

SBC – Aug. 22, 2021
Esther 3:8-15 (NKJV)
“Haman Legalizes his Murderous Conspiracy”

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Slide # 1

Theme: God’s providential Care For His People

Outline:

Chapter 1 – Queen Vashti Deposed

Chapter 2 – Esther Becomes Queen

Chapter 3 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews

Chapters 4-7 Esther’s Courage – Haman’s Plot Backfires

Chapter 8 The Jews Avenged

Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

Esther is a story about God’s covenant faithfulness in spite of His unfaithful people. It is a story about God’s providential care of His people even though His name is not even mentioned one time in the book.

Slide # 2

605/597/586 BC – Babylonian Captivity

538 BC – Decree by Persian king Cyrus permitting the Jews return

483-473 BC – Events in the book of Esther involving Jews remaining in Persia

Slide # 3

Timeline in Esther

3rd Year of Ahasuerus – **483 B.C.** (Queen Vashti deposed) – Esther 1:3

7th Year of Ahasuerus – **479 B.C.** (Esther made Queen) – Esther 2:16

12th Year of Ahasuerus – **474 B.C.** (Haman’s Plot Hatched) – Esther 3:7

As I say this is really a story about God in the background (so to speak) Who in reality was providentially controlling all things.

And the story line goes way back to the Amalekites and the Jews at the time of the Exodus. When the Jews came out of Egypt in the Exodus the Amalekites attacked the weakest of the Jews from the rear because they did not fear God as seen in Deut 25:17-19. Because of this God said that one day the Jews were to “blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” And then warned “You shall not forget”.

Fast-forward about 600 years and king Saul was told to go and wipe out the Amalekites as a matter of God’s “unfinished business”. However, Saul spared the king of the Amalekites named Agag (cf. 1 Sam. 15).

Fast-forward again about 500 years and Haman, now having the second highest position in the Persian kingdom is said to be an “**Agagite**” which I take it to probably mean he was a descendant of the Amalekites and king Agag in particular. As such he and his people were ancient enemies of God’s people Israel of which Mordecai and Esther were representative.

Slide # 4

1400 B.C. – The Jews Attacked by the Amalekites – (Ex. 17).

1000 B.C. – Saul told to finish off the Amalekites and king Agag - (1 Sam. 15)

474 B.C. – Haman Plots to Kill all the Jews – (Esther 3).

So, as you can see at this point there was about a 1000 year history of “bad blood” between Haman’s people (the Amalekites) and Mordecai’s people (the Jews). This is the essence of the story. And the story shows that God really is the God of Israel in spite of their unfaithfulness; and God really is faithful to His Word and covenant promises no matter what.

The story is not so much about the Jews and the Amalekites as it is about the God of Israel. This is what makes the difference in the story. As I say it really is all about God and His faithful covenant character.

Mordecai the Jew also had a high position in the Persian kingdom, but he was under Haman. To honor Haman the king had commanded that all were to bow in respect to Haman, but Mordecai refused to do this.

Consequently, Haman plotted not only on how he might kill Mordecai but also all of his people – the Jews – of course not realizing that the newly appointed queen was actually Jewish.

In first month of the year (Nisan) through the casting of lots Haman superstitiously decided they would seek to carry out his murderous plot on the 12th month of the year which was the month of Adar.

But one thing remained. Haman had to get the king on board with his plan and put it into law. And that is where the story now goes.

Esther 3:8–15 (NKJV)

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain.

Notice that Haman didn’t even mention who specifically these “certain people” were. He notes they are scattered about in all the provinces of the vast Persian kingdom. It is estimated that there were about 50 million people living in the Persian empire at this time and some think about 20 percent may have been Jewish. This would mean that about 10 million Jews are in view. Whatever the actual figure – it was probably millions of Jewish people.

Haman mixed truth with lies which often serves to strengthen a lie. He was right in saying that their laws were different from that of other people. It is true that the laws of God for the Jews were that only God was to be worshipped and they were to have nothing to do with idolatry (cf. Num. 23:9; Deut. 4:8; 32:31). However, it was slander to say, “**they do not keep the king’s laws**”. And be reminded the name *devil* means “**slanderer**”. It’s what he does through people in an effort to destroy God’s people.

