

Last week Haman, the chief ruler under King Ahasuerus, discovered that Mordecai would not bow down or pay homage to him and he became enraged at Mordecai and he was filled with wrath. But he would not immediately lay hands on him.

Does anyone remember why?

He was a Jew, but it wasn't that he feared only one Jew named Mordecai. If we look at the text notice what it says.

Esther 3:6 ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone,

Haman despised Mordecai, but he wasn't the only one he despised. He despised all of the people who were of the same group as Mordecai; that is all of the Jews.

^{NIV} **Esther 3:6** Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai.

^{NET} **Esther 3:6** But the thought of striking out against Mordecai alone was repugnant to him,

But as we saw last week it was precisely because Mordecai was a Jew that he was not willing to bow or pay homage to Haman and so Haman plots not just to kill Mordecai but every Jew in every part of the kingdom.

And as we saw last time the King doesn't hesitate to give Haman the tools necessary to carry out what is nothing short of the premeditated murder of men, women and children of all the Jews, which we call genocide.

Esther 3:14 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.

Essentially, what King Ahasuerus has done is to limit the slaughter to one day only by law. The chances of killing 10's of thousands of people all around the kingdom in one day are not very good. Ahasuerus may very well have considered that this would limit the bloodshed and would be his way of administering grace so that an entire group of people could not be wiped out.

Or as we will see shortly it will be God's way of protecting His people as He will ultimately intervene and turn the tables on Haman through another law that Ahasuerus will put into place.

But the law to wipe out an entire people is met with astonishment among many people there in the capital city of Susa.

Esther 3:15 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.

The word confusion regarding the people in the city of Susa would be a natural one. There were certainly Jews who lived in the capital city and these would be your neighbors if you were a Babylonian.

Now, for all we know many of the locals didn't care for the Jews, but that's different from having to put someone to death by law, even if they are a Jew. And so, we can imagine the confusion.

^{NIV} **Esther 3:15** Spurred on by the king's command, the couriers went out, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

^{NKJ} **Esther 3:15** The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

When we come to the 4th chapter of Esther we see an exchange between Mordecai and Esther as the both of them try and figure out how they can influence the king to rescind this law. The problem is that despite Esther being the queen she is still not allowed to approach the king unless the king first summons her. And according to the king's law, if you approach him without a summons the penalty for that action is death.

Esther 4:11 ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days."

And so, essentially what Esther says is that her hands are tied and there's nothing she can do.

But the back and forth continues as Mordecai sends her the message that she needs to rethink that position because when the

day comes for all the Jews to be put to death she may not escape that fate.

Up until this point does the king know that Esther is a Jew?

No. But when it's time to start the killing there will be someone who will reveal who she is and as we'll see later when it comes to the law the king will carry it out to the letter and so Mordecai reminds her of that.

Esther 4:13 ¹³ Then Mordecai told *them* to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.

But then Mordecai says something interesting in the next verse.

Esther 4:14 ¹⁴ "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

Even in this dark hour Mordecai seems to hold out hope that relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place.

What do you suppose he means by this?

The end of verse 14 may give us a clue. Nowhere in verse 14 is God's name mentioned, but Mordecai poses the possibility that the reason Esther is in a place of royalty is for her to be able to make a difference in the lives of the Jews.

Now, keep in mind that Mordecai is corresponding with Esther through messages he is conveying to Esther's servants.

He may very well be couching his language in such a way that does not expose Esther as one who belongs to the God who can save, that is the God of the Jews.

Mordecai is essentially saying that God is more than capable of saving His people during this time and that He may in fact raise up someone else to do it if she's not willing to, but in the process she may lose her life for her unfaithfulness to God.

On the other hand, if she will put her faith into practice it could turn out that this was the time and the reason that she was placed in such a position of royalty so that she could have access to the king and be an instrument in the hands of God for the good of His people.

And this message seems to have gotten through to Esther as we read in the following verses.

Esther 4:16 ¹⁶ "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

Again, no mention of God here but the inference is that she and Mordecai and the Jews in Susa need to approach the God of Israel as they humble themselves before Him seeking His deliverance.

And so, for three days all of these folks, including Esther's maidens, (Jews or not), will be fasting with the express purpose of approaching God for help.

And at this point it seems that Esther is in all the way.

How do we know this according to the end of verse 16?

Like Mordecai who would not bow to Haman, Esther, probably, for the first time in her life, has to make the hard decision to choose to follow God under unusual and hard circumstances without compromise. And so, she decides to stand even if it means she may lose her life.

But in her mind it is better to lose her life than to compromise and dishonor her God.

So, Mordecai takes the message to the Jews in Susa to pray and fast for three days and at the end of the three days Esther goes forward with her plan to approach the King.

Esther 5:1-2 ^{NAU} Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace. ² When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which *was* in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter.

Okay, so far so good. Answered prayer. Esther gets her foot in the door, literally. The king extends his scepter allowing Esther to approach him.

^{NAU} **Esther 5:3** Then the king said to her, "What is *troubling* you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you."

The NAU version of the bible inserts the word *troubling* at the beginning of the verse but it's not there in the Hebrew. It could certainly be inferred that she was troubled in light of the gravity of the situation but a better translation is found in the NIV.

