

Lessons From Mordecai and Haman

Rick Railston

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There are many examples in the Bible. If I mention the name Mordecai just out of the clear blue, some of you would know exactly what's that is about and some would say well, okay the name is familiar. When I mention the word Haman that name becomes even fuzzier. In the Bible there is none so moving and personal than the account of the book of Esther. We want to look at this account and see what God wants us to learn from the book, because God doesn't do anything by accident. Everything God does has a purpose and a plan. The book of Esther is there for a reason. We're going to approach this account from Mordecai's view and from Haman's view. Ten years ago or so I gave a sermon on this subject from Esther's point of view. The title of this sermon is: Lessons From Mordecai and Haman.

Let's set the time frame. The book of Esther probably occurred between 483 and 473 B.C. This was after Judah went into Babylonian captivity. The Persians conquered the Babylonians approximately fifty years before this book was written. If you want to put it in a continuum of the Old Testament, the book of Esther would fit between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra and before the book of Nehemiah.

Let's look at the scene where it occurs. I like geography. You want to pinpoint where things happen. Shushan was the winter palace of the Persian Empire. It became the capital when the king went to Shushan to spend the winter. It is in the northwest of modern day Iran, approximately eight hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies east of Jerusalem. The Persian Empire in those days, if you can imagine this stretched all of the way from India on the east to Egypt on the west, a gigantic empire.

Now let's turn to the account. For sake of time I'm going to summarize some of the chapters. The name Ahasuerus is a common name for a Persian king. It would be like today using the term president; the president went here or the president did that. However, the specific king that's being referred to in the book of Esther was Artaxerxes who reigned from 486 to 465 B.C. He succeeded Darius. Esther 1:3 and 4 tell us that there was a hundred and eighty day planning meeting for the invasion of Greece. Artaxerxes in these verses is bragging about his wealth, his majesty and his accomplishments. Verse 5 tells us that at the end of the conference there was a seven day drinking fest. Then in verses 10 through 12 we know that the king ordered the queen Vashti to parade in front of this drunken crowd. Josephus and others say that she was to parade with only her crown on and nothing else. We know that she refused. We don't know if she was a principled woman or a rebellious woman, nevertheless she refused. In verses 13 through 18 the king and his counsel decided what to do about this refusal. The term "wise men, which knew the times" refers to astrologers. So, the king discussed the matter with his counselors and astrologers. In verse 19 we're told that she was removed from being queen. We don't know what happened to her, as the

Bible is silent. She might have been killed. She might have been imprisoned. She might have been tortured.

In the first four verses of Esther 2 there is a replacement sought for Vashti the queen. We'll pick up the account in Esther 2:5-9a.

Esther 2:5. *Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; 6) Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.*

7) And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. (KJV)

We can imply from this that most likely Mordecai was quite a bit older than Esther.

8) So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9) And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him ... (KJV)

In verses 10 through 14 it describes the preparation and purification before these virgins would have an audience with the king. Continue in verses 15-17.

15) Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. (KJV)

When the Hebrew says "looked upon her" it can mean "met her." So, it's not like she was on parade to be gazed at and ogled. It was that as people met her, she obtained great favor.

16) So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. (KJV)

Notice the result.

17) And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. (KJV)

We see here that Esther has been given this incredible, great favor. Just looking forward you have to ask yourself who was behind all of this? How did this happen? Continue in verses 21-23, after she became queen.

21) In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door ... (KJV)

This means they guarded the door to the king's private quarters. In other words they provided security for him when he slept.

21b) ... were wrath, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

22) And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

23) And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king. (KJV)

We see here that Mordecai saved the king's life. That will be important later on. Continue in Esther 3:1-2.

Esther 3:1. *After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite ... (KJV)*

It is important that Haman was an Agagite.

1b) ... and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. (KJV)

He was number two in the kingdom. We see here he was an Agagite, which tells us he was a descendant of King Agag, who was king of the Amalekites. We run into that in 1 Samuel 15 with Saul. We'll come to that a little bit later.

