

*Will You Bow*

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Please turn in your Bibles to Esther Chapter 3 for tonight's study. It's been a couple of weeks so to remind of us of where we are in this study let me do a short review. First, we have titled this teaching, The Fingerprints of God. Because we do not see the name of God mentioned at all through the book of Esther, but we see his providential hand and fingerprints all over this time in the nation of Israel once again.

Once we begin reading our verses for tonight you will see the first 3 words of verse 1 are, "After these things!" After what things? After Queen Vashti, as I will say, was relieved of her duties as queen, King Ahasuerus went off to battle. Three years had passed, and his anger had abated, and he remembered what he had done to Queen Vashti and I think he became a little lonely.

So, the young men that attended the King made a suggestion. Go out to all the provinces and gather young women, young virgins and which one that you like the best, let her be Queen. As we learned the one that became queen was Esther.

What else we found out is that her cousin, Mordecai, who raised her, actually served at the king's gate. Mordecai heard of a plot to assassinate the king and shared that with Esther and Esther told the King in the name of Mordecai.

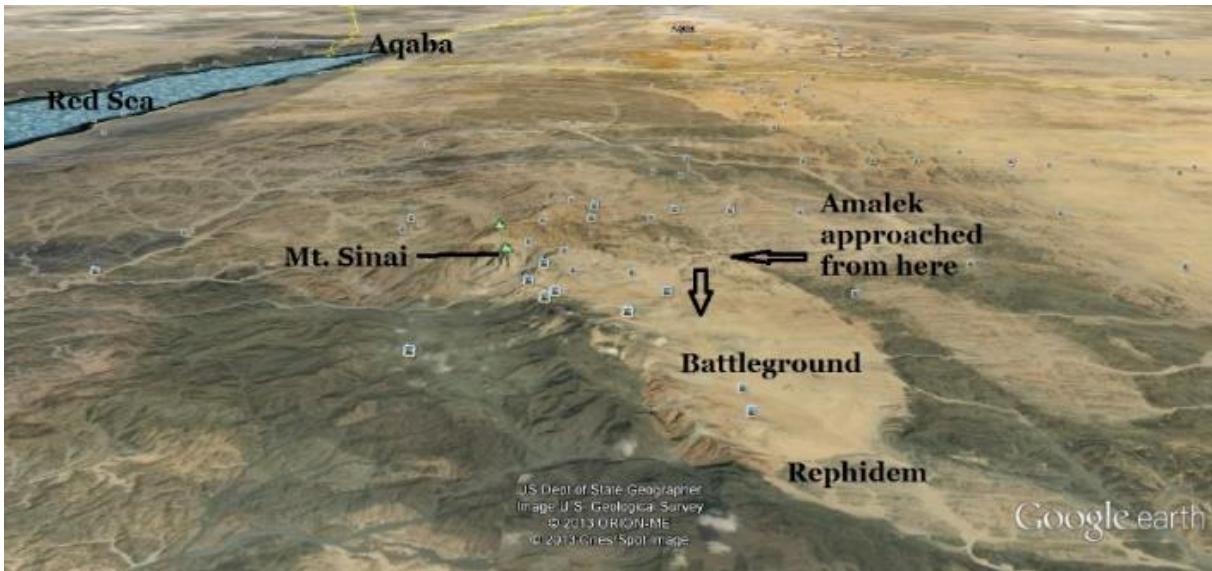
The two men, Bigthan and Teresh, were found out and they were hung on the gallows. Let us read verses 1 and 2 of Chapter 3.

***Esther 1:1-2***

***<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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.***

Now it seems that Haman just comes out of nowhere into the timeline. But we see that he is a close adviser and servant of King Ahasuerus. We also see that now, all the main characters to these events have been introduced to us. King Ahasuerus, the former Queen Vashti, Mordecai, Esther, and now Haman.

Haman the Agagite. What we see here is a historical connection that has lasted over centuries between the nation of Israel and the descendants of Amalek. We are first introduced to the Amalekites in Exodus Chapter 17 as they were the first nation, if you will, that opposed Israel passing from Egypt to Canaan and the promised land.



