

3. Hounded by unfinished business

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The Book of Esther is one of five Old Testament books that the Jews call "The Writings" or "The Five Megilloth." The word 'megilloth' means "scrolls" in Hebrew. The other books are Ruth, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon and Lamentations.

Each year on the Feast of Purim, the Book of Esther is read publicly in the synagogue. Whenever the reader mentions Haman's name, the people stamp their feet and exclaim, "May his name be blotted out!" To Jews everywhere, Haman personifies everybody who has tried to exterminate the people of Israel. This chapter explains to us why Haman was such a dangerous man to the Israelites.

Like a little ember that was not put out completely at a camp site came back alive to burn down the entire forest, Haman represents an unfinished business that we didn't think much of it, now came back to hound us with a vengeance.

A. HAMAN, AN AGAGITE FROM THE PAST

Esther 3:1-6 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. 3 Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus--the people of Mordecai.

To explain this, we first must travel in our time machine all the way back to Jacob and Esau which was somewhere around 2000 B.C. As we have learned in Genesis, Jacob followed the Lord, but Esau could care less about God and he served himself only.

Romans 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

Satan always encourages us to serve ourselves, not God like Esau.

Now we hop back into our time machine move forward to the time of Israel's Exodus in 1440 B.C. One of Esau's descendants was Amalekites. The Amalekites attacked the old and sick people who were in the rear of the marching formation of Israel during their wilderness wondering. God told Moses to write in a book that He had declared war on the Amalekites and would one day utterly destroy them because of what they had done to His people.

Satan constantly attacks our spiritually and physically vulnerable areas. We should not let our guard down at any time.

Let's move forward again to 1040 B.C. where we find king Saul and Samuel. Through prophet Samuel, God told Saul clearly not to leave any living being in the camp of Amalekites.

1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

But the result was not the one God told him to do.

1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

When blind prophet Samuel found out what Saul did, he rebuked the king and he himself hacked king Agag to death.

Satan whispers into our ears to keep a few worldly and carnal things in our hearts. He says, “You don’t have to be so narrow minded in following God. You are allowed to have some fun.”

Psalms 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.

The surviving Amalekites had remained bitter enemies of the Jews, and the feud was taken up centuries later by Haman around 470 B.C. Now Haman wanted to settle the old score once and for all. Prejudice is a vicious evil and it is passed down from generation to generation.

Everything about Haman is hateful. In fact, everything about Haman, God hated. Here is a great description of Haman.

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

When this insecure little weasel with a gigantic ego became a main man in the kingdom over everyone except the king, naturally he thought everyone should bow their heads to him. To his surprise, Mordecai didn’t do that. He became filled with rage and the anti-Semitic hair on the back of Haman’s neck stood on end.

Why did Mordecai refuse to bow down to Haman? What harm could it be upon him if he bowed down? As an Israelite, in no way did he want to show respect to an Amalekite.

Haman is an illustration of the “man of perdition” who will one day appear and ruthlessly rule over humanity that were mentioned in 2 Thess. 2 and Rev. 13. Haman was given great authority from the king, and satan will give great power to this wicked world ruler we call the Antichrist. As Haman hated the Jews and tried to destroy them, so the Antichrist will usher in a wave of worldwide anti-Semitism. As Haman was ultimately defeated and judged, so the Antichrist will be conquered by Jesus Christ and thrown into the lake of fire.

What people do with authority is a test of character. Do they use their authority to promote themselves or to help others? Do they glorify themselves or glorify God? Daniel was given a high position similar to Haman’s, but he used his authority to honor God and help others in Dan. 6. Of course, the difference between Daniel and

Haman is that Daniel was a humble man of God while Haman was a proud man of the world.

What kind of unfinished business is still hounding you and will hurt you later? Would it be something you've done in secret in the past or even now and you have not made a clean break away from it? You can cut any tie off from it with the power of the Holy Spirit if you are willing.

Proverbs 6:27 Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?

B. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL WILL IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTIES

I find two of God's providence were displayed here:

1) God permitted Haman to be appointed to this high office because He had purposes to fulfill through him.

2) God permitted Mordecai to reveal his nationality to others so that Haman could prepare for the destruction of the Jewish people in Persia.

In the midst of our difficult times, it is easy for us to miss the big picture of God. But the Lord is using every little bit of the situation to make His purpose known to us and others around us – bringing glory to Himself and extending His love to those who believe in Him.

When Haman decided that he was going to destroy the entire Jewish communities in Persia, he just declared a war against God of Israel. Keep in mind that the extermination of the Jews would mean the end of the messianic promise for the world. The reason God promised to protect His people was that they might become the channel through whom He might give the Word of God and the Son of God to the world. Israel was to bring the blessing of salvation to all nations.

How do we handle someone who is full of himself or herself and has a stiff neck toward us even though we have not done anything wrong against that person? What should we do to that person? Which method should we use?

Option A) Wait for an opportunity to bury that person with insults and every name in the book and embarrass that person in front of others. No mercy, no prisoner

Option B) Have Mike Pizzi take that person out to the desert on one of the hottest summer days without water and leave that person there.

Option C) Extend the same kind of love, mercy and kindness that the Lord Jesus had for us while we were still sinners to that person.

C. A PREPARATION FOR ANNIHILATION

Esther 3:7-14 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 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. 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." 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. 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." 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. 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. 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.

It was not unusual for pagans to ask their idols what they should do as we ask the Lord what we must do next.

It's interesting that Haman began this procedure in the month of Nisan, the very month in which the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Egypt. As the astrologers cast lots over the calendar, month by month and day by day, they arrived at the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.

Here is another providence of God. This decision was certainly of the Lord, because it gave the Jews a whole year to get ready, and because it would also give Mordecai and Esther time to act.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the Lord.

With deception and a half truth, Haman got everything he wanted from the king to do whatever his heart desired against the Jewish people.

Ten thousand talents of silver equaled 375 tons, estimated to represent two-thirds of the annual income of the entire Persian Empire. It is about 214 million dollars in current price. No doubt Haman planned to make good on his pledge by confiscating the assets of those he annihilated.

The plan sounded in the best interests of the empire, so the king gave it a "thumbs up." And he even told Haman he could keep the silver for himself.

D. THE APATHY AT ITS WORST

Esther 3:15 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.

In an English class, the teacher was asking definitions of the words the students read. He wrote "A-P-A-T-H-Y" on the blackboard and turned around to the students and asked them about the definition. There was a long silence among the students.

The teacher asked, "Come on, guys. You can guess what it means by reading this poem in contexts." One kid who was slouched down in his seat blurted out, "Who cares!"

Haman could send out the death warrants for thousands of innocent people and then sit down to a banquet with the king. What a calloused heart he had! He was like the people the Prophet Amos described:

Amos 6:6 Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

However, in the end, it was his own death warrant that Haman had sealed. Within less than three months, Haman would be a dead man.

E. APPLICATION

Do whatever it takes to cut off any tie to those old unfinished businesses that they may never come back to hound you. You will be glad you did.