

## Esther 3

We discovered last week that Esther is basically a book that portrays in a practical way the principle that God refuses to turn His back on a backslidden people. During this time period the Jews had been long since free to return to Jerusalem to restore and rebuild the temple, and re-establish their worship of God in the place that God had ordained for them to worship Him. And though there were about 50,000 Jews who did just that, there were millions who didn't, even though that was God's will for them both personally and collectively as a nation. And what that means to you and me is that there was only a remnant who were actually operating within the sphere of God's perfect will for their lives, the rest of them were in the permissive will of God, they were in essence, backslidden. Choosing to place their priority on the things of this world, they'd grown quite comfortable in Babylon, had established businesses, were treated well, the economy was booming, back in Jerusalem times were tough, things were dilapidated, run down, and destroyed, they'd have to start all over, do a whole lot of work and be lucky to barely make it by. So the vast majority of them opted to stay in the place of their captivity, rather than return to the place of their God given priority, seeking *Him* 1<sup>st</sup>. And how sad it is when a people, or a person settles down in sin, or grows quite comfortable in compromise, gives up on their God given priority of seeking 1<sup>st</sup> the Kingdom of God and His *righteousness*. And *because* they've grown accustomed to just sort of letting things slide, a little here, a little there, they become desensitized to the need to make that move, to repent, and return to their 1<sup>st</sup> love, so they opt to stay in the place of their captivity. Such is the case in the book of Esther, but even though we can be so lame, praise God that even when we're faithless, He remains faithful still, if you're in a backslidden state, God still *loves* you, He cares desperately *for* you, and refuses to give up *on* you. But don't miss the message, this book doesn't teach that just because God is moving, that He's approving of compromise in your life.

And sad is the condition of heart that says, "Well, God's got my back, I know He still loves me so it's all good." I hope you don't treat anyone else that way, your spouse that way, just sort of do what you want because you know they're still going to love you, and be there for you, because that speaks volumes of how little you truly care for them, even though they are desperately committed to you. But be that as it may, the emphasis of this book really isn't upon man's fickleness so much as it is upon God's *faithfulness*, He is going to see His own through to the very end, and He can take even those areas of compromise in our lives, and capitalize on them for His glory.

That's just the greatness of our God, the grace and mercy of our God, now if He can do all that when we're in compromise, imagine what He'd do if we were really sold out to Him, on fire for Him, truly committed to Him! and That's my encouragement to you, if you've allowed compromise to settle into your life, repent, be restored, and watch God renew His *perfect* plan for your life.

You remember how things ended last week, after Ahasuerus got drunk, he got a divorce, alcohol destroyed his marriage relationship. The bible says, “*Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*” Prov 20:1 After that the King went off to war with Greece, lost the war, returned home regretting what he’d done to his wife, how he’d treated her, gotten rid of her. And such is always the case, sin destroys our lives, and sooner or later we always come to regret those decisions that we make that ultimately only seek to serve our own agenda, cater to our own end, the flesh.

So his advisors recommended that he play the field, seek out various beautiful virgins throughout his vast empire, and the one who pleased him the most would be made Queen. At that point Esther entered the picture, as you know she ultimately became the Queen. Well, Mordecai her cousin (who raised her as his own) was sitting with in the king’s gates (many believe that perhaps he operated as an official of sorts in that position) and he discovered a plot on the king’s life to kill him. He made the plot known, it was true enough, and the 2 guys who were plotting the king’s demise were executed, Mordecai was forgotten about. “Thanks for saving my life; I’ll write your name on the official record.” and That was it, Ch 3 picks up.

Vs1

Now isn’t this just the way it goes? Mordecai literally saves the king’s life, and the guy gets nada, Haman, whom we don’t know from a hole in the wall (apparently some sort of official) for no apparent reason, (at least nothing we’re informed of) gets promoted to the highest office in the empire directly under the king himself.

