

“Haman’s Final Solution”

Esther 2:21-3:15

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August 28, 2022

It was called the “final solution.” For the first eight years that Adolph Hitler was in power in Germany, the strategy involved isolating and persecuting the Jewish population. The goal was to force them to flee the country as refugees, leaving their property and possessions behind. But the strategy shifted in 1941. Poland, parts of the Soviet Union, and other countries in Europe were now under Nazi rule. There were fewer places for Jewish refugees to flee. Hitler, along with Himmler and Goehring, came up with a plan to deal with what they saw as the Jewish problem. They called it “the Final Solution.” Their plan involved the deliberate and systematic extermination of 11 million Jews. Four year later, when the Third Reich fell, the Nazi’s had succeeded in murdering 6 million Jews.

Folks, Adolph Hitler was not the first person to want to exterminate the Jewish people. 2400 years earlier, a man named Haman made a similar proposal, his own version of “the Final Solution.” That is our focus today as we continue our journey through the book of Esther where we see God faithfully preserving people in the face of great hatred and opposition. Let’s pause and pray the Lord would both challenge and encourage us through His word today.

Our text begins with an interesting event involving a reward that is earned, but not received. Esther, the Jewess, is now the queen of Persia, though she is still keeping her ethnic identity a secret. **Esther 2:21 In those days, as Mordecai (Esther’s cousin) was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.**

Other versions say planned to assassinate the King **Esther 2:22, 23 And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.**

Normally, saving the king’s life would mean a substantial reward for Mordecai, but for some reason that doesn’t happen, even though the deed becomes part of the official record. Again, these details like many other in the book, will play a role later in the story as through His providence God works out His plan of saving the Jews.

Incidentally, though Mordecai is key to foiling this assassination plot, the King is not so fortunate a few years later, as he ends up being assassinated in his bedroom in 465 B.C. **Esther 3:1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him.**

Instead of Mordecai being promoted, Haman is. The one thing the author wants us to understand about Haman is that he is an Agagite, meaning a descendent of Agag, king of the Amalekites, ancient enemies of Israel. In 1 Samuel 15 we read how King Saul, an ancestor of Mordecai, defeated the Amalekites in battle, but ignored God’s instructions and allowed Agag to live. He was later killed by the prophet Samuel.

Almost 600 years later, a descendant of Agag and descendant of Saul battle again. Incidentally, even today Jews in Israel sometime refer to Palestinian enemies as Agagites. The author doesn’t tell us what Haman had done to gain this promotion, but **Esther 3:2 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.**

We don’t know why the king gave this command. Nor do we know why Mordecai refused to obey. It is possible that Mordecai felt he was being asked to worship Haman, but the bowing down was likely just honoring a high government official. And remember, I don’t think the command to worship the Lord your God and Him only was something on which Mordecai focused. It is possible Mordecai feels personal animosity because Haman received a promotion he thought he should have had.

Though Mordecai has pretty much forgotten about what it means for a Jew to faithfully follow the Torah and the Lord, I suspect he did remember that the Agagites are the enemies of the Jews. And knowing Haman is an Agagite is enough reason for Mordecai to refuse to bow down. And Haman is indeed an enemy. **Esther 3:5,6 And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. 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.**

Here is another big over reaction, something that was maybe common in the Persian court. Haman has been offended by one man, Mordecai, but instead of punishing him, Haman wants to wipe out the entire Jewish population. I suspect there are some other issues involved and remember, Ahasuerus' whole kingdom included Jerusalem as well as the many other places the Jews had settled. Haman then makes his plan. He seeks some type of pagan divining guidance by casting lots, also known as "Pur" or the plural "Purim." This is from where the name of the Jewish holiday commemorating the events of Esther will come. Haman comes up with a date 11 months later, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar on the Jewish calendar, or March 7, 473 B.C.

This is the day when all the Jews will be annihilated. This time frame will provide an opportunity for the edict to reach the far corners of the empire. He then meets with the King, and tells him **Esther 3:8 "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."**

Haman doesn't offer any evidence for the accusation, but apparently the king trusts him and quickly starts to buy into the plan. And Haman then sweetens the deal. If the king orders the extermination of the Jews, he will donate 10,000 talents of silver to the king's treasury. That translates to 12 million ounces, which today would be worth over \$200 million. This is apparently money that Haman thought he would

get after killing the Jews and confiscating their property.

