

Lesson 11 14 January, 2014

Haman Plots to Destroy God's People

Lesson Scope: [Esther Chapters 3 to 7](#)

Lesson Focus

The presence of the Jewish people expanded "throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus" (Esther 3:6). God sovereignly placed Jewish people, namely Esther and Mordecai, in political roles in the kingdom. King Ahasuerus promoted Haman to an official role "above all the princes." The servants of the king received Haman, but "Mordecai bowed not" (Esther 3:2). This response violated the king's command. Mordecai likely testified of his loyalty to and reverence for God when he revealed his Jewish identity (Esther 3:4).

Haman's nature was such that when he discovered Mordecai's refusal to give him the prescribed reverence and worship he coveted, he promptly contrived a plan of retaliation that would destroy not only the man but also the people he represented. Haman did not realize that a greater power with a more sinister plan was motivating him. He was simply responding to his carnal passion, and Satan was prepared to use that to its greatest potential.

The zenith of personal success and power for Haman was very brief. His objective to annihilate Mordecai and his Jewish people was thwarted by the providential workings of God.

The life and contribution of Mordecai stands in sharp contrast to Haman's self-asserting character. Mordecai was a man of integrity. Haman was corrupt. Mordecai exemplified moral strength in that while he manifested loyalty to the kingdom, he did retain his conviction for truth. He did not compromise principle to soften the animosity of Haman.

Throughout time, Satan has incited evil men to attack God's people. God permits them to delude themselves as they persist in their fatal course.

Lesson Aim: To portray characteristics of God's enemies.

Theme Verse: [Psalm 10:2](#). The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

Lesson Text

Malice

[Esther 3:1](#) ¹ After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that *were* with him. [Esther 3:5-7](#) ⁵ And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. ⁶ And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai. ⁷ In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth *month*, that *is*, the month Adar.

[Esther 3:15](#) ¹⁵ The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Conceit

[Esther 5:9-14](#) ⁹ Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. ¹¹ And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹² Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. ¹³ Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. ¹⁴ Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the

banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

Delusion

Esther 6:1 ¹ On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Esther 6:4-6 ⁴ And the king said, Who *is* in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. ⁶ So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

Esther 6:11-13 ¹¹ Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. ¹² And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered. ¹³ And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

Presumption

Esther 7:5 ⁵ Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

Esther 7:10 ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Questions for Study

Malice

1. Describe the character of Haman.
2. What are some identifying marks of vain ambition?

Conceit

3. Evaluate Haman's joy (Esther 5:9), his boast (Esther 5:11-12), and his

pleasure (Esther 5:14).

4. How might we be tempted to nurture or express feelings of conceit?
5. What are some present-day pressures that threaten to wrongly move us (Esther 5:9)?

Delusion

6. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in the course of these events?

Presumption

7. Why did Haman rightly fear the king and the queen?
8. What lessons can we learn from Haman's life?

Analyzing the Passage

Bowed and reverence (Esther 3:5) suggest the action of prostrating oneself to the earth. It represented more than simple, royal honor; rather, it was worship. No doubt Mordecai felt that his loyalty to God would be threatened by the act of bowing to a mere man.

Haman's wrath (Esther 3:5) was a passionate rage. The word scorn (Esther 3:6) means that he thought it contemptible to kill only Mordecai, when he could destroy the Jews as a nation. He craftily and selfishly influenced the king to approve the extermination of the "certain people" whom he represented as a liability to the Persian kingdom (Esther 3:8).

It is commonly understood that Haman's attendants cast lots to choose first the month and then the day in which to carry out this massacre (Esther 3:7). God overruled so that the date was nearly a year after the lot was cast, giving ample opportunity for Mordecai and Esther to respond.

The reading of the chronicles (Esther 6:1) was a common antidote for sleeplessness. It was not merely a coincidence that this particular account was read; it was the sovereign planning of God.

Queen Esther retained the favor of the king (Esther 5:2, 6; 7:2). When she revealed that Haman's scheme would destroy her and her people, King Ahasuerus was deeply angered (Esther 7:7). True to his impulsive nature, Ahasuerus decided quickly that Haman should be hanged on the gallows prepared for Mordecai.

Principles and Applications

Malice

1. God's enemies are often motivated by power, position, and praise

(Esther 3:1, 5). Carnal men have distorted views of true greatness. They expend energy, time, and finances to establish themselves in significant roles in occupational pursuits, professional services, and community or political affairs. Their concepts of importance and achievement demand a perpetual quest for superiority and advancement.

2. God's enemies are driven by hatred and vindictive passions (Esther 3:6-7). The wicked do not possess the love of God. They cannot respond graciously, compassionately, and redemptively to their fellow men in every circumstance. They seek retaliation for those who damage their possessions or insult their dignity. The Spirit of Christ moves believers, rather, to forgive those who wrong them.

3. God's enemies exult in their successes, unmoved by the agony of those they wrong (Esther 3:15). Pride flourishes, success feels self-rewarded, and selfishness excludes all pity. But it is only for a time. When we are intentionally wronged, we must remember that God is fully aware and will requite to all their deeds. "Knowest thou not ... that the triumphing of the wicked is short?" (Job 20:4-5).

