

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

REFUSING TO BOW (ESTHER 3:1-6)

INTERESTING TURN OF EVENTS

Ch. 3 starts off with Haman, the Agagite, being promoted into the highest position under the King instead of Mordecai. Mordecai saved the King and had a note recorded while an enemy of the Jews was elevated.

- **There will be seeming injustices in this life, but God knows what He is doing and will not forsake His people.**

THE KING ORDERS RESPECT TOWARD HAMAN

In his elevated position, the King commands that everyone is to bow and pay homage to Haman.

- It is noticed by the royal officials that Mordecai is disobeying the King's command and after warning him repeatedly, they tell Haman of his continued disobedience.

WORSHIP VERSUS RESPECT

There is a difference between refusing to bow in worship and refusing to show respect. **The King's order was to show respect to Haman, not to worship him as an idol.**

- **It was not a violation of the second commandment when Jews bowed to people in authority no more than when we show respect to leaders today.**

THE REASON FOR HIS REFUSAL TO BOW

Mordecai tells the officials the reason he could not bow to Haman was because he is a Jew.

- It's interesting that he draws the line here when he did not return to Jerusalem when Cyrus allowed it. He also hasn't gone back to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, and instead of encouraging Esther not to defile herself with the King's food, he directs her to conceal her identity.

ENLISTING IN THE BATTLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Haman witnesses Mordecai's refusal to bow and is "filled with rage." He dismisses the idea of punishing just Mordecai and instead wishes to wipe every Jewish person from the face of the Earth.

- **Though this reaction seems extreme, it is the anti-Semitic nature of the world** (Genesis 3:15).

CASTING LOTS (ESTHER 3:7-15)

THE DATE IS DECIDED

To decide when this genocide was to take place, Haman cast lots to pick a date. A date 11 months out was decided on to start the extinction of God's people.

- "Casting lots" in ancient times was the equivalent of rolling dice or flipping a coin in our time. **Even what seems like "chance" is under the control of God.**

HAMAN APPROACHES THE KING

Now that Haman has a date picked, he approaches the King to persuade him to make an irrevocable decree to kill all Jews.

- Haman tells the King there is a group that doesn't keep his laws; they are of no benefit to him, and, to play into his greed, offers him 375 tons (10,000 talents) of silver.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNET RING

The King, without further questioning, hastily grants Haman's request, even giving his signet ring to him.

- By giving Haman his signet ring, the King no longer had to have direct involvement, but gave full authority to Haman. He could now sign and seal letters as if they came from the King himself.

HAMAN THOUGHT HE WAS IN CONTROL

The King gave Haman the money and people group to do with as he pleased. The order was sent out declaring that in one day the Jewish people would be killed and their possessions plundered.

- Haman felt like he had won but failed to realize that the Jewish people were not the King's to give away, and God controlled the lots giving Him plenty of time to orchestrate a plan.

HAMAN'S APATHY

This section ends with a glimpse into the heart of the King and Haman. A death warrant had been sent out on thousands of innocent people, the town is confused, and the leaders sit down to drink.

- Before we condemn Haman, we need to look inward. **Have we been apathetic to the plight of humanity?**

GREAT MOURNING (ESTHER 4:1-6)

THE NEWS OF THE KING'S EDICT SPREADS

Mordecai becomes aware of the King's edict, tears his clothes, and puts on sackcloth and ashes.

- The tearing of clothes was symbolic of deep distress, and the sackcloth was a coarse material worn as a symbol of the inner discomfort caused by a crisis. The ashes signified desolation and ruin.

IN DESPAIR, THEY TURN BACK TO GOD

Mordecai was not the only one who grieved. The Jews in every province responded to the devastating news by "fasting, weeping, and many laying in sackcloth and ashes."

- Regardless of past shortcomings and failures in adhering to their Jewish faith, when all hope seems lost, Mordecai and the Jewish people seek God's help.

NOT UPSETTING THE KING (NEHEMIAH 2:1-2)

The author felt it important to tell us that Mordecai only went as far as the King's Gate, since law prohibited anyone from entering wearing sackcloth.

- Though the text does not exactly say what Esther's intentions were in sending clothes to Mordecai, it seems safe to assume she wanted to see what was causing her uncle such grief and not to pretend like nothing was wrong.

PROTECTING HER FAMILY

Esther was overcome with fear, so when Mordecai refused the clothes, she sent Hathach, one of the King's eunuchs, to find out what was troubling Mordecai.

- Esther, living in isolation, was unaware of the murderous edict and that Mordecai had revealed he was Jewish, so Esther was fearful for her uncle.

SUCH A TIME AS THIS (ESTHER 4:7-17)

MORDECAI PIVOTS FROM PREVIOUS PLANS

Mordecai, with insider information, relayed everything to Esther. Through Hathach, Esther would learn about the decree, the Jews eventual destruction, and how the King was swayed by money.

- Mordecai insisted that Esther approach the King, reveal her identity, and appeal to the King to save her people.

MORDECAI REQUESTS THE IMPOSSIBLE

It was a death sentence to approach the King without being summoned, and once a decree was issued, it could not be revoked by even the King himself.

- To add to the impossible nature of the request, Esther informs Mordecai that she had not been invited into the King's presence in almost a month.

MORDECAI RESPONDS TO ESTHER

He tells her that her position in the palace will not save her from the destruction the Jews face, and if she remains silent, she and her family will die.

- Ultimately, she could fail her people and let them down, but God is faithful. **God will not turn His back on us even if we have turned our backs on Him.**

"FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"

Mordecai sees that God has promoted an orphan for a purpose and now he, and the Jewish people, needed Esther to see it.

- **With God, there are no accidents or coincidences, only providence. He had a purpose in bringing her to the throne and now that purpose is evident. Esther is to intercede for her people.**

ESTHER'S RESPONSE

Esther is determined to act and petitions that everyone join her in prayer and fasting. Where she once was groomed to enter the King's presence, she now would approach him for the impossible while looking her worst.

- **There are special spiritual battles that require prayer and fasting** (Matthew 17:20).

"IF I PERISH, I PERISH"

Esther carried a bold attitude toward her mission and was determined to be obedient, no matter what the cost.

- **Mordecai and Esther have come to the end of themselves. Though their hope and actions may have once been misplaced, they now know that God is their only hope.**

WE ARE GIVEN A SIGNET RING

- Where Xerxes gave Haman his signet ring granting him authority to act on his behalf, the one true King has given us power and authority to act on His behalf.
- **Whose "will" are we acting on? Have we set aside "ourselves" in order to pick up the work we have been called to accomplish?**

A DECREE WAS SENT OUT

- The Jewish people faced a decree from King Xerxes that they were unable to escape. Destruction was coming.
- **How would we react to a similar decree?**
- **2 Peter 3:10 and 1 Thess. 5:2-3 tells us the date has been set, the world is ending, and everything will be dissolved. How will we respond?**

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

- Mordecai came to the realization that God had purposely placed him and Esther in a position to be able to save His people.
- God has put us in a place for a reason. **Have we relied on His wisdom to see that purpose and relied on His strength for the courage to walk in it?**
- **Are we serving Jesus where we are?**

"You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve him where you are."—Charles Spurgeon