

## Esther 3:1-6 “Haman’s Big Blunder” 6/19/22

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”<sup>1</sup> says Proverbs 6:16-19

Today, our reading in the book of Esther introduces a man who exemplifies all of these negative characteristics - His name is Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha

It is uncertain whether Haman was descended from King Agag, the Amalekite enemy of King Saul - Or perhaps he was just from the land of Agag - But the fact that Haman is a man of wealth leads many Bible scholars to lean toward the royal family connection between Haman and King Agag

It is interesting to note that the conflict between King Saul and Agag occurred hundreds of years before the events of today’s passage - The Jews and the Amalekites had been enemies a long time

And since an Amalekite had been responsible for King Saul’s death, these feelings probably ran even deeper for Benjamites like Mordecai and Esther - That generations old hatred may have had as much to do with Mordecai refusing the bow to Haman as did the mandates 2nd of the Ten Commandments,

“You shall not make for yourself a carved 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.” records Exodus 20:4

There is a lot going on in today’s chapter in Esther - We were introduced to Haman - And we heard about his rise to power to a throne above all the other officials

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quoted has been taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version,

He was then able to do many great things - But instead his first order of business was to have everyone bow to him and pay homage - And since he isn't well liked enough, or hasn't done anything great - Having everyone bow to him takes a royal order from the king

Warren Wiersbe writes that, "Haman was a small man in a big office, and the other nobles, worthier than he, would not willingly recognize him. This fact is another hint that Haman got the office not by earning it but by stealing it. If he were a worthy officer, the other leaders would have gladly recognized him."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the king's order, Mordecai refused to bow down and pay homage to Haman - It was permissible for a Jew, and under most circumstances it did not violate the second commandment when they bowed down to show respect for those in authority - Any more than Christians do when they show respect to leaders today

God's Word contains examples of others who have bowed before leaders - For example, in Genesis 23:7, Abraham bowed down to the sons of Heth when he negotiated with them for Sarah's grave - 1 Samuel 24:8 even records David bowing down to Saul - Plus Jacob and his family also bowed down before Esau

So, then what was Mordecai's objection? - Rod Mattoon<sup>3</sup> offers several guesses - In Babylon and Persia bowing down was a form of worship, and the king and his top appointees were worshipped as gods - So in that situation, bowing was indeed a violation of the second commandment

Some Jewish traditions hold that Haman's robe was imprinted with a large image of one of the Persian idols - So to bow to Haman involved paying homage to the idol as well - Once again, a bold violation of the second of the Ten Commandments

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<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, © 2003, (David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO)

<sup>3</sup> *Treasures from Esther*, Dr. Rod Mattoon,

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And, as I mentioned earlier - The Jews and the Amalekites, and especially the Jews who were Benjamites, like Mordecai, had been enemies for centuries

Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman got Haman just about as mad as a passenger on a red eye flight that went from Los Angeles to New York, with one stop in Dallas - The passenger told the flight attendant to wake him and make sure he got off in Dallas

But then the passenger awoke just as it was getting light outside, and the plane was landing in New York - Furious, he called the flight attendant and demanded an explanation - The young woman mumbled an apology - And the passenger stomped off the plane in a rage

"Boy, was he ever mad!" another crew member said - "If you think he was mad," replied the flight attendant, "you should have seen the guy I put off the plane in Dallas!"<sup>4</sup>

Haman was worse than those passengers - God's Word says he wasn't just angry - He was filled with fury - Esther 3:5 "And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury"

The online version of Webster's Dictionary's defines "fury" as "intense, disordered, and often destructive rage"<sup>5</sup> - Fury is anger taken to the next step - Anger that spreads to other people - And Haman's fury led to some very bad consequences

Esther 3:6 "But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus."

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<sup>4</sup> H.B. McClung, SermonCentral.com

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fury>

Haman's anger with Mordecai developed into hatred for the whole Jewish race - Haman could have reported Mordecai's crime to the king, and the king would have imprisoned Mordecai or perhaps had him executed, but that would not have satisfied Haman's lust for revenge

Haman's hatred had to be nourished by something bigger, like the destruction of all the Jewish people - Of course, the annihilation an entire race of people needed the king's blessing

And Haman knew exactly how to appeal to Ahasuerus - He offered him a bribe - A rather large bribe: ten thousand talents of silver, or about 12 million ounces - When I finished these sermon notes yesterday, silver was worth \$21.69 per ounce

So, Haman was offering silver worth more than a quarter billion dollars in today's money - I am sure that it was quite an appealing offer considering that Ahasuerus had recently spent a fortune on his failed attempt to conquer Greece

The king seemed like he could care less about the lives of his people - Because he was not even interested enough to inquire who the people Haman wanted to kill were

My King James Study Bible notes that, "The king's utter indifference to the fate of millions of his subjects has found modern parallels in Hitler, Stalin, and Khrushchev"<sup>6</sup> - The king gives Haman his signet ring so the letters would be sealed and sent in the king's name

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

Finally, the chapter closes with verse 15 "The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion."

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<sup>6</sup> The King James Study Bible, © 1988, 2013, by Liberty University, (Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, TN)

These two men, Ahasuerus and Haman have just ordered the execution of all the Jews in the Persian Empire, which even included the Holy Land - And all the Jews who had been allowed to return there after Persia conquered Babylon bringing an end to the Babylonian captivity

The Persian capital city was thrown into confusion - Yet, despite that, these two men who are the most powerful leaders in the entire kingdom simply sit down to have a drink together

There are many lessons for us to take away from this passage - First, notice that being faithful to God isn't always the easiest way to go - If Mordecai had just compromised his beliefs and paid homage to Haman - Haman probably would have never noticed him

Yet to do that Mordecai would have needed to turn his back on God and to bow down and worship a man - In the early Church days, Peter and the other Apostles were confronted with a similar choice to make - Either obey a person's unreasonable demand or obey God

Acts 5:29 records their decision, "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" - That was not the easiest way out either - Because they were faithful to God, they were beaten before they were let go

Another lesson to learn here is that being faithful to God doesn't always mean an instant reward or blessing - Sometimes we might be faithful, and all the worst happens

That's what it seemed to be happening in this 3rd chapter of Esther - Mordecai is being faithful to the Lord's commands - And instead of it being a blessing, it sure looks like a victory for Haman, and the entire Jewish race will be executed

We, of course, know the end of the story - So we know that this is a major blunder on Haman's part - His plan unwittingly includes the execution of Queen Esther

In addition, we know that the book of Esther ends with Haman executed - And with the veneration of Mordecai - Esther 10:3 “For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.”

Sometimes we do the right thing, and we don't end up second in rank to the king, great among the Jews, and popular with the multitudes - Sometimes we are faithful, and we don't see any reward at all - Or at least we don't see one until we reach heaven

Jesus' words are recorded in Matthew 6:19-21 - He said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

And the final lesson I want you to consider is about anger - Righteous anger is okay - There are many injustices in this world that should arouse our anger as believers - Ephesians 4:26-27 “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”

But the blind rage that Haman demonstrated is always wrong - And it always does damage - Forgiveness is a much better plan - Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

So, in conclusion, be faithful to what the Lord requires - Even if it isn't the easiest way - If it boils down to the question of whether we should obey what someone wants, or be faithful to what God wants; we had better pick what God wants

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to the right thing, even if there is no reward in sight - And we should always be careful with anger