Conceit

4. The enemies of God are proud and arrogant (Esther 5:9-12). The proud man does not blush to speak his pride, flaunt his accomplishments, or proclaim his disdain for those he considers inferior. He expects others to bow to him, yet he bows to no one. But someday every knee will bow to God. God hates even a proud look (Proverbs 6:16, 17).

5. God's enemies disdain the conscientious conduct of God's people (Esther 5:9-13). Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman became an irritant that burned deeply into his spirit. The testimony of Christian people gives witness of the work of God within their hearts. In their encounters with the world, they become a conscience to those who do not obey God and His Word.

Our commitment to the Bible as the basis for our faith and practice is often viewed as radical, and many scorn the conservative lifestyle of the believer. The Christian counts it a privilege to bear reproach for the Name of Christ. The contempt of the world must not deter us from holding tenaciously to truth and our spiritual heritage.

6. The wicked exaggerate difficulty and seek monumental solutions (Esther 5:13-14). We do well to ponder our own response to difficulty. The greater our struggle with surrender, the greater will seem the im-

pact of life's reverses. And the more we think of self, the greater the temptation to approach problem solving with grand and impractical solutions designed to impress others or to net great gains for ourselves.

Delusion

7. God's enemies seek self-gratification at every opportunity (6:6). The attitude of selfishness develops into an unconscious focus on personal interests and reputation. It causes people to seek the praise of men and to suppose that others notice and are impressed with their abilities. It blinds them to the contribution of others.

8. The enemies of God's people do not consider the omniscience of God (Esther 6:13). The interests of men are known to God. God providentially arranges circumstances to accomplish His purposes. He is able to frustrate the schemes and efforts of man.

Presumption

9. The enemies of God become fearful when their schemes are exposed (Esther 7:5-6). In one stroke, they lose their power, their confidence, and their passionately pursued ambitions. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

10. God's enemies will finally face full recompense for their folly (Esther 7:10). God will judge the peoples of the world in righteousness. All those who have defied God and lived proudly in disobedience will be banned from His presence forever. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:11).

Important Teachings

1. God's enemies are often motivated by power, position, and praise (Esther 3:1, 5).
2. God's enemies are driven by hatred and vindictive passions (Esther 3:6, 7).
3. God's enemies exult in their successes, unmoved by the agony of those they wrong (Esther 3:15).
4. The enemies of God are proud and arrogant (Esther 5:9-12).
5. God's enemies disdain the conscientious conduct of God's people (Esther 5:9-13).
6. The wicked exaggerate difficulty and seek monumental solutions (Esther 5:13-14).

7. God's enemies seek self-gratification at every opportunity (Esther 6:6).
8. The enemies of God's people do not consider the omniscience of God (Esther 6:13).
9. The enemies of God become fearful when their schemes are exposed (Esther 7:5-6).
10. God's enemies will finally face the full recompense for their folly (Esther 7:10).

Answers to Questions

1. Describe the character of Haman.

He was a self-focused man. He did not fear the Lord and was ruled by passion (Esther 3:5) and prejudice (Esther 3:6). He was boastful (Esther 5:10-12), impulsive (Esther 5:14), and proud (Esther 6:6).

2. What are some identifying marks of vain ambition?

Some make education their god and promote the assumption that the world's problems can be solved through education. Others aspire to become rich or powerful. Still others dress stylishly or drive expensive vehicles to create an impression.

3. Evaluate Haman's joy (Esther 5:9), his boast (Esther 5:11-12), and his pleasure (Esther 5:14).

Haman's feelings were determined by circumstances. He thrived on his position with the king and on being invited to a royal banquet.

This exuberance motivated Haman to highlight his success, his family, and his superiority. Yet the sum total of such values "availed him nothing" so long as Mordecai was in the king's gate.

His being pleased to have Mordecai hanged proved how base he was.

4. How might we be tempted to nurture or express feelings of conceit?

We might feel superior to others because of our abilities, management, or accomplishments. We could establish self-worth by comparing our contribution to the church with that of others. We might think as the Pharisee who prayed in Luke 18:11, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are."

5. What are some present-day pressures that threaten to wrongly move us (Esther 5:9)?

We are challenged with pietistic thought and casual Christianity. The fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are questioned and discarded

by mainstream Christian churches. Many assume that gain is godliness. There are social and economic dimensions of the world that would bring intimidation and opposition to the people of God.

6. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in the course of these events?

God ordered the king's wakeful night, his request to hear the chronicles read, and his interest in rewarding Mordecai. God had all these events timed precisely to accomplish His purposes.

7. Why did Haman rightly fear the king and the queen?

The interest of Haman's proud heart had created a snare for him. His wicked scheme to destroy the Jews would also destroy the queen, and the king valued Esther far more than his relationship with wicked Haman. God used the carnal reaction of the king to issue the death penalty to Haman.

8. What lessons can we learn from Haman's life?

"A man's pride shall bring him low" (Proverbs 29:23). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). "The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand" (Proverbs 12:7).

Summarizing the Lesson

"Behold, I am against thee ... saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up" (Jeremiah 50:31, 32). In the closing scenes of time, Satan will intensify his efforts to destroy the work of God. But we serve a God who will ultimately triumph. We praise God for His protective care today and trust Him for tomorrow.

Research Guide

1. Read Psalm 10, which illustrates the character of the wicked.
2. Study Scriptures portraying God's attitude toward pride.
3. Read the lesson scope thoroughly, to rivet the chronological sequence in your memory.