

Enter The Villain . . . Part 2!

Our Text: **Esther 3:7-15** *In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.*

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. 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."

Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring. 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. A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

Last week we noticed that:

Haman was a man with a lineage.

Haman was also a man with authority.

He was also a very vane man.

Now we will see look at the two remaining characteristics that are outlined for us in the third chapter of Esther. Let's dive in here . . .

He Could Be Subtle!

Esther 3:7-15a *In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.*

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Notice here that we have the specific steps that Haman took as he executed his wicked plan to destroy the Jewish people . . .

He selected the day:

Esther 3:7 *In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.*

Haman and some of the court astrologers cast lots to determine the day for the Jews' destruction. Of course, this was done privately before Haman approached the king with his plan because he wanted to be sure that his gods were with him and that his plan would succeed.

The Eastern peoples in that day very rarely did things without "*consulting the stars and the omens*".

In fact, a century earlier, when King Nebuchadnezzar and his generals couldn't agree on a campaign strategy, they paused to consult their gods:

Ezekiel 21:21 *For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver.*

The Babylonian word "***puru***" means "***lot***", and this is where the Jews get the name of their feast, Purim:

Esther 9:26 *So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them,*

Ray Stedman comments well on this: ***"What a strange procedure! But the casting of lots to determine a lucky day on which to do something was common practice in oriental kingdoms. It is very similar to the practice today of shooting dice in order to select a propitious day for some activity. When the record says, "They cast it month after month till the twelfth month," it doesn't mean they shook dice for a whole year in front of Haman. It means that every cast made stood for a different day. A cast was made for each day of the calendar and if a propitious number [we might say, an evil omen, or some sense of significance aroused by the throwing of the dice] turned up that day was regarded as a lucky day; thus they went through 365 casts before they found the lucky day. When they found it, it was in the twelfth month called the month of Adar. This whole***

process made it possible for Haman to go to the king and say, “Look! If you really want good luck in your life, if you want fortune to smile upon you, there’s only one thing to do—get rid of these people!”

It’s quite interesting that Haman began this procedure in the month of Nisan, the very month in which the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Egypt. As the astrologers cast lots over the calendar, month by month and day by day, they arrived at the most propitious date: the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.

When our lives are driven by superstition, we come up with some ridiculous ideas and decisions. Stupid things. Sometimes, even demonic things!

But this decision was certainly of the Lord. *How so?* **Because it gave the Jews a whole year to get ready and because it would also give Mordecai and Esther time to act!**

Proverbs 16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.*

He asked for the king’s permission:

Esther 3:8-11 *Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. 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.”

Like Satan, Haman was both a murderer and a liar:

John 8:44 *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

- To begin with, he didn’t even give the king the name of the people who were supposed to be subverting the kingdom.
- His vague description of the situation made the danger seem even worse.
- The fact that these dangerous people were scattered throughout the whole empire made it even more necessary that the king do something about them.

However, Haman was correct when he described the Jews as a people whose **“laws are different from those of all other people”**.

Their laws were different because they were God’s chosen people who alone received God’s holy law from His own hand:

Deuteronomy 4:8 *And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?*

The simple answer is: **“NONE!!!”**

What we are witnessing is an escalation of evil before our eyes:

- What began as anger turned to prejudice.
- Hatred has grown now to murder in Haman’s mind.
- This is nothing more than extermination talk.
- Haman is telling the king what the king wants to hear.
- But he’s not telling the king the whole story.
- Haman doesn’t mention his own prejudice, his own long-standing prejudiced grudge —the ugly anti-Semitism that goes back to his Amalekite roots.
- No, he deliberately hides his real motive while acting as if he has only the king’s good at heart.

But sadly, King Ahasuerus has no one to advise him wisely. No one with the objectivity to stand back and say, **“Whoa! There’s a lot more to this than meets the eye. This guy is prejudiced. He’s not concerned about your good, or the good of the kingdom. He’s pushing his own agenda here.”**

The fact that one man, Mordecai, disobeyed one law was exaggerated by Haman into the false accusation that *all* the Jews disobeyed *all* the laws of the land.

