



"Living By Faith In Troubled Times" (Esther 3-4)

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I. THE TEXT

3:1 Haman is an Amalekite; Agag was king of the Amalekites

* This is a time that Mordecai could write something similar to Psalm 73!

* Don't you just hate it when the wrong guy gets the promotion? Right after we are told that Mordecai saved the king's life (2:21-23), this guy named Haman gets promoted "higher than that of all the other nobles."

* History does not tell us the exact nature of Haman's promotion. Some believe he was Xerxes' prime minister. Others believe he was "The Commander of the Thousand," which would have made him the king's personal bodyguard. No one could enter the king's presence without this official's permission. One more suggestion is that he was the "King's Eye," having charge over all the satraps (governors). This was a position of great authority and influence.

3:2 The rabbis invented a story that Haman carried an idol with him, and this is why Mordecai would not bow. Mordecai's refusal to kneel before Haman certainly goes beyond just having an attitude toward him. As we will learn, Haman is an evil man. He is the Hitler of the Old Testament. Bowing before him would be akin to blasphemy. He does not bow for the same reason Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow.

3:3 Evidently, when King Xerxes promoted Haman, he commanded that people bow down to him

3:4 Why does he tell them that he is a Jew at this point? Because they will know that it is for religious reasons (not civil) that he does not bow to Haman.

3:5-6 This is very interesting in light of Deut.25:17-19 & I Sam.15:3. Israel was commanded to utterly exterminate the Amalekites. Having failed to do so, now an Amalekite plots to exterminate Israel. Satan would love to destroy the Jewish people, and has made repeated attempts in history to do just that.

* Pharaoh; Herod having all the babies in Bethlehem killed; Hitler; Haman

* The Six Day War

- Multinational force with the express goal of "wiping Israel off the map" [Egypt](#), [Jordan](#), and [Syria](#). The Arab states of [Iraq](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Sudan](#), [Tunisia](#), [Morocco](#) and [Algeria](#) also contributed troops and arms.

* Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

3:7 Note: The Feast of Purim

3:8-11 The signet ring was the same as what today would be someone's signature.

* This offer of money in exchange for a "favor" was common in ancient Persia. Estimates of what this offer would be worth today vary from \$30 to \$64 million! Some have estimated this amount to be about two-thirds of Persia's annual revenue.

* The king says that Haman can keep the loot and do what he likes. I have no idea what this guy Haman did to get such an "in" with King Xerxes, because this is unbelievable favor! Maybe it's because he was rich (?)

* Xerxes had dealt with an Egyptian revolt in the first year of his reign (485 B.C.). He ferociously suppressed revolts in Babylon in 484 and 482 B.C. Unlike Cyrus his predecessor, Xerxes had no problem using ruthless tactics to secure the compliance of his subjects (just ask Vashti).

* Note: In the ancient world, genocide was not considered abhorrent.

3:12-14 WOW! And at this point neither the king, Haman, or anyone else (but Mordecai) knows that when this decree is enforced, the queen's fate will be sealed as well.

3:15 Bewildered/Perplexed

4:1-3 No one was allowed beyond the king's gate in sack cloth. Why? History records that the Persian monarchs were extremely self-indulgent, so they did not want people bringing "grief and mourning" into their midst.

* What an awful thing. What a terrible time for the Jewish people of ancient Persia.

4:4-8 Mordecai holds out hope (however faint it might be) that Esther could go and plead mercy for the Jewish people. The last part of verse eight is very clear here. Mordecai is asking Esther to reveal that she is Jewish ("for her people").

4:9-11 Thirty days have passed what does this mean? Perhaps loosely translated, it might go like this: "I don't know what I might have done, but he doesn't seem that interested in me right now."

4:12-14 Don't think that you will save yourself by remaining silent. And don't miss ***your opportunity*** to be the one God uses to bring deliverance for the Jewish people. If you choose not to be the one, God will use someone else. Could it be that this is why God made you queen in the first place?

4:15-17 Esther makes her commitment

II. LESSONS

A. When Facing Serious Circumstances/Situations In Life - Fast, Pray, And Get Everyone You Can To Join You!

* Fasting is not to be just some religious thing to do

- John 9:14-15

- Luke 18: 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

B. Sometimes Breaking The Law Is The Will Of God

* Daniel and friends

* The Apostles (Acts 5:29)

C. The Difference One Person Can Make

* In 1776, one vote gave America the English language over German; In 1845, one vote brought Texas into the Union; In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment; In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency; In 1923, one vote gave Adolph Hitler control of the Nazi party.

* David's willingness to stand against Goliath; Gideon's willingness to stand up against the Midianites; Jonathan's willingness to stand up against the Philistines; Stephen's willingness to stand up against the Supreme Court of the Jews Jesus' willingness

D. Am I Willing To Give My Life For The Will Of God

* I have never been put in a situation like Esther was. But if I am, I must be willing to die. And that is a question I must ask myself even now. Because if I am not willing to make painful sacrifices NOW that are not "life threatening," what makes me think I will make the much greater sacrifice of literally dying for the will of God?

* How much pain have I had to endure as a Christian without "giving in?" How much pain did I endure before I "gave in?"

CONCLUSION

* I Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

* Luke 14:26-27, 33

* Deut.20:1-9; 7:3

* Note: It is not wrong to fear. It is wrong to give in to fear. Esther was quite concerned about her potential fate, which is why she fasted, and had others fast with her. But in the end she strong, even in the face of death.

* "God's War On Terror" (Walid Shoebat), p.18 - "I am not a push-over. I know I am supposed to be afraid of releasing what I am writing here. After all, some fanatic Muslim might kill me. Well, as my fifteen year old son Theodore said, "we are all dying, we can either die *for* something, or we can die *of* something."