

“A Study In The Book of Esther”
Edited By
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LESSON #3
God is Working, and the Devil is Working Too
(Esther 3)

The name of Satan is not found in the book of Esther, and yet the devil was actively working "behind the scenes," seeking to exterminate God's people, the Jews. Here in Esther chapter 3 we are introduced to the man whom Satan used to carry out his diabolical schemes.

Satan's Man: Haman

Who promoted Haman and made him great (Esther 3:10)? _____

In Esther 3:10; 7:6 and 8:1 what is Haman called? _____ Who else is called an **enemy** (Matthew 13:39; compare Luke 10:17–19)? _____ Not only was Haman an enemy, but in Esther 7:6 he was also called the A _____ (the foe, the enemy, the one who is against God and God's people). Who else is called by this title (1 Peter 5:8)? _____ The name "Satan" means "the adversary." He is the enemy of God and all those who belong to God. Though Haman was a wicked enemy and adversary, there was an even greater but unseen enemy behind him who was busy trying to work out his evil plans.

According to Esther 3:1, Haman was promoted or made great by whom (circle the correct answer):

- a) by God
- b) by a king
- c) by Esther

Haman was given a seat or a throne above all the other princes! When a person is exalted very **high**, there is only one way he can go—**down**. When you reach the top of a ferris wheel, what is the only direction you can go? If you take an elevator all the way to the top floor, and stop there, the next time the elevator moves, which direction will it go? _____ As we shall see, Haman went from the throne to the G _____ (see Esther 7:10)! It will be interesting to learn how God brought this proud man down!

If a believer wants to go up, what must he first do (1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10)? _____

_____ The way down is the way up! Who is the One who can lift up a person and make him great (James 4:10; 1 Chronicles 29:12,25)? _____ According to the Lord Jesus Christ, what is the secret of becoming **great** (Matthew 23:11–12; 18:1–4; Mark 10:43–45)? _____

_____ May we be like John the Baptist who was _____ in the sight of the _____ (Luke 1:15)!

Mordecai Refuses to Bow Down

What did all the servants of the king do (Esther 3:2)? _____ Why did they do this (Esther 3:2)? _____ What man refused to do this (Esther 3:2)? _____

Proud Haman wanted to be worshiped by men. One man refused to do this because he was a J _____ (Esther 3:4). Haman's spiritual father, the devil, also wanted to be worshiped (Matthew 4:8–9). Who refused to fall down and worship Satan (Matthew 4:10)? _____ Who is the only Person who should be worshiped (Matthew 4:10)? _____

In Esther 3:3 the king's servants asked Mordecai a question: Why do you transgress (disobey) the king's commandment? What do you think his answer was? Sometimes it is necessary to disobey M _____ so that we can obey G _____ (Acts 5:29). Mordecai disobeyed the king so that he could obey the **King of Kings!**

When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down to worship him (Esther 3:5) he was (circle the correct answer):

- a) filled with joy
- b) pleased and delighted
- c) somewhat disappointed
- d) filled with wrath (hot burning anger)
- e) indifferent (he did not really care)

The Day of Destruction

The devil can take advantage of the wrath of man and use it to accomplish his purposes. Who else can use man's wrath for His purpose and praise (Psalm 76:10)? _____

Haman's burning anger moved him to try to destroy and exterminate not only Mordecai, but also who else (Esther 3:6)? _____

Satan is the enemy of all God's people! Do you belong to God? If so, then Satan is seeking to D_____ you (1 Peter 5:8)! But who is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4)? _____

In the first month of the year (about four years after Esther had become queen), the lot was cast to decide upon the best time to carry out Haman's wicked plan against the Jews (Esther 3:7). When should all the Jews be destroyed? On what day shall it be? The lot would determine the day of destruction!

Beginning with the first month, all the days and months were tried with unfavorable results until finally the lot fell upon the 12th month (actually the 13th day of the 12th month--see Esther 3:13). Thus, the day of destruction was planned for this day, which would be about eleven months away.