Jeremiah had instructed the Jews of the exile to behave as good citizens and cooperate with their captors:

Jeremiah 29:4–7 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

The evidence seems to be that they obeyed. If the Jews in the Persian Empire had been repeatedly guilty of sedition or treason, Ahasuerus would have known about it by now. ***And even if some Jews in a few towns did disobey the king’s laws, why should the whole nation of Israel be destroyed for the crimes of a few?***

So how does Haman end his speech? He offers to pay the king 10,000 talents of silver (375 tons of silver) for the privilege of ridding the empire of these dangerous people. (According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the annual income of the entire Persian Empire was 15,000 talents of silver.) **In effect, Haman was offering the king an amount equivalent to two-thirds of the kingdoms yearly income!**

The king’s response, **“The money and the people are given to you”**, gives the impression that Ahasuerus rejected the money and offered to pay the expenses

himself. (He probably was fully expecting Haman to insist that he accept it.) But Haman knew that the Greek wars had depleted the king's treasuries, and he would never have offered so much money to so mighty a ruler if he didn't really intend to pay it.

Sadly, without asking any questions, the king gave Haman his royal signet ring, which granted him the authority to act in the king's name. This was an absolutely foolish thing for Ahasuerus to do . . . But true to character, he acted first and regretted it afterward.

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

He makes sure to spread the word and therefore spread fear:

Esther 3:12-14 *Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring. 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. A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.*

Unknown to the Jews who were getting ready to celebrate Passover, Haman was busy with the king's secretaries, writing out the new law and translating it into the various languages of the peoples within the empire.

But we have to notice that in verse 13, the words of the law are similar to the instructions Samuel gave to King Saul when he sent him to destroy the Amalekites: **1 Samuel 15:1-3** *Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."*

The one important difference to note was that Saul was not permitted to take any of the spoil . . . But Haman and his helpers hoped to plunder the Jews and accumulate great wealth.

So, the official document was given to the royal couriers, who quickly carried it to every part of the empire.

Warren Wiersbe adds an interesting note, ***"If, in an ancient kingdom, a message of bad news could be so quickly prepared, translated, and distributed, why does it take the church so long to disseminate the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? To be sure, we have more people in our modern***

world than Ahasuerus had in his empire, but we also have better means of communication and transportation. The problem must be with the couriers. The message is ready to go, but we don't have enough people to carry it and enough money to send them."

Let's wrap this up . . .

He Was Apathetic!

Esther 3:15b *So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.*

Notice how cold and calloused Haman was . . . **He could send out the death warrants for thousands of innocent people and then sit down to a banquet with the king!**

Amos 6:6 *Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*

But in the end, it was his own death warrant that Haman had just sealed, for within less than three months, Haman would be a dead man!

Helen Keller said, ***"Science may have found a cure for most evils, but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all – the apathy of human beings."***

Jesus illustrated that apathy in the parable of the good Samaritan:

Luke 10:25–37 *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "

And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus made it very clear that loving the Lord ought to make us love our neighbor and that our neighbor is anyone who needs us!

Therefore, before we condemn wicked Haman, let's examine our own hearts . . .

- Billions of lost sinners in today's world are under a sentence of *eternal* death, and most Christians do very little about it.
- We can sit at our church banquets and Sunday dinners without even thinking about helping to get the message out.

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

"In June 1865, missionary to China, J. Hudson Taylor, had gone to stay with friends at Brighton, a popular British resort city by the sea. He was weary and ill and seeking the will of God for the future of his ministry. On Sunday, June 25, "unable to bear the sight of rejoicing multitudes in the house of God," he went for a walk on the sands and wrestled with God in agony of soul. God met him in a fresh way, and he trusted God to provide twenty-four workers to labor with him in China. Two days later, he went to the London & County Bank and opened an account in the name of the China Inland Mission! It was the beginning of a miracle ministry that continues today."

- **Certainly it's good to rejoice in the Lord and to do it in His house, but rejoicing must never be a substitute for responsibility.**
- **We all want to enjoy the feast, but we don't want to share the message.**
- **We don't have to be hardened unbelievers like Haman to be apathetic and unconcerned about the plight of the world's billions of lost souls."**

But the situation in Shushan was not hopeless . . . **God had two people prepared and in place—Mordecai and Queen Esther—and He, and they, were ready to act!**

Let's pray . . .