2) And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate ... (KJV)

When it says they "were in the king's gate" that means that the gate that opens into the palace area, not the gate to the city, and the higher class of officers sat at the gate waiting to be called by the king should he need their assistance or he wanted to make an assignment to them.

2b) ... bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. (KJV)

All of the other officers had to bow down to Haman. What does "reverenced" mean? In the Hebrew it's Strong's number 7812. It means *to prostrate in homage to royalty or to God, bow down flat*. It can also be translated *worship*. Of the one hundred and sixty-six

times this occurs in the Old Testament well over half of them are translated “worship.” So, these officials had to bow down flat in worship of Haman.

2 continued) ... But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. (KJV)

You see, he refused to worship Haman as one would worship God. He directly violated the king’s commandment. That takes character and tells you something about Mordecai. He would never bow down to a man as he would God and especially, he, as a Jew, would never bow down to an Amalekite. He knew Deuteronomy 6:13.

Deuteronomy 6:13. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. (KJV)

You don’t bow down to anybody but God. Continue in Esther 3:3-6 from the New King James Version.

3) Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

4) Now 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. (NKJV)

Now let’s see Haman’s reaction.

5) When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.

6) But 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. (NKJV)

He could get rid of Mordecai by destroying all of the Jews. That tells you the value he put on human life. Continue in verses 8-9 from the New King James Version. He is presenting it as though there’s some kind of conspiracy.

8) 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.

9) If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed” ... (NKJV)

This is key. In the law of the Medes and the Persians if something was written by the king it could never be countermanded, even by the king down the road. Once it was written it was there and had to be obeyed. That is why Haman wanted it put in writing.

9b) ... "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." (NKJV)

He said, king if you will give me money, I will go out and hire people to rid the land of these Jews. Then I will take all of their property, their gold, their silver, their flocks, their herds and bring all of that back into your treasury. Of course, the king being a pagan and totally carnal to the core thought this was a pretty good idea. Continue in verse 10-11.

10) So the king took his signet ring from his hand ... (KJV)

That was a signet ring and it had his seal on it. When a scroll was written out and rolled up, they would seal it with a big gob of wax in the royal color. With that signet ring they would put a stamp in the molten wax, then it would harden. When this scroll was sent out to the provinces, the administrators would know that it came from the king because it had his seal on the wax. They would also know that the seal had not been broken and no one had tampered with the decree.

10b) ... and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

11) And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. (KJV)

In verses 12 through 15 Haman made plans to destroy the Jews. In Esther 4 when the Jews heard of the decree, they went into mourning. Esther over time became aware of the Jews' distress and asked Mordecai what on earth was going on. Mordecai sent her a copy of the decree asking her to intervene, which she did by putting her life on the line.

In the law of the Medes and the Persians if you went into the king's court unbidden, not invited, one of two things would happen. If you were standing at the entryway of the court and the king wanted to see you, he would lower his scepter and you were allowed in for an audience. If the king did not want to see you, it wasn't that you were sent away. You were taken away and killed. It was that serious.

Esther came before the king not knowing what he was going to do or whether he was in a good mood or a bad mood, but he offered her the scepter and asked her to come in. She found favor in his sight. Again, we have to ask who was doing that? So, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet the next night. When that banquet occurred and they were drinking wine and eating, the king asked her initially when she came in what can I do for you? She said I will tell you if you come to another banquet tomorrow night. So, everything was put off for twenty-four hours. In doing so it built drama and expectation on the king's part and on Haman's part. Let's pick up the story in Esther 5:9-14.

Esther 5:9. *Then went Haman forth that day joyful ... (KJV)*

This was because he was invited and the only one invited along with the king.

9b) ... and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

10) Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

11) And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

12) Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king. (KJV)

You see here that Haman is filled with pride. Yet despite all of this honor he's not happy.

13) Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

14) Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high ... (KJV)

That's about seventy-five feet. A normal gallows is probably about twenty feet. This is gigantic.

