

The last time we were together Mordecai was enlisted into the king's service as a servant who was part of the entourage that was to honor Haman, the new leader and commander of King Ahasuerus.

As Haman made his way to the gate of the city all of the servants were to bow down and pay homage to Haman. Since Mordecai would not do this it would strongly suggest that it was some form of worship that he was not willing to share with a human being, since only God deserves that type of homage.

Of course he was confronted by others as being treasonous.

Esther 3:3 ³ Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why are you transgressing the king's command?"

What is interesting in this account is that this was not a one-time event. Let's look at the next verse.

Esther 3:4 ⁴ Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

A couple of things are going on here.

The first is the fact that this seemed to be a daily event where Haman was being paraded out before his servants expecting this special treatment, and daily Mordecai would not submit, to where they finally told Haman.

Why do you suppose they didn't tell Haman on day one?

They may have liked Mordecai and didn't want to see him get in trouble or maybe they thought he just didn't get the whole idea of such adulation and were cutting him some slack. But whatever the reason, after some time had passed they felt that if they didn't say something they would be derelict in their duties to Haman.

But according to verse 4 why didn't Mordecai bow and give reverence to Haman?

Because he was a Jew.

Well, what does a being a Jew have to do with not bowing down to Haman?

In this case, being a Jew is another way of saying that he honored the King of the Jews, the Lord and Savior of the Jews, in other words the God of the Jews, the one true God and Creator.

Well, evidently after Haman was made aware that Mordecai would not bow down he actually looked out into the crowd or was made aware of where Mordecai was in the crowd to see for himself that Mordecai would not prostrate himself before him.

And his response was what we would expect for a guy who longed for such adulation.

Esther 3:5 ⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage.

The phrase filled, in other translations is, filled with wrath. The Hebrew word is simply, burned.

But because Haman evidently feared the Jews for whatever the reason, he was not willing to lay hands on Mordecai at that time.

Esther 3:6 ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him *who* the people of Mordecai *were*; therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

Why do you suppose Haman desires to destroy all the Jews for the act of one Jew?

There must have been a deep seeded hatred for the Jews for some time, and now this one Jew, whom Haman believes represents the entire group of Jews, will not submit, and so he concludes all of the Jews will not submit and would probably pose a threat to the Kingdom of Ahasuerus.

Esther 3:8 ⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from *those* of all *other* people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.

According to this account does it sound like all of the Jews were integrating themselves into the ways of Persia?

No. In fact, it appears that they have their own form of government with their own laws and customs. Now, this would be an

overstatement by Haman with the express purpose of making a case to kill all the Jews because we know that many of the Jews did in fact meld into that society as they adapted the language and customs along with the gods of Babylon.

But there was a remnant and there certainly would have been Jews who still felt that they should not give up their identity as God's people. And it would be this group who Haman believes Mordecai represents as those who defy the King, and all of Babylon.

But as we'll see Haman will not be content to only destroy the belligerents but all the Jews without exception.

Esther 3:9 ⁹ "If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the *king's* business, to put into the king's treasuries."

What is Haman saying here?

He is saying that the Jews as a whole need to be destroyed because they are a cancer in the land that must be cut out. This is what is known as genocide and it has been practiced for thousands of years up to the present day as we see in the Middle East with the group ISIS. There is nothing new under the sun.

But you would think that such a drastic measure would be weighed by the King in such a way where some thought would go into this and allow time to pass for other counsel, but that's not what happens.

Esther 3:10-11 ¹⁰ Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ The king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and the people *also*, to do with them as you please."

So, essentially what does the king do?

He signs the death warrant on an entire group of people.

But notice what else he does. What does it mean that the King gives his signet ring to Haman?

This is basically the king giving Haman whatever he wants with the king's approval as the signet ring is the equivalent of his Platinum Visa Card with all the privileges. Whatever Haman needs he only has to show the king's ring and he gets what he wants with

no one being able to question him because it would be the same as questioning the king.

And so the symbol of the ring becomes the decree of the king.

Esther 3:12-15 ¹² Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder. ¹⁴ A copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province was published to all the peoples so that they should be ready for this day. ¹⁵ The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa; and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.