And to add insult to injury Haman is an Agagite, perhaps you recall the situation. Agag was the king of the Amalekites, the sworn enemies of the Israelites, and that came to pass because of the way Amalek attacked Israel during the Exodus, they came up on the rear where the weary, and elderly, those who were weak and unable to keep up were, and began to slaughter them. And it was these guys whom Joshua engaged while Moses was up on the Mt, and as long as Moses’ hands were raised, Israel would be winning, driving back the Amalekites. But when Moses’ hands grew heavy, and he could no longer hold them up, Amalek would begin to overtake Israel, so you remember what happened Aaron and Hur held Moses arms up for him so that Israel would win the war. And you have there the picture of prayer and God’s Word being the key elements in effective warfare, Joshua down below implementing the sword, (which is a picture of the Word of God) and Moses up on the Mt interceding for those engaged in the battle, (as pictured in the raising of his hands). Well after that battle we read, “*Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.’*” Ex 17:14

And just before the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land Moses reminded them saying, *“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget”* Deut 25:17-19

Well years went by, Israel got tired of being a Theocracy and they wanted a king like the other nations around them, so God honored that, gave them exactly what they wanted. And he raised up Saul (a man from the tribe of Benjamin) and made him their king, then came the commission, it was time, God was going to settle accounts with Amalek. Samuel the prophet told Saul that he was to utterly destroy Amalek, every man, woman, and child, even the animals, and take nothing from them, don't divide the spoil, just be rid of it all, that was the Word, and will of the Lord. So Saul set out to do just that, and when the battle was over Samuel was going out to meet Saul and he says, “Well how did it go?” Saul said, “Hey praise the Lord, as the Lord lives I've done all that you've commanded.” Samuel says to him, “Then how is it that I hear the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the cattle?” Saul said, “Oh that, I kept the best alive to offer as sacrifices to the Lord. But everything else I destroyed.” Samuel rebukes Saul for his disobedience, Saul scrambles around trying to convince Samuel that he'd done what he was supposed to only keeping the best alive, to sacrifice to the Lord, and only 1 man, the king, *Agag*.

Samuel says to him, *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.”* 1 Sam 15:22-23 and He turns around to walk away and Saul grabs his robe and his robe tears, and Samuel says, “Even so the Lord has torn the kingdom away from you this day and has given it to another who is better than you.” (Speaking of David) and He grabs a sword and tells Agag, “Even as your sword has made women childless so shall your mother be childless among women.” and He hacks Agag to pieces right there on the spot.

But it would seem as though Saul *didn't* destroy them all, but that some of Agag's offspring had escaped, and here we are all these hundreds of years later and Haman (the Agagite) is placed in authority over Mordecai, who's of Saul's tribe; Benjamin.

Vs2-6

So enter the villain, Haman. Now there are those who say that the reason Mordecai wouldn't bow to Haman was because He only bowed to God. But I don't see that here, it was common for Jews to bow in respect just like anyone else as a simple sign of respect, not a divine act of worship.

Instead it seems to me that Mordecai just flat out didn't like Haman, we'll see as the story progresses that Haman was just about anything other than worthy of that kind of respect anyway. I mean already on account of one man he's willing to wipe out an entire ethnic group, what's that tell you about his character? Perhaps that he doesn't have one, he's obviously proud, arrogant, self serving, and hateful. Getting rid of Mordecai wasn't going to cut it; he wanted to exterminate the entire race. We're talking a pre-Hitler holocaust, that's what Haman was about. You won't find one praise worthy characteristic portrayed through him in the scriptures. The bible says, "*These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*" Prov 6:16-19 and As this story unfolds keep those things in mind, because you'll see them all in Haman.