14b) ... and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made. (KJV)

The gallows were constructed in his own private courtyard, not out in public. Continue in Esther 6:1-14 from the New Living Translation, because it flows better. Notice what happened that night after the first banquet.

Esther 6:1. *That night the king had trouble sleeping and so ordered an attendant to bring the historical records of his kingdom so they could be read. (NLT)*

How did he get the idea of reading historical records in the middle of the night? He could have brought the musicians in or read some other thing. Again, we have to ask the question who is putting thoughts in his mind?

2) *In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes.*

3) *"What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done."*

4) *"Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. ... (NLT)*

Who happens just to show up at this exact time?

4b) *... Now as it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai from the gallows he had prepared. (NLT)*

This is presumptuous of Haman to build the gallows before he gets permission. You have to think of the pride of this man. Well, I know he'll do what I want. So, he's there to ask for Mordecai's head.

5) *So the attendants replied to the king, "It's Haman out there." "Bring him in," the king ordered.*

6) *So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?"*

7) *So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone,*

8) *he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as the king's own horse with a royal emblem on its head.*

9) *Instruct one of the king's most noble princes to dress the man in the king's robe to lead him through the city square on the king's horse. Have the prince shout as they go, 'This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!'"*

10) *"Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said" ... (NLT)*

Right here Haman's chest is swelling with pride. He's thinking I'm going to be on that horse and there's going to be somebody shouting about my wonderfulness as we go through the city.

10b) *... "for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Do not fail to carry out everything you have suggested!" (KJV)*

God works in such great ways.

11) *So Haman took the robe and put it on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!"*

Can you imagine the humiliation? He is walking in front of the man he hates and the man he hates is sitting above him on a royal horse with a royal robe on.

12) *Afterward Mordecai returned to the palace gate, but Haman hurried home dejected and completely humiliated.*

13) *When Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends what had happened, they said, "Since Mordecai—this man who has humiliated you—is of Jewish birth, you will never succeed in your plans against him. It will be fatal to continue opposing him." (NLT)*

How did Mordecai humiliate him? The king did it.

14) *While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived and quickly took Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared. (NLT)*

This is crucial. The timing is perfect, because Haman could not undo his plans. He could not have the gallows torn down. It was all there and he had to go to this banquet. Continue in Esther 7:1-10 from the New Living Translation.

Esther 7:1. *So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet.*

2) *While they were drinking wine that day, the king again asked her, "Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" (NLT)*

She was held in very high regard. Notice her wisdom and humility and how she presents it.

3) *So Queen Esther replied, "If your majesty be pleased with me, and wants to grant my request, my petition is that my life and the lives of my people will be spared." (NLT)*

Can you imagine the shock on the king's face when she said this?

4) *For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had only been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would have been a matter too trivial to warrant disturbing the king."*

5) *"Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would dare touch you?"*

Now the king is just waiting and his wrath and anger are building.

6) *Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen.*

7) *Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden. ... (NLT)*

He was so angry he probably wanted to calm down before he could figure out what to do. Guess what?

7b) ... Haman stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that he was doomed.

8) In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the king returned from the palace garden. ... (NLT)

Notice the timing.

8b) ... "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes", the king roared? And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom. (NLT)

You wonder if this is where we get the tradition today that has been for hundreds and hundreds of years, where if somebody is standing before a firing squad or to be hung, they put a hood over their face. It would be interesting to see if this tradition originated right here. We don't know.

9) Then Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Haman has set up a gallows that stands seventy-five feet tall in his own courtyard. He intended to use it to hang Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination", ... (NLT)

He was reminding the king of that fact.

9b) ... "Then hang Haman on it!" the king ordered.

10) So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had set up for Mordecai, and the king's anger pacified. (NLT)

Continue in Esther 8:1-2.

Esther 8:1. *On that same day King Xerxes gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related.*

2) The king took off his signet ring—which he had taken back from Haman—and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's property. (NLT)

How things turn around very, very quickly. In the rest of chapter 8 and all of chapter 9 Esther and Mordecai intervene and the Jews were saved. Now turn to Esther 10:2.

