

# Haman's Hatred & the Cost of True Faithfulness To God

Esther 3:1-15 | Notes

## I. Mordecai's Faithfulness (Read 3:1-4)

Last week we learned that Haman descended from the wicked Amalekites & that his rise to power was the result of Israel's disobedience to God.

- We learned that Haman was a descendent of **King Agag** whom *King Saul & all Israel should have completely wiped out, but they didn't.* (I Sam. 15:2-3)
- And because God's people did not obey God's command, *Agag's descendent is now threatening to completely wipe out the people of God.* (Echo in v13)
- **This is a picture of the nature of all sin.** Sin's promise is always pleasure, prosperity, & peace. But sin's intentions are always to steal, kill, & destroy.
- The result of allowing the Amalekites to live is a biblical illustration of what occurs when, in disobedience to God, we let sin take root in our lives.
- Beloved, we must not allow sin—any sin—no matter how small it may appear to us, to find a home in our heart or continue unchecked in our lives.
- **Like Haman, it will always bring destruction. Therefore, like Samuel, we must take the sword of the Spirit & quickly put our sins to death.** (I Sam. 15:33)

One thing I did not mention last week is this: Not only is Haman a descendent of King Agag, but **Mordecai is also a descendent of King Saul.** (Esther 2:5)

- Thus, the battle between these two men is not a random conflict, but rather a divinely appointed picture of the age old spiritual battle between: *the Kingdom of God & Kingdom of Satan, the Seed of the Woman & Seed of the Serpent, the Son's of Obedience (Abel) & Son's of Disobedience (Cain).*
- We are meant to see the failures of God's people of old being revisited afresh, and for us to ask: **What will happen this time? Will they be faithful? Will they stand upon the truth? Will they trust their God and his Word or will they compromise and turn away from him yet again?**

It is important to understand that it was **NOT Mordecai's ethnic heritage that kept him from bowing down to Haman**—this is **NOT A RACIAL CONFLICT.**

- It was **NOT Mordecai's prejudice** against the Amalekites (Agagites). It was **NOT Mordecai's PRIDE** in being unwilling to humble himself before others. No.
- **The reason Mordecai would not bow b/c Mordecai would not disobey his God.** Although his faith was weak at times, Mordecai was a true believer.

Showing honor to governing officials is good & right. Jesus commands this of us (& we should keep this in mind in our divisive days!). (Rom. 13:7; I Pt. 2:13-17)

- **However, the requirement of merely showing "honor" is NOT what had been commanded. The type of "bowing" & "homage" in view went beyond honor & entered into the realm of worship—however minor that worship might have been.** (*"In every other biblical case where both words are used, worship is the context"*)
- For a believer to worship **ANYTHING** or **ANYONE** other than God alone is a direct violation of God's good & holy commandments. (Ex. 20:3-4; Deut. 6:13-15)
- Therefore, this was something Mordecai **COULD NOT DO**, and **WOULD NOT DO**, because, despite his weakness, he was a true believer who loved his God.
- This is further confirmed by the fact that when pressed as to **WHY HE DID NOT OBEY "the King's command"** his answer was that **"he was a Jew"**. (v4)
- **In other words, the reason Mordecai did not obey this command was because he was a member of God's covenant people and his first & highest allegiance is NOT to earthly kings, to this world, to culture, or even to himself. His first allegiance is always to his everlasting King, his holy God.**
- Therefore, whenever life in this world comes into conflict with his call to trust & obey his God, Mordecai knows the right choice to make.
- **Mordecai knows that he MUST disobey the world's pressures, norms, & demands whenever those forces come into conflict with his call to chiefly & supremely honor the Lord Most High.**
- **Moreover, Mordecai knows that he MUST do this even when, as we will soon see, it comes at earthly great cost.**

What do you do when the world demands your disobedience to God?—whether it is **your boss at work, your children's hobbies, the social pressures of family & peers?** What do you do when the culture around you **demand that you affirm its evil practices, or at least, keep quiet about them?**