If Mordecai and Esther are anything to go by, the Jews are largely prepared to assimilate. – ***The Reformation Study Bible***

Slide # 5

Jeremiah 29:4 (NKJV)

4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Jeremiah 29:7 (NKJV)

7 And 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.

The Jews were not there to make trouble. Mordecai's refusal to bow in honor before Haman is now made to represent general rebellion on the part of all Jews in relation to the king's commands.

Haman makes it sound like he is really concerned about the king's interests concerning a rebel people in the kingdom, but in truth his ego burned against the Jewish man Mordecai who refused to bow before him and therefore out of spite he wants to destroy all the Jews.

And so, with the slanderous idea planted that there is this certain people who are disobedient to the king, Haman says that ***"it is not fitting for the king to let them remain."*** (cf. Gen. 3:1). And here is his bold proposal...

9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries."

Haman suggested that the king write a decree that all these people be destroyed and then to sweeten the idea he volunteers that he will pay 10 thousand talents of silver to those who carry on the king's business (that is the Persian "IRS") that they might put it into the king's treasuries. This in effect was a bribe.

Most commentators think that this offer is probably what sold the idea to the king. The context is that king Ahasuerus had just come back from fighting a costly war with the Greeks (losing badly) to where he could use some extra revenue in the kingdom coffers.

One historian said that the annual income of the Persian empire was about 15,000 talents so Haman was offering to give about 2/3 of this annual amount. This was a lot of money. Haman must have been exceedingly wealthy.

A talent weighed about 75 pounds so in view here was about 12 million ounces of silver. That tallies out to about 225 million dollars in today's present currency – give or take a few million (If I got it figured right). The point is it was a lot of money.

10 So 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.

This incentive of the 10,000 talents was enough to seal the deal. The king's signet ring made an imprint which represented the king's official signature; and hence the power to authorize it (cf. 8:2; 8; Gen. 41:42; Dan. 6:17; Hag. 2:23).

Possession of the signet ring meant Haman now had permission to write up an official legalized decree and sign it in the name of the king making it official law.

The end of verse 10 states a key premise in the book saying that Haman was “the enemy of the Jews”. This is stated 5 times in the book (cf. 3:10; 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24). This becomes a show down between God who had called for the annihilation of the Amalekites and Satan’s instrument Haman who is seeking to destroy all the Jews. Who would prevail? God or Satan?

To be “the enemy of the Jews” puts one in a very bad position.

Slide # 6

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, And **I will curse him who curses you;** And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

11 And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”

Verse 11 is a little ambiguous. On the surface it sounds like the king didn’t take the money – saying in effect, “keep the money and do with it and the people what you like.” However, in view of 4:7 and 7:4 it is more likely that the king accepted the money and was saying go ahead and use it to do to these people what seems good to you.

Slide # 7

Esther 4:7 (NKJV)

7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and **the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king’s treasuries to destroy the Jews.**

Esther 7:4 (NKJV)

4 For **we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed,** to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”

Ahasuerus had so little regard for life that he didn’t even ask any questions about who this “certain people” were scattered throughout his vast empire.

Little did the king realize that even the queen according to this new edict was to be singled out and killed.

It seems his whole thing was “show me the money and its yours”. Wicked political leaders only seem to care about power and money.

Mindlessly Ahasuerus had just sentenced to death potentially millions of innocent men, women, and children on the altar of Haman’s pride for the sake of money.

12 Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring.

There it was – it was made legal and official in the king’s name. It was exactly according to what Haman wanted and commanded. This order was then commanded and addressed to all the governing officials throughout the entire kingdom.