Esther 10:2. *And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? (KJV)*

What a story. You think of everything that happened, all of the turn of events, all of the emotions, all of the worry, all of the joy all wrapped up into this one story.

We have to ask the question; what lessons does God want us to learn from Mordecai and Haman? We're going to spend the rest of the sermon time discussing seven different lessons we can learn.

Lesson 1: One of the most important lessons is God's way leads to life - - Satan's way leads to death.

Haman was a type of Satan. Mordecai was a type of Christ. Remember Satan attempted to destroy the Israelites in the wilderness and he used Amalek to attack Israel. Haman attempted to do the very same thing; destroy all of the Jew by getting the king to write this decree.

Another similarity is that Satan exalts himself. In Isaiah 14:13-14, that we have covered many times, it says:

***Isaiah 14:13.** For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:*

*14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
(KJV)*

It is I, I, I and me, me, me. I want to exalt myself. Haman did the same thing in Esther 5. He bragged and he bragged about his promotions and his wealth and his children and all of that.

Also, Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Let's go to Revelation 12:10 as a reminder. This is getting close to home for us, probably not that far away. We don't know, but it's certainly a lot closer than when Esther was written.

***Revelation 12:10.** And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (KJV)*

This tells us that Satan is allowed access to God's throne and he accuses us before God. Undoubtedly when we sin or have a wrong thought Satan is pointing to God and saying you called them. Look at what they're doing. Haman, you see, did the same thing. He accused Mordecai and the Jews in Esther 3.

Another similarity between Satan and Mordecai is Satan wants to kill all of those he hates. Turn to John 10:9-10, which is the parable of the sheep fold. Christ is saying that here is the sheep fold. The sheep go into the sheep fold and they are protected.

John 10:9. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (KJV)*

When you translate that to “find pasture” for the sheep, it means they are being fed. They are being watered. They’re being looked after. They are being taken care of.

10) The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: ... (KJV)

They come to steal people away from God, to kill us physically and to destroy us spiritually. Haman did the same thing, not just with Mordecai, but with the Jews. He wanted them dead.

In Haman we see how vicious and how evil Satan is. That is a warning to us, because Satan is after us far greater than Haman was after Mordecai. We ignore that to our peril.

Mordecai was just the opposite, being a type of Christ. Knowing that Haman hated him what did he do? Did he fight back? No. Did he turn the other cheek? Yes. He didn’t return evil for evil. We find we are to do that in Romans 12:17.

Romans 12:17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. (KJV)*

He did not worship Haman. He refused to bow down. Look at Luke 4:5-8. We are breaking into the context after Christ was fasting forty days.

Luke 4:5. *And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (KJV)*

Can you imagine that and what that it would look like?

6) And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7) If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

(KJV)

Here he is referring to Deuteronomy 6:13, which we discussed earlier. Mordecai knew that and wouldn’t bow down to Haman. Mordecai would only worship God. He would not worship or bow down to a man.

Christ and Mordecai wanted to give rather than take. Let's go back to John 10:10. Christ came on this earth to give, not to take. He came on this earth to humble himself to death.

John 10:10. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*
(KJV)

Christ came to give us life. Notice what happened with Mordecai. After he was exalted and was given the signet ring and made number two in the kingdom, he could have exalted himself and strutted around and all of that. Turn to Esther 10:3 from the New King James Version. Notice Mordecai's attitude, his desire.

Esther 10:3. *For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren ...*
(NKJV)

You can't be well received if you don't act in a godly way, if you don't take care of them.

3b) *... seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.*
(NKJV)

He looked after their welfare. He, in essence, was a shepherd to them. He took care of them as Christ takes care of us.

In this one account of Mordecai and Haman we see Christ and Satan at work simultaneously. Look at the difference between a godly man and a Satan inspired man. In the end we see God's way leads to life. Satan's way leads to death.

Lesson 2: We must obey God completely.