How wide and far reaching was this edict according to verses 12?

Was there any ambiguity in what the message or edict was according to verse 13?

Let's look at that for a moment.

Esther 3:13 ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder.

There are three separate words used to describe the mission in verse 13. Destroy, kill and annihilate.

Most English translations use these three words.

The word destroy in Hebrew means to be exterminated. The word kill simply means to slay and the word annihilate speaks for itself, which could also be translated perish.

There is nothing left to the imagination or interpretation of someone as to what these words mean, but if there were the edict goes on to elaborate who in this group is to be included, namely,

young and old, women and children. And of course to the victor goes the spoils and so the edict includes the plundering of all the possessions of the Jews.

And this was to be accomplished in one day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

This is a tall order to be accomplished in one day. We're talking of probably tens of thousands of people.

But we have to come back to the real issue at hand in the book of Esther. We can look at this account of the genocide of the Jews and conclude that the Jews were always at the focal point of disdain and that this was one more incident of that reality.

We can come to their defense and say that they were always a persecuted people to even this day where around the world they are still viewed as vermin especially among the Arab countries. But we would be missing the point at least here in the book of Esther.

And the point has nothing to do with individual people or even an entire nation. The point goes back to verse 4 of chapter 3.

Esther 3:4 ⁴ Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

What is this really all about?

What God will you worship and will you compromise that allegiance or not?

The book of Esther is a book about the God who saves and the God who judges righteously. And yes, there are God's people who will always be caught in the cross-fire as the world, the seed of the serpent, tries to destroy that which belongs to God.

We look at what is going on in the Middle East today and it's beyond comprehension in the western world how people can be so barbaric as they murder children and women and anyone who does not agree with them as they publicly behead innocent people.

But this war started back in the Garden of Eden as Satan successfully won the first battle to destroy the people of God. That war has been raging for thousands of years and it still rages today and yes, those who embrace Christ are seen as the enemy.

In the Middle East it is the official edict to kill, destroy and annihilate those who do not bow the knee to Allah. But, even though there is no official decree in this country it is assumed by many in power that born-again believers are enemies of the state as they are not allowed to speak the truth of God's word in many places.

Yes, there are still freedoms we possess, but just to our north in Canada it is against the law to speak in any hateful way against certain groups. And they define hate speech as intolerant speech. And so, if you teach from the pulpit that homosexuality is sinful behavior and someone is offended by that speech you can be prosecuted for that.

Well, if one form of sin can be viewed as hate speech at what point does other types of sin become out of bounds to address? Is it hate speech to address abortion as murder if it offends a part of the population that acknowledge that is the law of the land?

Is it hate speech to define marriage as instituted by our Creator God as that between a man and a woman? Is it hate speech to speak of alcoholism as sinful behavior instead of a disease?

The world, the seed of the serpent, will not rest until the last Christian is silenced and if at some point that means literally destroying them, then it is not beyond the scope of the enemy, with the full support of the people of this world, to carry that out.

Has anyone ever heard of the great tribulation?

The great tribulation is not the absence of destruction of the people of God, it is the destruction of the people of God by the world.

Matthew 24:1-22 ^{NAU} Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." ³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷ "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom

against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³ "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴ "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. ¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. ¹⁸ "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹ "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²² "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Jesus is clearly addressing believers who will be around to see the abomination of desolation, who will be around to see tribulation, even great tribulation and yet in His mercy God will intervene and cut those days short for the sake of the elect.

What we see in the book of Esther is a taste of the future. Nothing has changed with the plans of the enemy, but like Mordecai we are asked to stand and not compromise or bow down to the god of this world or the system of paganism this world produces, even as forms of paganism are taught in the church today, a precursor to the abomination of desolation.

You and I in Christ are called out to be a holy people to the glory of God, but we are called some interesting things by God Himself. I want to pick up next week as we look into what was for the Jews of that day a great tribulation.

But I want to end on how God views His people who are in Christ even during times of tribulation.

Matthew 6:26 ²⁶ "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

^{NAU} **John 16:33** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

1 Peter 2:9 ⁹ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1 Corinthians 15:55-58 ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

Romans 8:35-39 ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.