

# Check-Mate . . . Part 2!

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.*

Let's briefly recap . . .

Remember **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 was a Jew that deserved 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?*

**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!**

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!**

**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!**
- 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!**

Let's pick it up here . . .

### **Hanging Out For The World To See!**

**Esther 7:9-10** 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.

The Bible is oh so true:

**Proverbs 11:8** *The righteous is delivered from trouble, And it comes to the wicked instead.*

It just so happens that the very gallows that Haman had constructed for Mordecai was so convenient for the execution of Haman . . . **Therefore, the king was going to use it!**

*(Apparently Haman had let it be known in the palace that he planned to kill Mordecai, for the king's servant knew the purpose of the gallows.) THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE SHOOT OFF OUR MOUTHS ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET!!!*

**We call this irony. Theologians call it sovereignty. I call it God's surprising sovereignty!**

Warren Wiersbe said it well, ***“In his pride, Haman had boasted too much, and his words came back not only to haunt him but also to help slay him!”***

- Just the day before, Haman had led Mordecai through the streets dressed in royal splendor.
- **But now Haman was led through the streets with a covering over his face and a gallows at the end of the journey!**

Sadly, it is almost certain that Haman’s wife, Zeresh, and their ten sons witnessed the execution, as did many of the Jews in the city. ***(As others watch what becomes of the person entrenched in sin without surrendering to God, it should horrify them as to the grim reality that awaits any unrepentant person at the time of their death!)***

But this same hanging must have given courage to the Jews because now they knew that their enemy Haman was no longer on the scene . . . **AND GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE!!!**

- Haman sowed anger against Mordecai, and he reaped anger from the king.
  - Haman wanted to kill Mordecai and the Jews, and the king killed Haman.
- Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.***
- Job 4:8 Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same.***
- Proverbs 22:8 He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, And the rod of his anger will fail.***

This is the principle known as ***“sowing and reaping”*** and it is illustrated throughout the Bible, and it applies to both believers and unbelievers!

- Jacob killed an animal and lied to his father, pretending to be Esau. (*Genesis 27:1–29*)
- **Then years later Jacob’s sons killed an animal and lied to him, pretending that Joseph was dead.** (*Genesis 37:31–35*)
- Pharaoh gave orders to drown the Jewish baby boys. (*Exodus 1*)
- **Then one day his army was drowned in the Red Sea.** (*Exodus 14–15*)
- David secretly took his neighbor’s wife and committed adultery (*2 Samuel 11*),
- **Then David’s own son Absalom took his father’s concubines and openly committed adultery with them.** (*2 Samuel 16:20–23*)
- David killed Bathsheba’s husband. (*2 Samuel 11:14–25*)
- **Then three of David’s own sons were slain: Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah.**
- Saul of Tarsus encouraged the stoning of Stephen. (*Acts 8:1*)
- **Then when he became Paul the missionary, he was ultimately stoned at Lystra.**

But let’s keep in mind that this law of sowing and reaping also applies to doing what is good and right as well:

***Galatians 6:8*** For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

- No good deed done for the glory of Jesus Christ will ever be forgotten before God.
- No loving word spoken in Jesus' name will ever be wasted.
- If we don't see the harvest in this life, we'll see it when we stand before the Lord.
- Even a cup of cold water given in the name of Christ will have its just reward.

***Matthew 10:42*** And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

***Matthew 25:31–46*** "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

So, Haman was hanged, (or impaled), on his own gallows, and then his body taken down and buried. ***BUT ALL OF HAMAN'S WEALTH AND GLORY COULD NOT SAVE HIM FROM DEATH AND HE DIDN'T TAKE ANY OF IT WITH HIM!!!***

***Psalms 49:6–8*** Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him — For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever —

***Psalms 49:16–17*** Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased; For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.

Therefore, ***HOW PRECIOUS IS OUR SALVATION?!***

***1 Peter 1:18–19*** knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

So we should have clearly seen that there is there a personal lesson here . . . But there is also a lesson learned about the nation of Israel: **EVERY ENEMY THAT HAS EVER TRIED TO DESTROY ISRAEL HAS ULTIMATELY BEEN DESTROYED!!!**

*Remember the Abrahamic Covenant?*

***Genesis 12:3*** *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

**GOD HAS ALWAYS KEPT THIS PROMISE . . . AND HE WILL ALWAYS KEEP IT!!! Why? Because God takes His promises seriously even if the nations of the world ignore them or challenge them!**

- This doesn't mean that God necessarily approves everything Israel has done or will do.
- But this does mean that God doesn't approve of those who try to destroy His chosen people.
- Whether it's Pharaoh in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, Haman in Persia, or Hitler in Germany . . . **THE ENEMY OF THE JEWS IS THE ENEMY OF ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF!!!**

Notice the second half of verse 10:

***Esther 7:10b*** . . . *Then the king's wrath subsided.*

**Subsided** = שָׁכַךְ **šākak** = *To be pacified. To recede. To have gotten rid of.*

This same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 8:1:

***Genesis 8:1*** *Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.*

- The king's anger had welled up within him and reached its peak when it overflowed and he executed Haman.
- Now it subsided, and the king was himself again.

