**Providence at Work in the Conflict**

**Esther 2:21-3:15**

Act three: we come to the third chapter of Esther before we meet Haman, the great enemy to the people of God (3:10). Thus far we have encountered a royal banquet gone sour and a beauty pageant to replace a divorced Queen. In this chapter we see all the major actors on the stage, and we see the contrast between good and evil.

In this chapter we meet a man who personifies arrogance, self-interest, ambition, pride, and ultimately evil. His name is Haman. He is going to be contrasted in the story with a very humble, righteous, benevolent Jew by the name of Mordecai.

• **Mordecai the life of the King (2:21-23).** This chapter closes with an event that will become more relevant later in the story. God will use this event, remembered at the right time, to spare His people!

**God works in the major and the minor keys!** This sidenote event will become very important, even though it was forgotten when it happened.

• **Mordecai refuses to Haman (1-4).** Here we have another worship conflict by the people of God living under pagan rule. Verse 2 describes two action verbs, “to bow down” and then “to pay homage.” The first is simply the act of bowing or bending of knee, perhaps in respect for a person or position; however, the second involves much more. It involves an act of worship. To pay homage involves an act of worship. Mordecai, as a Jew, could not do this.

**Christians living in a pagan culture will be called upon to conform, but we must not yield. We must be transformed from within, not conformed from without!**

• **Haman plots to the Jewish people (5-9).** When I think of Haman, I think of two destructive ills: pride and hatred.

**While the legal term, *hate crime*, may be a recent term, the reality of violence and oppression based solely upon hatred for a particular race or group of people is as old as time!**

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Haman is a dark illustration of the depravity of the human heart. His racial prejudice and his personal pride caused him to hate with such a vengeance that he was desirous to destroy a whole race of people. Haman desired to be the “Hitler” of the Old Testament.

**Interesting Historical Note:** Haman was referred to as an Agagite in verse one. What is the significance of this reference? Josephus says that Agagite means a descendant of Agag, the common name for the kings of the Amalekites. The Amalekites were ancient enemies of Israel.

(Numbers 13:28-30, Numbers 14:45, Judges 6:3-4, 1 Sameul 15:7-8, and 1 Samuel 15:32-33)

Mordecai was a Benjamite (2:5) as was King Saul who fought against and captured King Agag. There was a long violent history between these two families and peoples. Racial prejudice always leads to hatred and pride! Let us always be on guard against such!

• **The folly of the King (10-15).** So far, the Book of Esther has painted a very negative picture of King Ahasuerus. He is easily manipulated; he has surrounded himself with fools and mad men! The decree was authorized by the King, letters were sent throughout the kingdom, and a date of execution was set!

**God’s covenant people are about to be annihilated. Or are they? Stay tuned!**

**Application:**

**The heart of man is desperately wicked. Only the gospel can give us a new heart! Cry out to Jesus!**

**Resisting the temptation to conform to the culture takes courage and fortitude. Stand firm!**

**Fighting our own personal prejudices and bias is a constant battle, Keep fighting!**

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