^{NIV} **Esther 5:3** Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

At any rate the king would certainly be concerned to see his queen approach him without being summoned and so it wouldn't surprise us that she appeared troubled.

But to give her assurance that he only desires her best in this situation he says the following.

"And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you."

Whether the king was actually willing to give her up to half of his kingdom what is the point he is making to Esther?

There is no request too small or too great that he is not willing to meet just for the asking.

Okay, this seems to be going pretty well so far. God is still answering prayer at this point. But she's not willing to play all of her cards here at this time. Notice what she does not do. She doesn't ask that the king spare her people. She asks that Haman would be allowed to come in and be blessed by Esther at a banquet that she has prepared for two people, the king and Haman.

Well, the king will never turn down a good party especially for himself and so he tells his servants to run and to get Haman and so Haman and the king enjoy themselves drinking wine and eating good food. But the king knows that Esther has not asked for what she really wants.

Keep in mind that for whatever else the king is, he is certainly a good politician and a good politician knows when he is being worked, even if it's his own queen.

So at some point during the banquet the king once again asks Esther the same question.

Esther 5:6 ⁶ As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."

A second time the king assures Esther that there isn't anything that the king would not be willing to do for her.

And her response is once again calculated.

Esther 5:7-8 ⁷ So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is: ⁸ if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."

The Lord is certainly leading and guiding Esther in this endeavor but He is doing it in such a way as to demonstrate the wisdom in such an approach. As we will see this is being innocent as a dove and wise as a serpent.

At this point the king is probably wondering what Esther has got up her sleeve, but he seems to be more than willing to let her pursue this particular path as she leads him along so as to get whatever it is she wants. Haman sees this as a great political opportunity to get even closer to the king and his queen so as to advance his political career.

And so, full of wine and good food Haman leaves the party pretty excited about what a great impression he must have made on Esther to be invited back to a second party in as many days.

But on his way home his merriment turns into anger.

Esther 5:9-10 ⁹ Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

It's hard to say what is going on in Mordecai's heart at this point but it sure looks like the two of these guys have got it in for each other. Haman wants nothing more than for all people to honor him

as the second in command to the king, while Mordecai willfully stands against such overtures and he continues, at least as far as Haman is concerned, to dishonor Haman by not paying him homage.

While Haman is filled with anger he seems to have enough self-control to simply let this situation go by as he considers how he might get back at Mordecai.

And so, he goes home and gets together with his friends and his wife to have an after party-party.

Still full of wine and himself he soothes his anger with a recount of his incredible abilities.

Esther 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every *instance* where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹² Haman also said, "Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king.

What kind of guy does Haman strike you as?

Prideful, self-centered, arrogant. It will be this precise attitude that will be his downfall. But of all the things that Haman has, good friends, a good wife, the best position in the kingdom with wealth and family that is head and shoulders above everyone else in society, there is one thing that Haman does not possess and it is driving him nuts, that he simply can't get off of his mind.

Any guesses as to what it is?

Esther 5:13 ¹³ "Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

Why is Haman so obsessed with Mordecai?

Because Mordecai sees through him, but more than that Mordecai places his honor at the feet of his God and creator and is willing to give his life for the Lord. He is not willing to give that type of honor to any man, including Haman and this drives Haman mad because everyone else in the kingdom will. But to add insult to injury this Mordecai is a mere Jew a captive of the great nation Babylon.

But let's think for a moment. You and I in Christ serve a King and our Savior and Lord.

But what does the world require of you?

It requires you to think like them and if you don't then you are viewed as a rebel. You must view science as the final word to all of life. You must view the government as your mother and father and submit to it as the final authority. You must practice any religion found in any form but Christianity because Jesus Christ puts forth a much too narrow view.

John 14:6 ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Matthew 7:13-14 ¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The world requires you to be more like them because if you won't then you stand out as one who is viewed as holier than thou and the world will not be placed in a position of having to think it has any un-holiness.

But more than the world there is one who hates believers with a passion especially those who will not compromise the truth of God's word and those who are willing to give the world the greatest news this world has ever heard, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Satan, and the world which is used to advance his plans, will do everything to silence the church of believers who go forward with the truth in love.

It is when we are loving each other and the truth of God's word and we are willing to let that love spill over into the world that the world will actually hate us for that stance on the truth. In fact, this is the context in which Christ makes His statement on why the world hates us.

John 15:16-19 ¹⁶ "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷ "This I command you, that you love one another. ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me

before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

Haman is the personification of the world and he can only hate that which belongs to God and he who only bows to God.

Peter understood that a faithful servant is one who does all things for his Master in the power and authority of his Master.

1 Peter 4:11-14 ¹¹ Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ¹²

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 John 3:13-14 ¹³ Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

Haman abides in death and so does the rest of the world as they will not bow the knee to Christ. No one likes to be hated, but it is inevitable if we love our Lord Jesus without compromise. They hated Christ and they will hate us, unless we don't appear as any different from the world and its ways.

^{NAU} **Matthew 5:14** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Mordecai was going to be that light in a perverse and crooked generation but he was also going to rely on the promises of God and the Lord's faithfulness to come through for him and God's people.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 ³ But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*.

We'll see how the Lord's faithfulness and His protecting hand will come to Esther, Mordecai and all of God's chosen next week.