Now, a minute ago we were speaking about the fact that Haman was an Amalekite, and here he is wanted to utterly wipe out the Jews. You may or may not be aware of the fact that Amalek in the scripture always serves as a type of the flesh. God's instruction concerning Amalek was that he was to be totally wiped out, put to death, every last aspect of the people of Amalek was to be utterly eradicated, eliminated, terminated, done away with completely. What's God's instruction concerning our flesh? That it's to be totally wiped out, put to death, every last aspect of our flesh is to be utterly eradicated, eliminated, done away with completely. Jesus said that if we're going to follow Him we're to take up our cross; Paul said that those who were Christ have crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires. We're not to spare any part of it, think, "Well, I've got this one under control, chained up, imprisoned. Saved alive, but no real threat." That's what Saul did, he Samuel, hack it to pieces (proverbially speaking) Saul sought to save Agag alive, and here's the lesson we learn, Saul didn't utterly destroy the Amalekites did he? As a matter of fact when you find Saul leaning on his spear practically dead at the end of his life on the battlefield, who was it that came up and ultimately did him in? An Amalekite, now hundreds of years later, who is it that's wanting to do in the entire nation? An Amalekite, there can be no treaty with the flesh, keeping a little portion of it alive to serve your own personal agenda, if you don't do in the flesh, the flesh will do you in. If you don't destroy it, it'll destroy you. God help us to learn the lesson, so often we want to flirt around with the corrupt tendencies of the flesh, but as a child of God the flesh is not your friend, it's your avowed enemy, and it'll do everything in its power to destroy your life, deal with it decisively, crucify it completely. Because if not, one of these days, perhaps years later, it'll rear its ugly head and come back to haunt you.

Vs7

Let me explain what's happening here, Haman is scheming to destroy the nation of Israel, but 1<sup>st</sup> he consults the astrologers and magicians and all to make sure when exactly is the best time to inaugurate his plan. So they cast lots (or Pur) to determine exactly when this should happen, and they cast lots in the month of Nissan (April) the 1<sup>st</sup> month on the Hebrew calendar. And it doesn't come up that he should instigate his plan until the month of Adar which is the 12<sup>th</sup> month (around March of the following year).

So in reality this will give the Jews a year to prepare and time for Mordecai and Esther to act, the Proverbs tell us, *“The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.”* Prov 16:33 Remember one of the key overtones of the book of Esther is the providential hand of God, Haman just thinks he’s in control, but God is over this whole situation, and He’s going to tend *to* and take care *of* His own.

But what people do with authority is a real test of character. Do they use it to help others, or promote themselves, to glorify God, or magnify themselves? Daniel received a promotion much like this, but he used it for the glory of God and the benefit of others, not so with Haman.

Vs8-11

So being true to form Ahasuerus (better known as Xerxes) is easily persuaded as to what his course of action needs to be. But in all fairness to him he probably has no idea the level of operation he just endorsed. I would imagine he thinks this is a fairly small time operation, because Haman fills his head with ½ truths and ambiguous lies. Now having said that it’s his responsibility to find out exactly what his advisors are suggesting, but he doesn’t do that, he just says, “Hey, if there’s a group of people out there who aren’t in compliance with the law, than do what you need to do.” But look back at Vs 8, it’s true that there are a people scattered throughout the provinces, and it’s true that they have their own laws (the Law of God, the Mosaic law) but its not true that because of that they don’t keep the king’s laws. To the contrary it in reality makes them ideal citizens because they’d be treating people fair and right if they were complying with God’s Law. As a matter of fact before they went into captivity Jeremiah exhorted them by the Word of the Lord, *“...seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”* Jer 29:7 In other words, “Don’t be rocking the boat in Babylon but rather get along with the people, because if things go well for them, they’ll go well for you.” So they’d been explicitly instructed to get along, and not cause problems, so for Haman to say that because they had their own laws that that meant they didn’t obey the king’s laws was just a flat out lie. And think it through, if this was such a kingdom wide epidemic why hasn’t he heard about until now? I mean he’s been the king now for 12 yrs! You see it just doesn’t add up with even just a little bit of thought put toward it. But herein I believe lies a key for Ahasuerus’ persuasion, there in Vs 9 Haman offers to pay the king 10,000 talents of silver. What that basically adds up to is 375 tons of silver, add that up in today’s market value and I don’t know what you’ll get but believe me it would be millions and millions of dollars to say the least. Now he’d just been to war, and lost, war isn’t an inexpensive operation, how many billions is this war in Iraq costing America? and I have no doubt that Haman’s plan was to exterminate the Jews, and take from the spoil to fund the king’s treasuries. So the king says, “Well, ok.” and Where he tells Haman to keep the money, seems to me to be the standard eastern way of doing business. Remember when Ab and Ephron bartered back and forth over his cave so that he could bury Sarah? Ephron was all, “Just take it,” Ab said, “No, I’ll pay for it” and back and forth it went for a while until Ephron said, “Well its worth 400 shekels of silver, but what’s that between you and me?”