This money was something the king probably could use. He had cut taxes when Esther became queen, and his army had lost an important battle to the Greeks during the five years between Esther 1 and Esther 3. The king tells Haman to use some of the money to carry out the plan. He then seals the edict with his ring, making it official.

He sends out the decree of death on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the first month on the Jewish calendar, which is ironically the eve of Passover. At that point **Esther 3:13-15 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction (instructions for all citizens) 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, (11 months from when the decree is made) and to plunder their goods. A copy of the document was to be issues as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. 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.** The king and Haman are very comfortable with the plan, but others are not. Not everyone in Susa hates the Jews like Haman does.

Okay, the tension is rising in our story. The Jewish people are in great peril. We will continue with that in a couple of weeks. But, now let's turn our focus to lessons the Lord has for us through this passage.

**Number 1** – We need to realize that God works through unfairness and injustice to accomplish His purposes. A couple of weeks ago we talked about how God's providence enables Him to use even mistakes we make, even sins we commit, to bring about His glory, and our ultimate good. Esther and Mordecai are two fallen, flawed individuals, and not devout Jews. Yet, God uses them to save themselves and all the Jewish people. For people who, like me, are simultaneously saints and sinners, that is really good news.

Another dimension of God's providence is that even when we are treated unfairly, even when we are a victim of injustice, God can still use that, not

only for His glory, but for our ultimate good. Yes, Mordecai did not receive a reward he deserved. Haman, wicked Haman, received a promotion that maybe should have been Mordecai's. But, as we will see, the discovery of this injustice happens at just the right time to enable Mordecai to act and save his people. If Mordecai would have been rewarded immediately for his lifesaving service to the king, who know what might have happened? The answer is, no one know except the Lord, and He somehow, in ways far beyond my comprehension uses that knowledge to accomplish His purposes.

Now, this does not mean we should simply sit back and accept whatever unfair treatment we experience. In Acts 21, for example, the apostle Paul protests when he is being treated unfairly by the Roman authorities and demands his rights as a Roman citizen. I think he does that to 1) maximize his own freedom to do what God has called him to do, proclaim the gospel; 2) to try to prevent others from being treated unfairly. When it comes to our religious, 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights, there are times when we ought to just accept the fact we are being wronged. Often, however, it is a good thing to try and correct an injustice that occurs.

However, many times that won't be possible to do. Any complaint by Mordecai that the king had not given him the honor he deserved would have fallen on deaf ears. Or perhaps your efforts for justice would do more harm than good.

That is why the apostle Paul forbids Christians from taking each other to court in 1Corinthians 6. If you sue another Christian believer, you may win and get what you "deserve," but the harm done to the church and the cause of the gospel is so high that it would have been far better if you would have just accepted whatever the unjust situation was, or in Paul's words, "Why not rather be wronged."

Instead, in those situations when you are getting the short end of the stick, when things just are not fair, and you cannot do anything about it, rest, *rest*, in the providence of God. He will see that the scales get balanced perfectly. At the end of the book, it is Haman who is brought down and Mordecai who is exalted. That is an illustration of **1 Peter 5:6,7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the**

**proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

So, the next time someone else gets a promotion at work that you think you deserved, or when a student, who cheated on a big test gets a scholarship for which you had applied or when another family member gets credit for something you did, or you get a ticket for driving six miles over the speed limit, while your friend got only a warning for 12 miles over the limit, or any one of the thousands of "unfair" things that occur every day happened to you - keep your cool. Don't panic. Trust the Lord.

Or as Paul instructs us in 2 Timothy 2:24, "Patiently endure evil," God will reward you the proper time.

