

Queen for A Day Such as This

Studies in the Book of Esther

"Pur Evil"

Introduction

What do young nonbelievers think of Christians?

David Kinnaman, president of Barna polling, and Gabe Lyons set out to find the answer.

Kinnaman and Lyons spent three years polling young, unchurched Americans to find out what they thought about Christianity. They published their results in 2012. Millions of young people, they discovered, see us as judgmental, hypocritical, anti-homosexual, too political, insensitive - and boring. Ouch.

Our immediate reaction is that hostile, liberal media characterizations of us as judgmental, homophobic bigots have stuck. But this is only half the answer. A shocking 50 percent of respondents said they base their negative views **on personal contacts with Christians**.

You and I may not give God a bad name, but some Christians do.

In our story, Mordecai will give God a bad name. He starts out keeping his Jewish heritage a secret, but when a situation arises that rankles him, he blames it on God, saying it's because he is a Jew.

Sometimes we want to be like Bible characters. This is an example of someone we do not want to be like.

Esther 2:19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

Virgins had been gathered from all over the kingdom in order to choose one of them to be queen. Esther had been chosen. We don't know why there was a second search. The best explanation seems to be that King Ahasuerus wanted to add to his harem; and this idea of having young virgins compete was rather appealing to him.

It meant he would be with a different girl each night for at least the next year, if not longer. Pretty much right after he was so pleased with Esther, he was through with her. Esther's life was very sad, if you ask me.

Mordecai sat within the king's gate. The words mean he was promoted to a position of a magistrate. He was one of the men who sat in judgment over legal matters that were brought to the king.

Esther 2:20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

Esther was old enough to decide for herself. She should obey God, not a man - especially one who was asking her to sin.

Instead she hid behind her obedience to Uncle Mordecai. It's not commendable; it was a cop-out.

Esther obeyed when it was convenient. When it was beneficial. Such behavior gives God a bad name, a bum rap.

Esther 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

Esther 2:22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

Esther 2:23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

Mordecai overheard a plot against Ahasuerus. It led to the arrest, conviction, and execution of the conspirators.

It was duly noted in the official records. Make a mental note of this because it is going to play a crucial role later on in our story.

For now, notice that Mordecai received no recognition for his deed. But, even if he had received recognition, so what? Isn't it infinitely better to live in such a way that your recognition comes from God? Isn't it His "Well done, My good and faithful servant," that you want to hear?

Serve as unto the Lord. He sees what you are doing; and deeper – into your heart with its motives. Trust Him to reward and promote you.

Chapter three begins with a contrast. Mordecai was not recognized and rewarded for his good deed... But Haman was recognized and rewarded, though he was an evil man.

Life can seem unfair. In fact, it is unfair. So what? You and I walk with God and can remain above our circumstances.

Esther 3:1 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.

Haman was an Agagite, which could mean he came from a district in the empire known as Agag. But it could also mean that he was descended from Agag, king of the Amalekites.

Esther 3:2 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.

We don't really know why Mordecai refused to bow to Haman. Maybe it was because he was an Amalekite, not popular among Jews.

At first reading, we think his refusal to bow is commendable, an act of obedience to God.

Not so fast. It wasn't wrong for Jews to bow before officials, or even to one another, as long as there was no worship involved.

There was something about Haman that irritated Mordecai. This was a personal issue - not a spiritual issue.

Esther 3:3 Then the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

Esther 3:4 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.

Mordecai played the religion card. He wasn't walking according to strict Judaism, but he used his Jewishness as an excuse for not bowing... Which was not forbidden.

God was getting blamed for Mordecais' personal bias.

Esther 3:5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.

Esther 3:6 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.

You cannot understand history unless you read the Bible from cover-to-cover and realize that there is a spiritual conflict in our universe. Much of the tension between God and Satan focuses on God's plan for the nation of Israel. Haman was a Hitler – just as others before him and others after him.

Haman hatched a plan to exterminate the Jews:

Esther 3:7 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.

Haman consulted the wise men of Persia, who were occult astrologers and sorcerers.

In order to determine the best date to exterminate the Jews, they threw a die, called Pur, onto calendars. They thus determined the month; then the date of the month; that this plan would have the support of the zodiac.

Does that make Haman the first Zodiac Killer?

Esther 3:8 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.

Esther 3:9 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."

Esther 3:10 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.

Esther 3:11 And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

Maybe the king ought to have thought more about his people than his virgin-search. Whether he was distracted, or just shallow, this was a horrible decree.

The plan was announced:

Esther 3:12 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.

Esther 3:13 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.

Esther 3:14 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.

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.

Perplexed is an understatement. There you are in Persia, minding your own business, when all of a sudden a law is passed that says on a certain day you can exterminate an entire people and confiscate their property. We know from secular sources that Jews were heavily involved in business dealings in Persia; many of the Persians were friends with Jews.

All the while Ahasuerus and Haman are at a bar enjoying Happy Hour.

Mordecai put Esther in a position where she would need to totally submit her body to the sexual use (really abuse) by the king, against all God's clear teaching on sex and marriage. Yet he refused to show common respect for a nobleman, which was not unlawful, blaming it on his being such a strict Jew.

These types of behaviors are why average people look at God's people with disdain.

You could legitimately argue that Mordecai brought this trouble upon himself. Moreover, God's people suffered for his deliberate and unnecessary disrespect of authority.

Let's be sure our version of being a Christian is really biblical and not a matter of our own personal biases hiding behind things we pick and choose from God's Word.

Let's defy the odds and 100% show people Jesus.