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

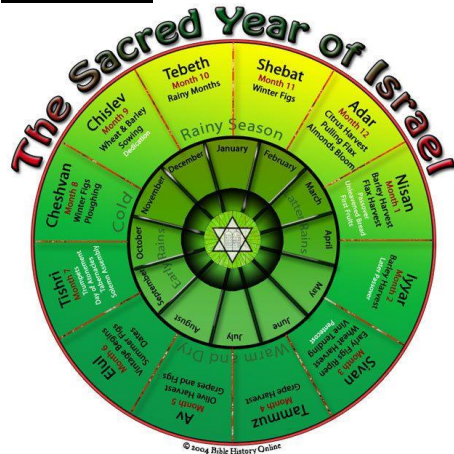
The letters were clear. The command was that they were to DESTROY, TO KILL, AND TO ANNIHILATE ALL THE JEWS, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, LITTLE CHILDREN AND WOMEN”. That is totally barbaric and ruthless. This was the legalization of full out genocide. There was NO MERCY here! Just cold calculated murder – legalized MURDER!

It was to happen on one specific day – namely on the 13th day of the 12th month which is the month of Adar. And oh, as a P.S. all the possessions of the Jews were to be plundered as well. The order was to kill all the Jews and then you can have their possessions. That seems to be the sense of it.

The decree was made on the 13th day of the 1st month, and it was to be carried out on 13th day of the 12th month. They seem to have been counting on the “lucky” number “13”.

But in the providence of God that gave time enough for events to transpire that resulted in a countermand or in a qualified countermand. It gave enough time for the Jews to prepare to defend themselves. It gave enough time for the outworking of the preservation of the Jews.

Slide # 8 – Jewish Calendar

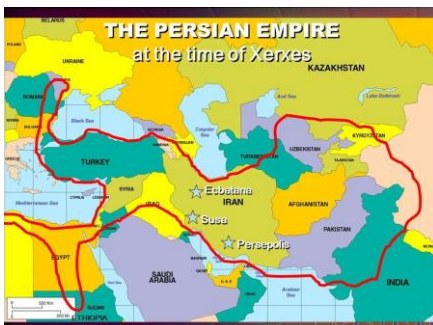


14 A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.

This was made to be the LAW of the land and was to be made known and published in every province – all 127 of them so that the people of the empire would be ready to act as one in carrying out this murderous decree. By share of population, the largest empire in the history of the world has been **the** Persian Empire, which accounted for approximately 49.4 million of the world's 112.4 million people in around 480 BC – an astonishing 44%.

In other words, almost half the world's population by LAW was to be pitted against the Jews to put them all to death on the 13th day of the 12th month of Adar.

Slide # 9



It is not easy to change of course of established law – even murderous law.

Consider the issue of legalized abortion in our own country. In 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court in a case called Roe. v. Wade legalized abortion as a constitutional right. Do you know how hard it has been to change that law. Up to this point it has been impossible. There are nearly **1,000,000 abortions per year** on average (and that's just ones reported!) Never mind that a child's heart scientifically beats at 21 days. It doesn't matter it is the LAW of the land.

When something becomes the LAW of the land affirmed by the highest judicial body that is just very difficult to overcome.

Now realize that what might seem possible in our country seemed totally hopeless in the Persia where you had the law of the Persians and the Medes which could not be altered (cf. 1:19; 8:5-8).

Humanly speaking this seemed like an insurmountable situation. Humanly speaking it looked like the Jews were going to be killed off. It was a matter of the law of the Persians and the Medes which could not be altered.

But then there is the God-factor! There is this little thing called "providence" and when it plays out God and not Haman would have His way.

Slide # 10



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.

The emphasis on the "king's command" drove everything – irrational as it may be. The couriers went out and began proclaiming this murderous edict – starting in Shushan (also called Susa) the citadel – meaning the capital fortress.

And with this little business matter handled the king and Haman sat down to have a drink. They were so happy with themselves – clueless but happy.

But in contrast the capital city of Shushan was perplexed – meaning the whole city was confused, agitated, bothered, and puzzled by it.

When somebody in power makes a unilateral decision that is totally crazy, wicked, and irresponsible, even the general populous can see through that.

I think this had a chilling effect on the entire capital city as people couldn't make sense of this arbitrary decree that was so vicious and without any known rationale behind it.

Sometimes the masses are wrong, but not always. – *Irving Jensen*

But again, it was a situation that no one could do anything about. But there is always God. God specializes in IMPOSSIBLE situations, and He was about to PROVIDENTIALLY do that for His people Israel – in spite of themselves.

Stay tuned...