- **Do you "bow down" & "pay homage" to the world's demands? Or by faith do you stand firmly for Christ? Do you hold fast to his Word? Do you strive to obey his law even when it is very hard to do so & tell the truth even when it is hated by the people around you both inside & outside the Church?**
- Just as *there was a cost to Mordecai for being faithful*, so *there is a cost for us to be true followers of Christ today as well*—& it is not a cheap one.
- The book of James teaches us that **"friendship with the world is enmity with God."** That is a needed reminder. But it is also true in reverse, isn't it?
- **Friendship with God**—that is, *faithful and uncompromising devotion to his laws, his people, and his ways*—**will mean enmity with the world.** (Matt. 10:22)

## II. Haman's Fury (Read 3:5-11)

**"Haman was filled with fury." Note carefully, dear ones: You do not have to do anything wrong to be hated in this world. This is an ancient truth.**

- Mordecai was so respectful about his non-compliance that Haman was not even aware of it until others told him! (v4) Yet it made no difference!
- **Why did Cain hate his brother? What wrong had Abel done? Nothing.** In fact, Abel had only done what was right in God's sight, what pleased the Lord.
- But it was the mere doing of what was right by Abel that, by contrast, *exposed* how ugly Cain's own heart and behavior truly were before God.
- This *exposure* filled Cain's heart with furious "anger" (just like Haman) and led him to lash out by slaying his righteous brother "in the field." (Gen. 4)
- **Beloved, it is the nature of light to expose darkness, the nature of truth to expose the lie, & the nature of holiness to expose the ugliness of sin.**
- **Merely walking in uncompromising obedience to God, no matter how lovingly, will incur the wrath of the worldly both inside & outside the Church.**

But Haman's hatred went deeper and stretched wider than merely being focused on Mordecai—and there is a key reason for this.

- **Mordecai had made it known that the basis for his disobedience was his Jewish faith** (v3). In other words, it was because he was a member of God's covenant people dwelling under God's covenant law that he *could not* and *would not* obey this command to bow down and pay homage to Haman.
- **Thus, for Haman, this was not only a Mordecai problem.** It was a problem with all of **"Mordecai's people"** because if they too share Mordecai's faith then they will share Mordecai's practice as well. Therefore, we are told: **"Haman sought to destroy all the Jews...throughout the whole kingdom..."**

**There is irony in the next verse of our text. (v7) The very feast of "Purim" ("lots"), which commemorates the events of Esther, was named after this irony.**

- Haman was **"casting lots"**—apparently believing that the fate of the Jews was in the hands of some pagan deity or perhaps, left to "chance".
- As such, Haman was seeking to leverage the power of this pagan deity or "chance" in order to maximize his effort to annihilate the Jews.
- But what he did not know is that while **"the lot is cast in the lap, its every decision is from the LORD"** who sovereignly rules & reigns over all. (Prov. 16:33)
- Haman's plots against the people of God could not & would not prevail—even as the world's persecution of the Church cannot prevail either. **Why?**
- **B/c there is no such thing as chance, no such thing as a pagan god who controls or even faintly influences the fate of God's covenant people. No!**
- **There is only the one true God who is ever-faithful & mercifully keeps covenant w/ his people even when his people have failed to keep covenant w/ him. Do not forget: Long ago the LORD promised that he himself would "make war with Amalek from generation to generation."** (Ex. 17:16)
- **And though God's people have repeatedly failed to obey his Word and have turned their back on God by their disobedience, their God is "gracious and kind, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love," and he will not turn his back on them nor fail to keep his promise.**
- **God himself will soon turn the very plans which Haman crafted for destruction into the day in which Amalek & his people are finally put to silence.**
- **Just as the Lord Jesus Christ turned the Devil's schemes & Israel's rejection of him into the very means by which he conquered sin & death forever.**
- **The feast of "Purim" ("lots") was named as such to remind God's people that their fate is never in the hands of their enemies or left to chance.**
- **Rather, as God's covenant people, chosen and beloved, we always dwell under the almighty & faithful hand of our Father in heaven—even when that hand is presently hidden from our sight, even when the threats of enemies abound, & even when the fear of suffering taunts us on every side.**
- **The feast of Purim was created to continually remind us that the Haman's of this world will rise to power and breath their threats, but our hope is ever secure, our days are in our Father's hands, and nothing can befall us but that which our King has ordained to serve our everlasting good.**