This is so important today in God's church. It's my experience that God's people with God's spirit don't always exercise it as much as they should. They obey partly, maybe mostly. How many of us obey God completely? If God's commandments had been obeyed completely, Haman would never have existed at that time. Let's find out why. Turn to Deuteronomy 25:17-19. We know that Deuteronomy is Moses' look back to Egypt and the forty years in the wilderness. They're getting ready to cross over into the Promised Land. Moses is ready to die and he wants to recount this to teach Israel their history, but also to be careful. Moses is speaking to all of Israel.

Deuteronomy 25:17. *Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;*
18) *How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.* (KJV)

This tells you Amalek didn't fear God. It also tells us that Amalek was a coward. He would knock off the very young, the very old, the ill, and the handicapped. He would kill those who straggled, but he wouldn't dare go after the main body.

19) Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it. (KJV)

Now let's turn to I Samuel 15:1-3 to see that God told Saul to exterminate the Amalekites; genocide, wipe them out completely. Saul had just been made king.

1 Samuel 15:1. Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

2) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3) Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (KJV)

God ordered this so there would be no descendants remaining of Amalek and therefore Amalek could not repeat trying to take out Israel, trying to kill the weak and the helpless and all of that. He said the best way is just wipe them off of the face of the earth. It is the same today. There are some people who do not deserve to live in this physical life. They'll have their chance down the road. Continue in verses 9-11 from the New King James Version.

9) But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. (NKJV)

They did not have a willing heart. No matter what God said they weren't going to do it. Anything that was of no use to them they destroyed. That's big of them. If they wanted it, they kept that. They didn't care what God said.

10) Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,

11) "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night. (NKJV)

All of us had better hope that God never says about us that it grieves Him that He has called us, that He has given us His spirit.

You see Agag was king of the Amalekites. Haman was an Agagite, therefore Haman was an Amalekite. It's obvious that Saul did not completely destroy Amalek. Otherwise Haman would not have existed. Haman's existence is the result of Saul's lack of complete obedience. If Saul had been completely obedient, the book of Esther wouldn't need to be written. Look what could have been avoided if there had been complete obedience. Look at all of the pain and the suffering and the worry and the fear by all of the Jews, by Mordecai, by Esther.

You could say – well, Mordecai could have made just a little exception to bowing down to Haman. He could have nodded or maybe half knelt down or got down on one knee or some such symbol of obeisance to Haman. Let's go to Exodus 20:3-5 and see what we find. This is God speaking to Moses from the mountain.

Exodus 20:3. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

4) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (KJV)

This is very plain, very clear. It is exactly what happened. Saul disobeyed and generation after generation after generation we come to Esther. The Hebrew word for "bow down" is interesting. It is the exact same word as "reverence" in Esther 3:2. Mordecai knew what that word meant. He knew Exodus 20:3-5 and he wasn't going to bow down no matter the cost, even disobeying the king. This is true whether bowing down to an idol or bowing down to a human. It makes no difference to God who you bow down to, if you are bowing down to them, doing them reverence and worshipping them. It could be something of stone or something of flesh. It makes no difference to God. Mordecai chose rather to obey God completely. The lesson for us is we have to completely obey God, not partly, not mostly, not when it feels good, not when it's convenient. How can we stand before God at the end of the day and say before God well I mostly obeyed you? Can you throw me a bone here? That doesn't cut it with God. We either do or we don't.

Lesson 3: Evil was successful right up to the very end.

This is important for us today given the trials God's people are going through. The gallows for Mordecai had been built. Haman was ready to be exalted going to the banquet. It looked as though Haman would succeed right up until he didn't. It all changed in the blink of an eye. Turn to Proverbs 18:12. This is a principle. Sometimes when we are tempted to pound our chest or to stand up a little taller to exalt the self we need to remember this. This is Haman.

Proverbs 18:12. *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty ... (KJV)*

Haman was haughty, arrogant, exalting himself.

12b) ... and before honour is humility. (KJV)

Mordecai was humble. He did not fight back. He did what he could, but he did so with humility. The fact is sometimes God takes us right to the very edge. A trial looks really grim. We are peering over into destruction or catastrophe or whatever it might be. He takes us right there to see if we will remain faithful or if we will start backpedaling and start looking other places. In the end God works everything out. This is a perfect example for us. Right to the very end it looked bad. It looked like evil would succeed. Look at Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (KJV)*

That's exactly what happened. Evil was successful right up to the end, but not in the end.

