): "He who sits in the heavens laughs;"
 - [Rev 19](#) "20 And the beast was captured ... 21... birds were gorged with their flesh."
 - [1 Cor 15:50-58](#) This is why Paul can mock sin, death and the empty tomb: Where (Haman) is your victory; where (Haman) is your sting?
- The world right now is a terrible place so in the short run, we should weep with those who weep; but taking into account the long run, we can laugh.

Discuss

- Can we name some Hamans in our world's or country's history or in our own lives?
- How does knowing the Holy Spirit within us allow us not to fear naming Hamans.
- What are examples of Christian protests. Does civil disobedience dishonor authority?
- Considering that Christians are protestors, do we feel empathy for other protestors?
- Is the world right now a terrible place? How is it terrible? Why is it not terrible?
- Only through true faith can we survive our tears and look forward to laughter.

Conclusion/Application

• To this day the Jewish people celebrate [Purim](#) which comes from Est 3 where Haman casts lots (or purs) to decide when he will carry out his evil plot against the Jews. During the celebration the book of Ester is read aloud in the synagogues. Whenever Hamans name is read in Est 3, his name is blotted out by children making noise with their [graggers](#) and by adults booing, hissing and stamping their feet. This is beautiful because when God comes again to redeem our world and we're called to the great festival of the Lamb, all the Hamans of the world and all the sin and oppression will be blotted out

alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of Him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Gospel Reading [Matt 2:1-5, 7-12, 16](#)

2 ¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ...

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

...
¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

forever. There will be no more tears, there will only be laughter.