This is a Google Map image depicting the area where this first battle took place. You see down towards the bottom, the area called Rephidem and this is where the battle took place. Once I explain this you will remember one of the main events of this battle. Moses had Joshua lead the men into battle. But Moses stayed on top of a hill overlooking the area the battle took place. Remember what he had in his hand? In verse 9 it says he had the staff of God with him.

Moses was on that hill with Aaron, his brother, and a man named Hur. As the battle began, Moses raised his hands and as long as his hands were raised, Israel prevailed, but if he lowered his hands, “What happened?” Amalek would begin winning the battle.

Moses’ hands got tired, he was weary, and Aaron and Hur put a rock under Moses to sit down on. Then, what did Aaron and Hur do for Moses? Look at the picture.



They held his hands up until the sun set and Joshua and the Israelites, overwhelmed the Amalek. In verse 14 of Exodus Chapter 17 God said this.

***Exodus 17:14***

***Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.***

Remember that verse! We find in Scripture three separate occasions where the Amalekites joined the Canaanites, Moabites, and the Midianites to try to annihilate Israel. They were a bitter enemy of Israel! Now, the next time the Amalekites are mentioned in Scripture is in 1 Samuel Chapter 15. Turn there in your Bibles.

***1 Samuel 15:1-3***

***<sup>1</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”***

King Saul, according to the word of God, was to destroy the nation of Amalek. This pagan nation, vile, vindictive, harassing, constant thorn in the side of Israel was to be destroyed. But Saul did not do it. Here is another reason why Saul lost his kingship. Look at verse 9.

***1 Samuel 15:9***

***<sup>9</sup> But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.***

Saul spared the life of Agag, the king of Amalek. What we see once again as I talked about a couple of weeks ago, is pride takes over in Saul’s life. He thinks he knows better than God. That is a good description of sin in our lives. We think we know better and in that we are rebelling and are rebels against God!

We won’t read it but after what Saul does or doesn’t do, the Lord tells the prophet Samuel what has happened. So, he goes to meet Saul and Saul greets Samuel and says, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Samuel says then why do I hear the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen! What have you done Saul? After Saul tries to make excuses, Samuel tells him to bring Agag to him. Let’s see what happened. Look at verses 32 and 33.

***1 Samuel 15:32-33***

***<sup>32</sup> Then Samuel said, “Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” <sup>33</sup> And Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.***

But what we see through all of that is there are always going to be enemies that come against God and his authority, his truth, because of the sinful heart of mankind. And that if we profess to be a disciple of the Lord then we should have a desire to honor and obey God’s Word. Turn to Colossians 3.

***Colossians 3:16-17***

***16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.***

See the progression? The Word of Christ, dwell richly, which produces worship in knowing his word, singing, thankfulness, outward fruit. Obedience in outward expression to glorify the Lord. Not ourselves! That is what we have been seeing in these first few chapters of Esther and what we have looked at so far tonight. Pride that elevates us, give me the worship, give me the praise.

It is Saul's pride that led to his disobedience we now continue to see the affects of his sin as we now look at Haman and the pride that is within him.

But do you see the connection once again of what Matthew brought out a couple of weeks ago. Haman, the Agagite, a descendant of Agag the Amalekite. Mordecai, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, a descendant of Saul. One of the most notorious enemies of the Israelites back in a place to attempt to oppress the nation of Israel once again.

Haman, the Agagite! A man that is all about self-worship and in his pride, he seeks and desires the recognition and the worship of man! Through this study we will see his craving for himself to be exalted and thought himself to be well deserving of this reverence.

We are not told how Haman came to have this promotion bestowed upon him. He was placed above all the officials who were with him. As we read in verse 2, in that position King Ahasuerus also commanded that anyone at the king's gate was to pay homage by bowing down to Haman.

But Mordecai refused! What was his reasoning? Let's look at three possibilities!

1. The character of Haman. We will see proof of this. Haman took no thought of integrity when it came to seeking favor of the king and of the people. Haman was conniving, evil, prideful, and desiring of worship. I personally don't think that was completely it. But I would say it definitely had something to do with it.
2. Mordecai was pouting. Here is the man that saved the king's life by stopping the assassination plot against King Ahasuerus' life. And he got nothing! I don't think so!
3. Mordecai is a Jew. Haman is an Amalekite and Mordecai knows the history and will not bow before this arch enemy of Israel. This is where I fall because of what we are about to read.

