



Esther 3

Our world is not the way it's supposed to be. There is an Enemy at work in our world—an ancient Enemy who first appeared in human history in the Garden of Eden. God created the world in perfection, but this Enemy deceived God's people and enticed them to rebel against God. As a result of their disobedience, the world was corrupted with sin and death.

The Bible tells the story of God's unstoppable plan to restore the perfection of His world and to eliminate sin and death. One day Jesus will return to establish God's Kingdom, but until then, we contend with the ancient unseen Enemy who continues to influence the world's powers in opposition to God. Satan's schemes continue but his doom is sure. God is building His Kingdom, and He will make all things new. (See Revelation 21:1-4)

1. Read Esther 3:1-6 *The Enemy of God's people makes his move*

- a. It has been five years since Esther was crowned as queen. How has the king's panel of advisers changed? (3:1-2)

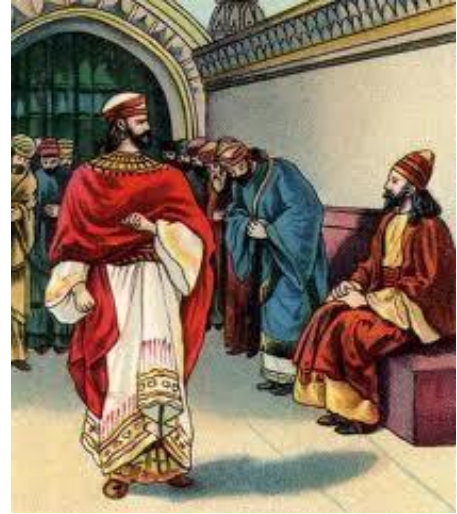
- b. How did Mordecai draw unfavorable attention to himself when Haman passed through the king's gate? (3:2)

Haman is a descendant of the Amalekites—the perennial enemy of God's people Israel. The Amalekites attacked the Israelites as Moses led them out of Egypt. God declared in Exodus 17:14-16 that He would be at war with the Amalekites forever.

King Saul of Israel demolished the Amalekite villages when Agag was king of Amalek. Haman is described as a descendant of Agag, and Mordecai descends from the family of King Saul.

This long-standing enmity contributes to the decisions these men make.

- c. Haman was enraged when he was told that Mordecai had refused to bow down to him. How does the historical enmity between the Jews and the Agagites heighten this insult? (For background information, see Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 15:32-33)



- d. What retaliation did Haman devise against Mordecai and Mordecai's people? (3:6)

2. Read Esther 3:7-15 *The Enemy of God's people is the father of lies*

- a. Haman's accusation against this "certain people" is full of deceitful claims. What false characterizations do you find in Esther 3:8?
- b. Why do you think Haman didn't tell the king that this "certain people" who were so disobedient were, in fact, the Jews?
- c. It is surprising that the king didn't ask for more information before ordering the annihilation of an entire people group. Haman made use of greed as a strong motivator. How did Haman "sweeten the deal" so that Xerxes made the decision without further consideration? (Esther 3:9)
- d. How did the king relinquish his authority to Haman? (Ether 3:10-11)

- e. What was the content of the official genocidal edict? (Esther 3:13)
- f. This monstrous edict decreed a government-directed massacre of the Jewish people. How did Xerxes celebrate his decision. (3:15).
- g. ***For Personal Application:*** Read Psalm 146. Notice especially Psalm 146:3. How does this psalm challenge your thinking about where power resides, and what is the source of true security in the midst of the chaos, injustice, and dangers of life in a fallen world?

3. Read Ephesians 6:10-12 *The enemy of God's people is still at work today*

- a. The book of Esther makes no mention of God or of Satan, but as we look at the story through the eyes of faith, we understand that there is a spiritual force at work directing the mighty power of Persia against the people of God. Nevertheless, God is a far greater power, and God is at work behind the scenes fulfilling His promise to protect and preserve His people. How has God already provided an unlikely hero in Persia who can bring salvation from the threat to God's people?
- b. Can you think of other times when God used an unlikely hero to bring salvation for God's people?
- c. ***For Personal Reflection:*** God has been faithful through the centuries to provide for His people. You may be facing difficult circumstances right now; let this reminder of God's love provide you with comfort today.

My Prayer:

*Father, help me remember
that You are always at work in ways I cannot see,
bringing about Your good purposes for my life.*