But even though the adversary (**Haman**) was out of the way, the problem was not completely solved. *Why?* The king's decree was still in effect "**and could not be changed**"!

- This was now the third month. (*Esther 8:9*)
- And there were nine months to go before the fateful day when the Jews could legally be slain. (*Esther 3:13*)

*How would Esther and Mordecai solve this problem? (Actually God is going to make sure it's solved.)*

We'll pick it up there next week.

But I want to end this study with an excerpt from Chuck Swindoll . . .

***“Since we are trapped in this earthbound cage, this little space where light is often diffused and God is sometimes silent, how can we be sensitive to His interventions? What do we do when we, like Job, struggle in the fog with God’s silence, when we’re convinced that His silence means absence?”***

***Please, be assured, He is not absent. He may be silent, but He’s not absent. So let me close this chapter with three “life preservers” that have helped me stay afloat during my own scary experiences on the lake, when the fog seemed unusually thick.***

***First: The fog on your lake is neither accidental nor fatal. So while swimming, listen very carefully and patiently for His voice. Some days you will be seized with panic and dog-paddle like mad. You’ll try various approaches: breaststroke, butterfly, backstroke, float. But all the time, you want to be listening for His voice. I urge you to listen with great sensitivity, because His message will come in various ways.***

***I get nervous around some people and the way they talk about hearing God or seeing Him at work. Sometimes I freely admit that I want to recommend a good therapist. Especially when I hear people say things like, “The Lord spoke to me in my kitchen at 2:15 this morning.” Or, “God found me a parking space today.” I consider these folks “bumper-sticker Christians.” They’re often scary folks, almost spooky. Miracles are everyday occurrences to them. They see skywriting in the clouds, and they hear voices in the night. Hear me well, that’s not the kind of “voice” I’m talking about.***

***God gave you a mind. God gave you reason. God gave you a unique sensitivity; it’s built into your spiritual system, and each person’s system is tuned differently. God wants to reveal His will to you and to teach you while you are waiting. So while you are waiting, don’t start searching for spooky stuff. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Get into His Word. Get on your knees. Accept counsel from those who are maturing and balanced believers, solidly biblical in their theology and in their own life. And wait. Wait! Don’t try to read the stars, and while you’re at it, stay away from people who tell you they can. The answers are not on your palms or in some astrology column or in the flash of a crystal. However, there are tangible things to connect with. Passages of Scripture that bring comfort and insight. Messages that enlighten and enliven. Certain people you respect. Tap into those, wait, and listen with a sensitive ear. Like Esther, don’t rush into big decisions. And may I be painfully direct? Don’t talk so much! Believers who are maturing not only respect God’s silence, they model it as well.***

**Second: The workings of God are not related to our clocks; they are related to our crises. That's why God doesn't care if this is the last day you can buy that car on sale. It doesn't bother God that it is the first day of summer or high noon or a quarter after seven or ten minutes to one in the morning. His timing is unrelated to Planet Earth's clock time. So while waiting, look beyond the present.**

**The best way to do that is to pray! Make your life a life of prayer. Tell Him, in anguish if necessary, the horror of the waiting. Express your panic. Tell Him you're trapped. (Ask Him to hurry up, if that helps. He can handle it!). You don't know how you can stay afloat much longer. In those moments, ask Him to help you see beyond the pain of the present.**

**Prayer supports me when I can't quite grasp the meaning of something I'm struggling with, like when I'm dealing with big decisions or working with difficult people. Prayer gives me a calming perspective.**

**Third: The surprises in store are not merely ironic or coincidental, they are sovereignly designed. While anticipating, trust Him for justice. You may not live to see that justice, but it will come. He is a just God; you know He is. So trust Him for it.**

**I have found, while in the fog, that my great temptation is either to doubt or to deny—maybe they're the same thing—to doubt or to deny that He is even at work. But, more often than not, when something looks like it's the absolute end, it is really the beginning. I can see this later, when I look back.**

**Think of the cross. The Roman officials applauded. The Jewish officials rejoiced. "Finally, we got rid of him, that troublemaker! We're glad that's over." Yet three days later, He was alive again. What seemed like an ending was only the beginning.**

**Esther, our heroine, is a lovely model to follow. And her story is certainly one to remember. But the best focus of all? God Himself. How perfectly He works, how sovereignly He controls, and how remarkably He changes the face of things, once He moves in. A queen who was once passive is suddenly in charge. A king who was once duped is now informed. An enemy who was only moments away from exterminating a nation is now an object of scorn. And even those ghastly gallows, once built for a Jew named Mordecai, will soon pierce the body of a Gentile named Haman.**

**When will we ever learn? At the precise moment when it will have its greatest impact, God ceases His silence and sovereignly makes His moves. And when He does, it's full of surprises."**

Let's pray . . .