**But for now, it still looks as though Haman has the upper hand. It still looks as though God is absent & all the power belongs to their enemies.**

- Haman used the three famous tactics of Satan & the world to gain approval to persecute God's people: **Slander, Misrepresentation, & Self-Interest**
- **Be wary of a slanderer, dear ones. Misrepresenting other people can make them appear quite different than reality, and such was the case here.**
- Haman successfully distorted things in such a way as to make the Jews sound like a group of seditious rebels ready to overthrow the government.
- **That was far from the truth.** Yet, when stated in a slandorous and misrepresentative way, it quickly inclined the king to a very wrong view of them.
- **The same happens when we listen to slander today.** Many seeds of bitterness, division, & false judgment are built upon slander & misrepresentation rather than truth. **How oft the Bride of Christ has been harassed & abused by those who participate in these evil behaviors which God condemns!**
- The king should have investigated the matter rightly before arriving at a judgment, just as we must. But he didn't. And the results were devastating.
- **On top of this, Haman also appealed to the king's self-interest.** He did this by offering him a HUGE sum of money for permission to enact his plan.
- Remember: The king's coffers had been emptied by his failed war with the Greeks, so he was especially vulnerable to new sources of revenue.
- **v10 tells the result: The full authority of the mightiest nation on earth was now placed in the hands of "Haman the Agagite...enemy of the Jews."**

### III. The Jew's Fearful Future (Read 3:12-15)

**It was on the eve of Passover (13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) that the message went out across the nation that death & destruction were determined against the Jews.**

- On the very day when God's people remembered their deliverance from slavery and destruction, an edict goes forth that foretells their annihilation.
- This timing is no accident. It is part of God's perfect providence for his weak and doubting people. It forces them to make a public decision of faith.
- **The very next day, after receiving the edict, they would all be faced with a sobering question: *Knowing the danger & the cost, will we now, continue to paint our doorposts with the blood of the Lamb and thereby publicly identify ourselves to all around us as Jews in obedience to our God?***
- *Do we really believe that God is worthy of our worship, of our trust, and our obedience even when all these things might mean suffering & death?*
- *Or will we walk by fear, "bow down" and "pay homage" to the world, hide our faith, disobey our God, and abandon our association with the Lord?*
- **Beloved, this is a question which believers must face in every age—indeed, one we must face each new day: Will I live in obedience to my God bearing public witness to his glory and honor regardless of what it may cost me in my family or in my workplace or in my church?**
- **We too have to ask ourselves: Will I boldly paint the doorposts of my life with the blood of the Lamb, publicly standing firm in faith, obeying the Lord's will for me even when those around me despise it, and making it clear to all that I am unashamedly numbered among the people of God?**

**The hour is presently dark in the book of Esther. We know the break of day is coming! But let us not rush too quickly past the key lessons for us here.**

- Obedience to God is what led Mordecai & the whole nation of God's people into persecution. Doing what is right is what made their lives hard.
- **Understand: True faith & obedience to God are not easy, dear ones. They are very hard. They are very costly. They often lead to rejection & persecution.**
- The only way to avoid this is to be unfaithful, to be disobedient, to hide the truth, to never take a stand, to never offend, to never speak up for Christ.
- **There has always been a great cost to being a true believer in this world. Just as there is a great cost to being a true follower of Christ today.**
- We have to make decisions all the time about whether we will walk by faith in obedience or whether we will "bow" & "pay homage" to the world.
- But we too have an ancient **promise** from God—in fact, **many promises** from our Savior to strengthen us: **Mt. 16:18; Jn. 10:28; 11:25; 16:33; Rev. 2:10**

#### Application:

**Be faithful and trust your God dear Christian! "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord," (Prov. 21:30).**