And then Ab paid for it, but that was always the plan, they just seem to have a backhanded way of getting to the point, seeming to be polite but the intent to sell was always there. Same thing here, the king says, “Keep it” but in reality Haman would be coughing it up.

### Vs12-15

No one could figure out why the king would make such a decree, the genocide of an entire nation who’s never been any trouble for him or the nation throughout the entire time that they’ve been there. They’re confused, of course God’s not the author of confusion, as for Haman, he sits down for a hearty meal after ordering the murder of millions, nice guy isn’t he? This letter says that on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month it’ll be legal to kill Jews and any that you kill, you can keep what belonged to them. And we see there in Vs 13 the express agenda of our enemy. To destroy, to kill, and to annihilate the Jews, anti-Semitism is Satanic to the core and no child of God should have anything to do with it. And it stems back to the promise that God made to Ab, that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (a reference the Christ coming from his line).

And from that day forward Satan has considered it his express agenda to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate the Jews, it’s thanks to the Jews that we have the Scriptures, and God through them according to the flesh brought forth the Savior of the world, Satan hates them, and has over and over throughout history sought to erase them. But no one has ever succeeded nor will they, no weapon formed against them will prosper (ultimately). God has covenanted with the nation of Israel and nothing will keep Him from performing the fullness of His Word, and so when you come against Israel, you in essence come against God, big mistake. He told Ab, “I’ll bless them that bless you, and curse them that curse you.” It’s interesting that nearly every major natural disaster that we’ve experienced over the recent years correlates directly by date to the United States involvement in seeking to get Israel to compromise their position on their land. The day they were forced out of the Gaza strip, surrendering their land to the Palestinians, we were busing people out of New Orleans having lost that city, coincidence? Perhaps, but you’d be surprised how many things have happened exactly like that in our nation, in our relationship to Israel. It’s the enemy’s agenda to destroy that nation.

And you as well, remember Jesus said that he came to steal, kill, and destroy, if you’re a child of God he’s after you, but greater is He that is in you than he that is of this world. And its easy for us to criticize Haman for being at peace knowing that millions of people are sure to perish because of what he’d done, and rightfully so. But consider this before we close, how often do we sit down to feast, and fellowship, being at total peace not giving a 2<sup>nd</sup> thought to the fact that there are millions of people out there who will perish apart from Christ? Oh forgive me for the comparison, I’m not saying that you are, or I am *anything* like Haman in that respect. As a child of God you *should* have peace, you *should* have joy, but you should also have a burden, I need to have a burden, a burden for those who are sure to perish as we sit idly by. God help us catch *His* vision and *His* heart for a hurt and dying world around us.

And I don't want to hurl condemnation towards anyone, God will accomplish His purpose with or without you, or me or anyone else, but mull it over, seek the Lord to entrust you with an active part in His plan in reaching the lost. That many might be saved alive, and His kingdom might increase to His glory through your life.

Prayer Points:

God help us to snap out of any apathy or lethargy in our commitment to You, help us according to Your will to take an active part in your plan in saving multitudes eternally for Your name's sake. And God may we take heed to Your word in utterly annihilating and crucifying the flesh. So often we're guilty of making provision for the flesh, but may we learn the lesson and heed the warning found in Your Word, teach us to set our lives apart *totally* unto You. May we be salt and light.