

# Check-Mate . . . Part 1!

Our Text: **Esther 7:1-10** *So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"*

*Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."*

*So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"*

*And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.*

*Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"*

*So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.*

So imagine the scene . . .

- As King Ahasuerus and Haman arrived at Esther's palace apartment, **neither of them knew that Esther was a Jewess!**
- Haman was probably still distressed because of the "horrible" events of the day.
- But, he composed himself and was expecting to enjoy the banquet.
- (Just for the record, this is the seventh banquet recorded in the book of Esther.)
  - The three banquets mentioned in chapter 1.
  - Esther's coronation banquet. (Esther 2:18)
  - Haman's celebration feast with the king. (Esther 3:15)
  - Esther's two banquets for Haman and the king. (Esther chapters 5 and 7)
  - The Jews' banquets when they heard the new decree. (Esther 8:17)

If he had known the nationality of the queen, Haman would have done one of two things:

- **He would have either run for his life!**
- **Or, he would have fallen on his face and begged the king for mercy!**

God had been warning Haman the entire time he was concocting his scheme:

- He warned him through circumstances.
- He warned him through his advisers.
- And He warned him through his wife.

**BUT HAMAN REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THE WARNINGS THAT GOD WAS GIVING!!!**

***Proverbs 16:5*** *Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.*

The problem for Haman (*like a lot of people*), is that he thought he was safe and good-to-go because he mistook God's long-suffering nature as passiveness:

***Ecclesiastes 8:11*** *Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

The reason God is long-suffering is that it gives people an opportunity to repent: ***2 Peter 3:9*** *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

But the problem is that our sinful world thinks that God will forget and that He won't judge sinners at all . . . **BUT NOTHING CAN BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH!!!**

***1 Thessalonians 5:3*** *For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*

Let's dive in here . . .

### **The Subtle Queen!**

***Esther 7:1-4*** *So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"*

*Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."*

Ever since the previous evening's banquet, King Ahasuerus had been waiting to hear the queen's petition . . . So when the wine was served, he brought the subject up.

Now, keep in mind that the statement "***up to half the kingdom***" was not a royal promise that should be taken literally . . . It simply meant that the king would be generous so she could tell him whatever she wanted.

We have to ask ourselves how many times Esther had probably rehearsed this speech . . . **AND NOW GOD WAS GOING TO GIVE HER THE STRENGTH TO DELIVER IT!!!**

Remember, she was taking her life into her hands . . . For if the king rejected her, **THAT WOULD BE THE END OF HER AND HER PEOPLE!!!**

Notice what she said:

**Esther 7:3-4** Then Queen Esther answered and said, **“If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”**

- She made it very clear from the beginning that she was depending on the favor of the king.
- She then made it clear that she wasn’t trying to tell him what to do.
- She also said that her desire wasn’t to please herself but to please the king.

This was great psychology, **especially when we know Ahasuerus was a chauvinistic pig!**

She focused her entire petition on the fact that the queen’s life was in danger and that the king had to do something about it . . . **AND ANY KING WHO LOVES THEIR QUEEN WOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!!!**

- Although the king was a chauvinist, we have reason to believe Ahasuerus still loved his queen and didn’t want any harm to come to her.
- So, as he sat there in her presence and beheld her beauty, her blinking eyelashes and her soft words must have moved him.
- ***After all, what monster would want to kill the queen?***

But not only was the queen’s life in danger . . . But her people were also in danger of being slain . . . **AND THESE WERE GOD’S PEOPLE!!!**

*Could this question have perplexed the king?*

- *Who were her people?*
- *Wasn’t she a Persian?*
- *Has she been keeping a secret from me?*

It was here that Esther reminds the king of the decree that he himself had approved to wipe out the Jewish nation . . . In fact, her words are almost verbatim from the decree:

**Esther 3:13** And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, **to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women**, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

**Esther 7:4** **For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.** Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”

Luckily for Esther, **AND FOR THE JEWS AS A WHOLE**, King Ahasuerus was smart enough to put two and two together and understand that **Queen Esther was a Jewess, and he had unwittingly consented to her murder!**

Esther continues by pointing out that the king had been paid to issue this decree: ***Esther 3:9–11*** *If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries."*

*So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."*

- If he had sold the Jews as slaves, such a payment might have been just.
- But to sell them into death and total destruction was something for which nobody had enough money.

This is why she says:

***Esther 7:4*** *For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss.*

This is the moment Queen Esther was born for as she bravely interceded for her people . . . **AND GOD WAS IN CONTROL OF ALL OF IT!!!**

***Proverbs 16:3–4*** *Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established. The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.*

Well . . . *How will the king respond?* Let's see . . .

### **The Enraged King!**

***Esther 7:5-8*** *So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"*

*And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.*

*Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.*

We have to try to imagine what was going through the mind of King Ahasuerus . . .

- Without openly accusing him, Esther has implicated the king in a horrible crime.
- Because of this, he was bound to feel guilty.
- The king knew that he had wrongly approved the decree on a whim.
- But he didn't realize that the decree was part of a conspiracy.