Friend, if someday, when life on this earth is over, and as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are in heaven, God's kingdom, and for some reason the Lord gives you the opportunity to look back on all the things that happened in your life on Earth, including all the unfairness and injustice, as well as all the ways God used those things to help you become the person He called you to be, and then asks you, "Okay, any complaints? What would you have like me to have done differently?" Be assured your answer will be, "No, no complaints Lord. You did everything well. It wasn't always easy, but it was always good." Remember folks, when the story is finished everything that was unfair will be made right.

**Number 2** - We need to recognize why the story of Esther is our story. A big part of the book of Esther is the battle between Haman the Agagite and Mordecai the Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin. Though 100's of years had gone by since Agag battled King Saul, the hatred of the Agagites for God's people, for the Jews continued. Though I am not aware of any modern literal descendants of Agag, there are certainly some figurative ones.

Adolph Hitler's 20<sup>th</sup> century desire to exterminate the Jews certainly makes him an heir of Agag and Haman. Yet, if we follow the story line of the Bible, we realize Haman versus Mordecai was just one battle in a war that goes back long before Agag and Saul. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, when God said to the serpent, **Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;**

(or your seed and her seed) **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**

Folks, that is what the Bible is all about the seed of the serpent versus the seed of woman. Through out the Old Testament I think we see many examples of this conflict, beginning when one of Eve's children, Cain, acts as a seed of the serpent and murders his brother Abel. All of the enemies of Israel, including Agag and Haman, are seeds of the serpent. The reason they are in this category is not so much that they are enemies of God's people, which is not a good thing to be, but that they are enemies of God's plan of redemption.

Ultimately, it is the crucifixion of Jesus where the seed of the serpent bruises the heel of the seed of the woman. Men intending to do evil, Jewish leaders and Roman authorities, put to death, Jesus, God's anointed savior, the only perfect human being to ever live. But through that death and the resurrection which would occur within three days, the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, bruised the head of the seed of the serpent.

And folks, that is the great victory, the great triumph of the seed and the woman, of Jesus Messiah. It is a victory that will be made complete when Jesus returns. That is when the head of the seed of the serpent will be crushed completely, and there will be no more sin, or sorrow or death.

But if Haman would have succeeded in exterminating the Jews, there would have been no Messiah Jesus. The seed of the serpent would have triumphed. God's redemption story would be unwritten. And there would be no hope for sinners like you and me who deserve not God's grace, but wrath. Folks, that is what makes Esther, and many parts of the Old Testament so important for us. It is our story.

If Haman succeeds and wipes out the Jews, we die as well. Our hope of eternal life through Jesus Messiah is snuffed out. That is why Haman must not succeed. It is why the Lord will make sure Haman does not succeed. And it is why we can read this story with gratitude and joy.

For many people, life is about having enough money to pay the bills, keep food on the table, and then try to have as much fun as you can. Yet, deep down inside most of us know there is something more to life than that, there has to be something

that will give our lives solid meaning and purpose, even in the dark face of death.

The Bible says, yes, there is. It is being part of the story. And every believer in Jesus Christ is part of this story. It is the greatest story, full of twists and turns in the plot, full of much of that is unknown to us.

But...but do we know how this story ends? As Revelations 21 tells us, in the end God will dwell with us. In the end we will be His people. In the end He will be our God. In the end there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain. All the brokenness, that makes life so difficult right now, will be made whole.

So, the obvious application is to make sure you are part of that story. You are if, and only if, you are trusting in Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus said **John 14:6 I am the way, the truth and life, no one comes to the Father, except through me.** Friends, if you are not sure if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus, maybe not sure what that means or how to do that, please talk to me or someone who can explain that to you after the service. If you are a believer in Jesus, the application I suggest is this: Do not lose heart. Be of good cheer. Don't give up trusting and following Jesus.

You may be dealing with health issues. Finances might be really tight. Your relationship with some other family members may be strained. You may be struggling with an addiction, or maybe with depression. Perhaps you are discouraged because the world seems to be falling apart. But remember, as a believer in Jesus, you are part of the story, just like Mordecai and Esther were. And every part of the story matter, every part of your life is significant, but in the end the seed of the serpent will not triumph. The seed of woman, Jesus Christ, is the victor and no matter how good you think being with the Lord Jesus will be, it is going to be better. Friends, keep that thought in your mind today and the days ahead.