Lesson 4: God works in ways we cannot know or imagine.

I have learned this over the last ten to fifteen years. God is working behind the scenes. During a trial or a problem or a situation we don't see what's going on, but God is moving those chess pieces on the board just to do exactly what He wants. We don't see it at the time. We generally can see a glimpse of it in hindsight.

Look at what happened behind the scenes in the book of Esther. Esther was given favor with the keeper of the women. Esther was chosen above all of the other women. The king allowed her to come to his throne unbidden and the scepter acknowledged her, so she was able to come in and make her petition. Esther had a plan for a banquet. Whose idea was that? How did that get into her head? Then she delayed her banquet to a second night and had a second banquet. This built expectation and drama. Between the two banquets is when Haman's family came and advised him to build a gallows and hang Mordecai. If she hadn't delayed until the second banquet, that wouldn't have happened. Then the king couldn't sleep at night and asked for the chronicles. Where did that come from? Then Mordecai's loyalty was discovered. The next morning Haman came early just after the king had a bad night's sleep. He probably wasn't in a good mood anyway. He discovered that Mordecai was loyal and then this guy Haman walked in. Haman thought he was the one to be honored. In reality God allowed Haman to decide how his enemy was going to be exalted. Who would have figured that one out? At the banquet Haman's plot was revealed to the king. The king rushed out and Haman plopped on the couch. The king ran back in and it looked like Haman was assaulting the queen. How did that come about?

The point is in looking through this whole thing you see God's hand in putting thoughts into people's minds, bringing people together at certain places and certain times in the right sequence. God is seeing the big picture. We're looking at it through soda straws and don't see much of anything. God sees it from beginning to end. With that in mind let's turn to Romans 11:33-35. All of this was unknown to Mordecai, to Esther and to Haman. He thought he was succeeding. He thought he was cool stuff. When we are in a trial and things look grim read this scripture.

Romans 11:33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (KJV)

We don't see it. We don't know what He is doing for us to bless us behind the scenes even when things look grim.

*34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?
35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?
(KJV)*

When Mordecai refused to bow down that was a gift to God. Look what came back. When Esther went in unbidden, that was her gift. The scepter could have been held back or dropped. Look at what happened. God recompensed both of them for what they gave to Him.

In our lives God does exactly the same thing to us. I remember when I was a young lieutenant in the Air Force. I'd been baptized less than a year, applied to get out, knew I would get out because I was doing God's will and it was rejected. They made you wait six months to reapply. During those six months I was transferred out five different times; the first time to Germany. A couple of days before it was cancelled. The next one was to Taiwan. A couple of days before that it was cancelled. There were two more. The final one, as I was getting close to the six months when I could reply, was to Sondrestrom Air Force Base in Greenland. If I went up there, and I had to disobey because of the Sabbath, I'd go into a jail up there and probably never be heard from again. That was cancelled. The old master sergeant who was in charge of personnel, after that last one came up to me and said it's been cancelled. You don't have to go to Greenland. He said I've been in this Air Force for thirty years and I have never seen that happen. You know, God works behind the scenes in ways we can't imagine. In fact the day I left he gave me a family heirloom. It was a copy of Erdman's The Life of Jesus Christ. You could tell it was very old. I still have it to this day. He said I just want you to have that. He was a Catholic. He said, I know God intervened in this situation.

God takes us right to the edge, but He works behind the scenes in ways we can't imagine to do what is best for us.

Lesson 5: God sometimes brings upon us what we wish for others.

You have to be careful about that. Haman wanted Mordecai hanged, but God caused him to be hanged on the very gallows that he had built for Mordecai. Turn to Deuteronomy 19:16-20. This is a principle of God and something we should remember. This talks about a similar situation.

