

THE CHURCH IN BABYLON

Esther 3:2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

Est 5:12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

Est 5:13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

The Church is like Israel which was in a foreign land, such as Babylon. While the story of Mordecai takes place in Persia, I will still use the name Babylon in a metaphorical sense. But even in Babylon, the Church is still the Church of the living God, Jesus Christ. Keep in mind that Babylon was a world superpower at the time with people from all the conquered nations represented. All these nations bowed to Haman, except a Jew named Mordecai. Mordecai is an apt and metaphorical symbol of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ today: we, too, must refuse to bow down to Haman because Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of Amalek. “And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy” (Esther 23:10). The reader must understand biblical history in order to appreciate Mordecai’s stubbornness which actually endangered the lives of all Jews in the entire empire of the Babylonians.

Mordecai knew well God’s proclamation to Moses, “For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Exodus 17:16). One cannot reason with Amalek – will a Jew today reason with a Nazi? Mordecai also knew that it was King Saul who spared the ancestor of Haman – an ancestor called Agag, and in doing so was indirectly responsible for the existence and murderous hatred of Haman. “But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly” (1 Samuel 15:9). There is no literal Amalekite alive today. Amalek’s spirit is embodied in sin. Sin is the Amalek we fight everyday, and must kill everyday. Sin cannot be spared or appeased. It is like Haman, it will return more powerfully and seek our destruction. Note the attitude of Paul towards sin in his life. “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily” (1 Cor 15:31). We cannot afford to let sin live!

Hence, the lesson is crystal clear for the Church: God has commanded us to fight sin; we cannot bow down or compromise with sin. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Just as physical or mental labor receives a salary on a set day, rest assured that sin never forgets or skips payday. Mordecai knew that a far worse judgement would come on him and his people if he bowed down to Haman. Jesus is always able and will deliver his Church from Haman but woe to the Church if it bows down to or demonstrates more fear of sin than the word of God.

Today’s Babylon also has its Hamans, its idols, which demand reverence and worship. The Apostle Paul warned us about some of these idols of the last days.

***2Timothy 3:2** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

***2Tim 3:3** Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

***2Tim 3:4** Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*

***2Tim 3:5** Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

***2Tim 3:6** For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,*

Let pray and determine to never bow down to these Hamans! We may be in Babylon but we are not of Babylon, in the same manner that the children of Israel were foreigners in Babylon. We must emulate the example of Mordecai. Mordecai made it his business to be in close proximity to the palace. Why? This was very strategic: he was a spiritual watchman for Esther and his own people. By taking up position near the palace, he could monitor some of the most important events taking place there. He warned the King when there was a plot to assassinate him, for instance. However, the first order of business was of being a conduit or a reminder of the great covenant between Abraham and God to Queen Esther. Esther did not ask to be Queen to a pagan King in Babylon. The King did not even know she was Jewish. How easy it would have been for her to forget her spiritual heritage and worship the gods and ways of Babylon! She was an orphan but raised by her uncle Mordecai. The Church may be an orphan in Babylon, but our Jesus has not abandoned us. Just as Esther was raised and favored to become Queen of the world’s superpower, the Lord will bless and favor us in the world. “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come” (Ezekiel 11:16).

Finally, the day came when the generation of Mordecai could return back to the Holy Land after 70 years of captivity as prophesied by Jeremiah. “For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10). Please understand that there was a new generation born and bred in Babylon, spoke the language, and were familiar with the customs of Babylon. Several had flourished reputationally and financially in Babylon. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying” (Ezra 1:1). But once the Persian King Cyrus signed the decree, there was a huge decision to be made: continue to stay in Babylon and build on the success or return to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Keep in mind that Israel was a mess in those days. All the returnees had were the promises of God.

***Ezekiel 36:33** Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.*

***Eze 36:34** And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.*

***Eze 36:35** And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.*

Thank God many Jews decided to return despite flourishing in Babylon. No wonder God wrote their names in his book. “Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel” (Ezra 2:1,2). Mordecai is mentioned together with Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua. Despite his great achievements and prestige, Mordecai knew it was time to leave Babylon. One of these days, the word of the Lord Jesus will come to pass and we will leave this Babylon of this world. May your name and mine be among those who left!

***Luke 17:34** I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.*

***Luke 17:35** Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*

***Luke 17:36** Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*