

I. Intro

A. Text: **Est. 3:8-13**

*⁸Then 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. ⁹If 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." ¹⁰So 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. ¹¹And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you." ¹²Then 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. ¹³And 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. (**Est. 3:8-13**)*

B. Series Overview

C. Textual Background

1. Story takes place in the 5th century B.C. in Persia (Iran)
 - a. Israel had been conquered in the 6th century B.C. by the Babylonians and taken into exile.
 - i. The Babylonian Empire was defeated by the Persians and a new empire was established with many provinces.
 - b. The Persian King Cyrus gave Jews the permission to go back to their homeland. (**Ezra 1-2**).

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- i. Some Jews prospered in Persia, so they decided to stay in the land (under Persian rule).
 2. By the time we get to the book of Esther, the national and political climate of the land had shifted.
 - a. There was a new political regime with a new leader.
 - b. Although the land was prosperous, it was volatile and ripe for just about anything to happen.

II. The Characters & The Dilemma

A. The Characters

1. Ahasuerus: Common name/ title for all Persian emperors (like Pharaoh).
 - a. This Ahasuerus was likely Xerxes I
 - b. The Banquet (Esth. 1:1-12): Xerxes I held a banquet to show off all his riches and glory to the Princes, governors and leaders of his empire.
 - i. The men had one banquet and the women had another.
 - ii. But after 7 days of drinking and bragging, Xerxes decided to show off his most prized possession: Vashti the Queen.
 - c. The Divorce (Esth. 1:15-22): Upon the advice of his confidants he got rid of her (immediately).

¹⁹If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she... ²¹And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. (Esth. 1:19, 21)

d. The Contest (Esth. 2:12-17): Upon the prompting of his advisors, Ahasuerus had a contest to see who would be the next queen that could top the last one.

- i. Each contestant took a year to prepare themselves to meet the King. (**Esth. 2:12**)

*¹²Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women... (**Esth. 2:12**)*

- ii. Each contestant had one night with the King. (**Esth. 2:14**)

*¹⁴In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name. (**Esth. 2:14**)*

- 2. Esther: One of the many contestants who had a lasting effect and impression upon the King. He had to have her, so he married her.

*¹⁷The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. (**Esth. 2:17**)*

- a. Esther had a testimony:
 - i. She was a Jew... in the land because her people were taken captive into the land.
 - ii. She was an orphan (no parents), taken in by her cousin, Mordecai.
- b. Esther didn't go around sharing her business. She simply shut her mouth and enjoyed the favor of the Lord.
- c. She was the new queen of the land.

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3. **Mordecai**: a wise Jewish exile who held some prominence in the community. Assumed because he stood at the gate (**Esth. 2:21**).
- a. Man of Integrity who raised his young cousin, Esther, as if she were his own.
 - b. Shrewd/ Wise: Instructed Esther not to share a word about her background.
 - i. Former orphan... a Jewish descendant of former slaves.

*All seemed to be going well for Esther and Mordecai... except for one minor obstacle.

4. **Haman**: Self-seeking, manipulative cabinet member and advisor to the King.
- a. A man who was thirsty for power and prestige.
 - b. And he happened to be an Amalekite.
 - i. Amalekites always hated Israelites.
 - ii. They attacked Israel as soon as they crossed the Red Sea.
 - c. Mordecai, refused to feed Haman's ego by bowing to him.

*²And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. (**Esth. 3:2**)*

- i. It probably wasn't a good social move...
Disrespecting the noble one.

³Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" ⁴Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to

Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. (Esth. 3:3-4)

B. The National Dilemma: Precursor to Modern Racism

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. ⁶But 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. (Esth. 3:5-6)

1. Haman didn't just hate Mordecai. He hated everyone that looked, acted, talked like Mordecai.
2. Because a minority of egotistical, insecure people (Haman) had influence on an unstable, impulsive leader (Ahasurus)... it set the stage for a national and racial catastrophe.
 - a. Ahasuerus signed the bill. It was a mob-type hit with a bounty for the lives of the Jewish people.

¹³And 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. (Esth. 3:13)

3. Bigger Picture: Haman was operating out of the same demonic influence that we've seen for years.

III. Conclusion: Where was God in the middle of the Crisis? Right There!

A. The Timeless Truth: Catastrophe shocks people, but it doesn't shock God. God is in Control.

B. God always has people in place.

1. Ahasuerus: As evil and unqualified as the King was, God placed him on the throne at that time and for God's purposes.

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2. Mordecai: God had Mordecai on the ground floor, who labored before the Lord on behalf of his people.
 - a. He risked his life by breaking protocol and storming into the gates of the palace.
 3. Esther: As evil as that empire was... As perverted as the nation was, God had placed a woman of incredible bravery in the palace.
 - a. Esther could approach the King about the lives of her people, but it could possibly cost her life.
 - b. Esther couldn't just pop up because it would be cramping his style.
 - i. And if she popped up unannounced and the king wasn't ready for her, it would cost her life.

¹¹"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." ¹²So they told Mordecai Esther's words. (Esth. 4:11-12)

- c. Esther was between a rock and a hard place.
 - i. Do nothing and her people could be wiped out.
 - ii. Step out of her comfort zone and risk the loss of her own life.

¹³And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:13-14)

- d. Don't think you can stay aloof and disconnected.

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- i. The same enemy that's trying to take out your people is aiming to take you out.

C. God will deliver, heal and set free... whether we participate with Him in it or not.

"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

- 1. Who Knows...?
 - a. Have you ever stop to consider that the place where you are, God placed you there... for His glory?
 - b. We can't be so selfish to believe that God just wants to deliver us.
 - i. When God sees us, he doesn't just see us.
 - ii. He's looking at our kids, grandkids, great-grands, etc.
 - c. He invites us to bless our lineage, our homes and communities.

D. Crisis God Has Never Threatened God's Crown

- 1. He's still in control... in the midst of chaos.
- 2. His plan can never be thwarted by the Enemy
- 3. Esther ended up going to the King... and He accepted her uninvited visit.
 - a. While Esther was planning to tell the King about the plot to wipe out her people, Haman had gallows built to start the killing with her cousin, Mordecai.
 - b. Because of the favor on Esther's life, the King ended up having Haman killed on the same gallows that he built for Mordecai.

E. God's passion in the Crisis is not to turn attention to a people, but to Himself.