- He had, in reality, signed the death warrant for the Jewish people and even his own wife!

**Because of all this hitting him at once, King Ahasuerus had to find a way to SAVE HIS WIFE and SACE FACE at the same time!!!**

Now we have to keep in mind, in an absolute monarchy the king is looked upon as someone who can do no wrong. This is why ancient monarchs always had a stable of scapegoats available—people who could take the blame for the ignorance or inefficiency of the throne. (*Modern politicians often do the same thing.*)

Therefore, the king's question in verse 5 implied much more than, "*Who is guilty?*" The king was also looking for somebody to punish.

King Ahasuerus was just blown away and surprised when he learned the nationality of his queen, and now he would be hit with another bombshell:  
***Esther 7:6*** *And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.*

**The king's favorite officer was actually the adversary and enemy who had plotted the whole thing all along!**

Keep in mind that **HAMAN IS STANDING RIGHT THERE WHEN ALL THIS IS GOING ON!!!**

- He had also had just learned that Esther was a Jewess.
- And now, King Ahasuerus is wondering if Haman's crime was wanting to slay the queen all along and that he had decided to accomplish it by killing all the Jews.
- For that matter, maybe Haman was part of the Bigthan-Teresh conspiracy that Mordecai had exposed, a conspiracy to murder the king!
- *And like Esther, Mordecai was a Jew!*

Now we can truly understand why God directed Esther to delay her speech:

- God wanted to give Ahasuerus opportunity to learn what Mordecai had done.
- He also wanted the king to learn that Mordecai was a Jew.
- And he was a Jew that deserved to be honored because he uncovered the plot against the king.
- *After all, if a Jew had saved the king's life, why should the king exterminate the Jews?*

*So what happens next?*

***Esther 7:7*** *Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.*

We've already seen that King Ahasuerus was a man with a short temper:  
**Esther 1:12** *But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.*

**So now, his anger must have been volcanic and ready to explode!**

- His masculine pride was hurt because he had misjudged the character of Haman.
- He had made a fool of himself by promoting Haman and by giving him so much influence.
- The king had also made a mistake in approving the decree without first weighing all the facts.
- As a result, he had endangered the lives of two very special Jews—Mordecai, who had saved his life, and Esther, his beloved wife.

**Proverbs 18:13** *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.*

So now the king walks to and fro in the garden, trying his best to control his anger boiling within him.

**Proverbs 16:14** *As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it.*

**Proverbs 19:12** *The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, But his favor is like dew on the grass.*

**HAMAN SHOULD BE AFRAID . . . VERY, VERY AFRAID!!!**

- He had been near enough to the king to recognize that **THIS WAS NOT GOOD!!!**
- **He also knew the king was about to become judge and jury and pass a sentence from which there was no escape!**

But Haman thought there might be one small sliver of hope . . . **The mercy of the queen!**

**Esther 7:7** *Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; **but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.***

Perhaps he could beg her for pity and get her to intercede for him.

- But Esther knew Haman was a tool of the Devil.
- She knew that he determined to destroy the Jewish people.
- If Haman had known originally that Esther was a Jewess, he might have cleverly worded the decree so that her life would be preserved (or maybe not), but he would still have had authority to annihilate all of her people.
- After all, **it was Haman's hatred for the queen's cousin Mordecai that started this whole problem!**

**Esther 3:5-6** *When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.*

And now, **ESTHER WAS NOT ABOUT TO ABANDON THE ONE MAN THAT MEANT SO MUCH TO HER AND HAD STOOD BY HER ALL ALONG!!!**

Dr. S. Goldman said it so well, *“The arrogant bully became, as usually in the face of disaster, a whining coward”*.

Or we can like the way Warren Wiersbe stated it, *“When the authority of the king had been behind him, Haman could courageously strut about, demand respect, and give orders. But now that the anger of the king was against him, Haman’s true character was revealed . . . He was not a giant; he was only a small man full of pride and hot air! And all the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Haman’s life back together again.”*

**What an amazing embarrassing paradox!**

- Haman had been furious because a Jewish *man* wouldn’t bow down to him.
- **And now Haman was prostrate before a Jewish *woman*, begging for his life!**

**When the king entered the room and sees, he accuses Haman of trying to molest his bride, THE QUEEN!!!**

In his anger, the king could have exaggerated anything Haman did, and besides that, molesting the queen was a capital crime. So, forget about the conspiracy . . . **Everybody could see for themselves that Haman was guilty of attacking the queen! AND FOR THAT CRIME ALONE HE DESERVED TO DIE!!!**

- After escorting Mordecai around the city, Haman had covered *his* head in humiliation.
- **But now the king’s guards covered Haman’s *face* in preparation for his execution!**

Sadly, had Haman covered his head in true humility and repentance, things would have been very different. But since he refused to listen to the warnings of the Lord . . . **It was time to pay with his life!!!**

*Aren’t we grateful that Someone else paid for our lives instead of us having to pay the price of sin on our own?!*

**THANK YOU JESUS!!!**

Let’s pray . . .