

In a Strange Land - Esther

Haman's Hatred

Foundation

Bible passage : Esther 3 & 4

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-09-11

Hatred: We see in the world today how easy it is for one group of people to come to hate another. When people migrate from one country to another they can often find themselves the objects of hatred and that seems to have happened to the people of Israel years after they had been taken removed to Babylonia.

Haman was particularly irritated because he was an important man and liked other people to acknowledge this, but Mordecai would not. Haman felt himself too important to show his hatred openly but in private he was seething. He decided not only to kill Mordecai but all Mordecai's people too.

“who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Promises: If Haman had succeeded then all the Jews in the empire might have been killed, which would include all those who were already back in Israel. But God had made promises to Abraham more than a thousand years before that his descendants would increase and live in the land. If Haman succeeded then God's promises would fail. The book of Esther shows how Haman's plans were frustrated and although God is never mentioned we can see how He was at work to protect the people and keep His promise.

Haman's plan : Haman got the King to agree to kill all the Jews (another instance of a powerful



Ancient ruins of Susa, Iran

king who is weak, acts unjustly and abuses his power). Chapter 4 verse 14 is a key verse because it is clear, though it is not said, that God has brought Esther to this position for “such a time as this”. That being so she must now act in faith and courage.

Prayer ?: When the command to kill the Jews was announced Mordecai tore his robes, put on sackcloth and ashes and cries out with a loud and bitter cry (4.1). As news spread so in every province the Jews fasted, wept and lamented. We would expect them to pray, and surely they did, and all the phrases are associated with prayer, but continuing its style the book still does not mention God, and does not mention prayer.

Action: In faith Esther and Mordecai set out to try and protect their people. But behind the scenes, including in the King's restless night (chapter 6), God was at work. As a result Mordecai came to the King's attention, Haman acted rashly and in chapter 6 his wife rightly recognised that he could not prevail. Again it is not said, but God was protecting His people and the ground was set for Esther and Mordecai.



Again, unmentioned but unmistakable, we see God's providence and how He acted to protect His people.