***Esther 3:3-6***

***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.***

Mordecai was questioned why he wasn't bowing to show homage to Haman. This was an edict from the King! What was his answer? I am a Jew! Though we do not see a description of Mordecai's faithfulness to the word of God or his devotion to the Lord. We do see some inclination of his life and understanding of God's Word. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments from the Ten Commandments are this.

**Deuteronomy 5:7-8**

***<sup>7</sup> You shall have no other gods before me. <sup>8</sup> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>9</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>10</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.***

These verses tell us that day after day, after day, after day, after day. Well actually it just said day after day. But you get the point! The other servants were after Mordecai to bow! Come on! Compromise a little. Try it! It's not that bad. You'll like the way it makes you feel! Everyone is doing it! Wait! You're not going to be popular! You are going to look peculiar!

Wait, be pure? Be holy? You actually believe the Bible to be absolute truth? You are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? The outside pressure to compromise can be undaunting! The age-old question, when it comes to God's Word, that came from Satan when he tempted Adam and Eve. Did God really say?

This brings me to a point I think we need to think about for us as we look at this passage. Mordecai refused to bow or give homage to a man that represented a nation that its sole purpose was to annihilate the Jews. They represented evil, wickedness, an attack upon all that God says is truth and says is good.

The Jews were to live a life that is the expression of God's holiness, power, the only truth, the only God that truly exists. They were to represent this in a way that would bring others to the truth of God's sovereignty and that salvation is only provided through God.

Isn't that the battle! Satan wants you to bow down to him and his lies, his deceptions. Scripture refers to Satan with different names. We see Jesus himself describe Satan in a couple of ways.

**John 8:44**

***You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.***

**John 10:10**

***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.***

**1 Peter 5:8-9**

***Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.***

Where in our lives are we bowing down to these deceptions of Satan?

Is it saying you are a follower of Christ, but you are not being obedient to his Word? We have fallen too much toward the grace side and your view of sin is not biblical? Or the other way, may be pharisaical that we have a constant critical spirit.

1. We've talked about it over the past few Sundays. Fear, Being Anxious.
2. Discouragement
3. Brokenness or even maybe almost a depression over you
4. Bitterness, Anger
5. Pride, Self-Righteousness

May I encourage you as Ephesians 6 says, ***Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*** In John 10:10 it tells us how Jesus has come to help us, first salvation, but yes in our times of need. 1 Peter says, Resist the Devil, be firm in your faith! Use God's word! Praise Jesus! I was reminded of that 3<sup>rd</sup> day song, Cry Out To Jesus!

***There is hope for the helpless  
Rest for the weary  
And love for the broken heart  
And there is grace and forgiveness  
Mercy and healing  
He'll meet you wherever you are  
Cry out to Jesus, Cry out to Jesus***

In what we are looking at tonight we do see another example of the sin of pride and what it does. What we just read, Mordecai, was not bowing day after day. Haman didn't even notice! He had to be told by the other servants that Mordecai wasn't bowing. Look at verse 4 and 5 again.

***Esther 3:4-5***

***<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury.***

Do some of you remember that old saying about someone being prideful or we called it stuck up! We would say, "They walk around with their nose stuck so high up in the air, if it rains, they will drown!" Remember that? When Haman noticed Mordecai, what did it cause in Haman?

It said he was filled with fury! The Greek word for this is Hema – Rage, Wrath, Poison, Burning Anger!

You are not going to bow down to me! You are not going to do what I want? You are going to question me? You disagree with me? Remember when I taught on Chapter 1. We focused on pride and how all sin flows out of pride in the heart! In Galatians 5 and Colossians 3 it speaks of the works of the flesh, the works of the sinful nature.