To illustrate this method of choosing a date, here is an experiment that could be tried. With a pair of dice and a calendar, start with tomorrow's date and begin throwing the dice for each day. When both dice fall on six, then this is the day that will be chosen!

*Men may throw dice or cast lots, but Who is in charge of how they fall (Proverbs 16:33)? _____
Is there really such a thing as luck or chance, or is there an all-wise, all-powerful God Who works all things together according to His wonderful plan (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28)? _____*

God worked out the lot so that there would be **plenty of time** (about eleven months) for Haman's plan to be overturned and come to nothing. Haman thought that on the 13th day of the 12th month all the Jews would be destroyed. ***Little did he realized that he would never live to see that day!***

The Royal Decree

Haman knew that God's people were **different** from all other people (Esther 3:8). The Jews were scattered throughout the Persian Empire, and yet, they maintained their national identity. They did not become Persians. They remained Jews even though they lived among the Persians. This is still true today. There are Jews scattered throughout the nations of the world, and yet, wherever they are, they are still recognized as Jews.

Try this experiment: Stir sugar into water. What happens? The sugar is like most ethnic groups of people which mix in with the nations of the world (represented by the water).

Stir oil into water. What happens? The oil is like the Jews! The Jewish people have remained distinct even though they found in many different nations.

Believers today are different from other people. God Himself makes the difference and He is the One who is the difference! Although we live in and among the world, we are not to be like the world (Romans 12:2). People should be able to recognize that we are different! Do not mix in with the world, but be ye S_____ (2 Corinthians 6:17).

According to Esther 3:9, Haman wanted the Jews to be _____. In Esther 3:13, what are the three words or expressions that describe what Haman wanted done to the Jews on the appointed day? 1) _____
2) _____ 3) _____

The royal decree was sent throughout the kingdom by "posts" (literally "runners"--see Esther 3:13,15). The Persians had a very efficient postal system. Herodotus, the ancient historian, described these postmen: *Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers. Along the whole line of road there are men stationed with horses, in number equal to the number of days which the journey takes, allowing a man and horse to each day; and these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night. The first rider delivers his dispatch to the second, and the second passes it to the third; and so it is borne from hand to hand along the whole line (Herodotus' Histories, 8.98).*

In a few weeks, the most remote parts of the empire could be reached with the message!

Haman was given permission to prepare the royal decree (edict) in the king's name. After writing the document, he sealed it with the king's ring (Esther 3:10,12) which made it an official document, just as if the king had signed it!

In the Media-Persian empire, the law of the king was irrevocable and unalterable. Not even the king could change it (see Daniel 6:8 and 6:15)! If an edict or decree went forth, it became the law and it could not be changed. **[This is different from the Babylonian Empire where the king, such as Nebuchadnezzar, was all powerful and he could change the laws any time he wanted.]** Haman must have thought that the doom of the Jews was settled for sure! He failed to realize that God is not bound by the laws of men!

The Lord can take care of His people! What is one thing that can never be changed and that is even more settled than the laws of the Medes and Persians (Isaiah 46:10–11; Psalm 119:89; Numbers 23:19–20; Hebrews 6:17–18)?

Haman, the enemy, cast the lot hoping to destroy all the Jews (see Esther 9:24). God took care of the lot and provided a **long interval of time** (about eleven months) so that the destruction could be avoided. How did God work things out so that this Satanic scheme could be overturned and frustrated? The following chapters in Esther reveal this.

*From a human point of view, the situation that the Jews faced seemed disastrous. Their future looked quite dismal and bleak. God may allow the believer to get into circumstances and difficulties that appear hopeless. There seems to be no solution, no way out. Is God able to work things out? Is God sovereign over your situation? Does He have the solution? **Where should your eyes be** (2 Chronicles 20:12)? _____*

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