Deuteronomy 19:16. *If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong;*

17) Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

18) And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;

19) Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

20) And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. (KJV)

I wish that the United States would obey this statute today. Sometimes God allows us to experience what we wish for others. Sometimes we want some bad things to happen to other people, which we shouldn't. Oftentimes God will turn it around on us and the same bad thing happens to us that we wanted to happen to somebody else. Why? It is to show us our evil thoughts and desires and to show us how our human mind works and how Satan provokes us so that we can learn and we can change.

Let's understand we all must this principle. Remember what Christ said in Matthew 7:12.

Matthew 7:12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: ... (KJV)*

Sometimes God brings back on us the evil that we had wished for others to teach us a lesson. That is exactly what happened to Haman.

Lesson 6: In a trial we must patiently wait on God.

Patience is hard to come by and sometimes, as I said, God takes us right to the edge and we have to have patience. Look at Psalms 37:7-11 from the New King James Version. David is speaking. If there was anybody that was taken to the edge, it was David. His life was hanging in the balance at times.

Psalms 37:7. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret ... (NKJV)*

The Hebrew word for "fret" is interesting because it means *to glow or to grow warm*. We know when we're anxious and we're worried and we're tying ourselves in little bitty

knots, our face can get red and we can get heated up. That's what this word refers to. Don't glow warm, get upset.

7b) ... because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. (NKJV)

Haman was prospering right to the end.

8) Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret — it only causes harm.

9) For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

10) For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more.

11) But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. (NKJV)

Christ repeated this on His very first recorded sermon. If we have patience, we will have peace. Again, sometimes God takes us right to the brink, even going over the edge to see if we will have patience, if we will wait on Him, if we will trust Him. If going over the edge is death, then so be it. That's the way it is.

Mordecai teaches us that patience and humility are interrelated. If we're humble, we will look to God. If we look to God, we will have patience in the face of horrible trials. We have to humbly, patiently wait on God. Whether we live or die the resurrection awaits either way.

Lesson 7: In the end, the faithful are protected and blessed by God.

Remember that none of the Jews were harmed and their enemies were killed. That was in Esther 9. In Shushan the very first day after the Jews were armed and could defend themselves five hundred were killed and three hundred were killed the second day. In all of the provinces we're told that seventy-five thousand of the Jews' enemies were killed. God provided and took care of them. Haman had ten sons. Remember he was bragging about his children. They were all hanged. Mordecai did not repeat the error of Saul. If he had allowed those ten sons to live, what they would do for the rest of their lives to the third and fourth generation is to attack the Jews. So, you stop it. You don't cut the dog's tail off an inch at a time. You take it off once and that's exactly what Mordecai did. Let's turn to Psalms 121:1-8. This is called by many the soldiers' psalm. David was speaking and he was a soldier. Notice what David said about the faithful being protected and blessed by God.

***Psalms 121:1.** I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

2) My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

- 4) *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*
- 5) *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*
- 6) *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*
- 7) *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*
- 8) *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (KJV)*

You see, we have to know. Esther and Mordecai learned this, that without a doubt God is going to protect us. It may look grim at times. It may look even hopeless at times. God will protect us as He did Mordecai and as He did the Jews. We have His spirit. We are His children. How much more is God going to protect His children that have His spirit residing in them? In the end our job is to yield to God, to be faithful to God and God will bless us and protect us.

In conclusion we see here the end of this story is that good conquers evil. What a story. People were taken right up to the edge of destruction. God knew what was going on. He was planning what was going on. He was making moves that the people involved could not comprehend or understand. Yet, look at the end result. Good conquered evil. Let's turn to one final scripture in 1 Corinthians 10:11. The Bible, the personalities in the Bible and the events in the Bible are so important. When this was written, the only thing they had was the Old Testament. We are blessed because we have not only the Old Testament, but the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 10:11. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition [learning, understanding, correction], upon whom the ends of the world are come. (KJV)*

Let's learn the lessons of Mordecai and Haman, a type of Christ and a type of Satan. Know that as God took care of Mordecai and Esther and the Jews, He will so take care of us.