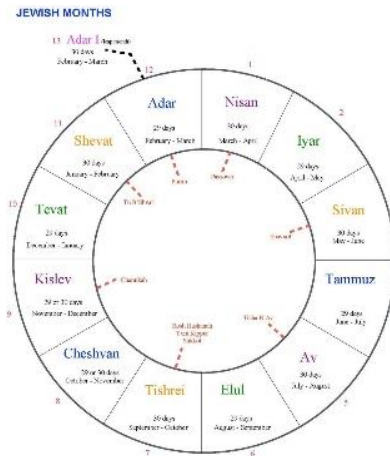
At the forefront, what is derived from that sinful nature were fits of anger, malice, wrath, slander, obscene talk. And now as we see that anger, that fury in Haman has brought him to the point that he is going to destroy Mordecai. But that is not enough!

In this case, Haman is going to destroy the whole nation of the Jews! We once again see a plot, a plan, out of pride devised to destroy someone. Look at verses 7 to 11.

***<sup>7</sup> In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."*

I do want to show you that what is described here is the Jewish calendar.



You see at 12 o'clock and Nisan in purple begins the Jewish calendar, just quickly, what very important celebration for the Jews was celebrated during the month of Nisan? Passover! So, for practically a year they cast lots. Primarily by rolling dice, or stones. And eventually it fell on the month of Adar! Again, looking at 12 o'clock you see Adar in blue right beside Nisan.

Haman has to devise a plan. This cannot happen without King Ahasuerus proclaiming the edict to have the Jews destroyed. To get this done he has to placate to Ahasuerus' senses, his leanings, and to his pride!

Haman had to show that the Jews were totally against the King. But also, Haman exaggerated the situation to make it look worse than it was to make sure it was shown in the worst light possible. He was right that the Jews did have different laws. But they were in accord to show the holiness of God. Not to disobey the King.

These people were all over the kingdom so this could really make you look bad King. As we saw in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter Ahasuerus was all about showing his wealth and power. Haman offers 10,000 talents of silver of his own money to make sure this was treacherous act was fulfilled. A talent of silver at that time was 75 lbs. So, Haman was offering 750,000 lbs. How much money is that? A lot!

But King Ahasuerus said, "No I am not going to take it! Write up the edict and I will put my seal on it!" Now some would say that Ahasuerus gave Haman the money instead. But that is not what is said here in context. What does the victor in a battle usually get out of winning the battle? The spoils! What Ahasuerus was telling Haman that you and those involved will collect whatever spoil there may be and you do with those people as you desire!

So, the edict goes out to all 127 provinces. Verse 12.

*<sup>12</sup> Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.*

What evil and how wicked both Haman and Ahasuerus are! Look at once gain the pride, the arrogance as they sit down to drink. To kind of celebrate what they have done. As the decree goes out, especially as we just read in the Susa the capital. It throws the city into confusion. The Jews read this and it's like, "What!" Remember the intermarrying! My husband is a Jew, my wife is a Jew! They may even be friends and I am to what?

Some may just be looking at this and this is so evil, so wicked, how can this be!

Ultimately what has happened here is that Haman has just set himself up for his defeat. In the year that was to take place God is able to orchestrate the plan that will bring about Haman's death and the salvation of the Jews.

Not that God needed that long! He could have orchestrated the deliverance of the Jews at any time. But we see God's sovereignty. In those times that our backs seem against the wall, and we are looking for God to move. It is during the duration of those times that God is bringing us along until it is time for him to put us in place to be used for his glory.

If we didn't already know the rest of the story we may think, Mordecai, what have you done. Mordecai stood on truth! A wicked evil man, Haman, came after him! I'll show you! Do you not know who I am? Yes! You are just a person. God is sovereign and is only worthy of my worship and praise! I will not bow!

Satan is going to come against us in many ways! Outside the church the attacks are easy to see! But it is inside the church where Satan can do the most damage. Are we going to bow deceptions of the great deceiver? Are we going to allow Satan to use pride in our lives to spread gossip, a critical spirit, slander, sow discord among the brethren?

Personally, are we going to bow down to the fears and discouragement that Satan can spread into our lives to steal our joy, steal our witness, keep us from being the light of the Gospel for a world that is dying and going to Hell.

Will you bow? I have been reminded so often recently of these verses from 2 Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 3 to 5.

### ***2 Corinthians 1:3-5***

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*