

## March 6

**Scriptures:** Read Esther 3 & 4

**Key Verse:** “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”  
(Esther 4:14b)

### Overview

Mordecai refused to pay homage to Haman, whom king Ahasuerus had promoted to the highest position under himself. In such a place of dignity, he was to be afforded due respect; all those under him were to bow to him. We know that the Israelites had bowed to their kings and other respected people (1 Samuel 24:8; 2 Samuel 18:28; 1 Kings 1:16; Genesis 23:7; 33:3; 44:14); so what might the reason be for Mordecai’s refusal? There have been many speculations, but consider this: Haman was an “Agagite” (3:1); therefore, he was probably a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag (1 Samuel 15:8). God had ordered the Israelites to exterminate all the Amalekites because of their wickedness and ruthless attack on the children of Israel after they had left Egypt (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Israel, however, under the leadership of Saul, did not faithfully carry out this command. Saul’s sin had far-reaching consequences for the Israelites and his own posterity. Some Amalekites remained, and they continually plagued the Israelites. There had always been deep-rooted enmity between them.

If Haman was indeed an Amalekite descendant, this may well account for the fact that Mordecai would not bow to him. God had cursed the Amalekites and proclaimed war against them, so Mordecai stood with God against “the enemy of the Jews” (3:10). It also appears that Haman had a hatred for the Jews, even before he heard that Mordecai would not pay him homage, and thus he desired to kill them all (3:6).

In the same month that God, many years earlier, had miraculously redeemed the children of Israel and brought them out of Egypt, Haman plotted their destruction by deceptively obtaining the king’s authorization. Haman spoke the truth in telling the king that the people he sought to kill were dispersed throughout his kingdom and had a different law, but he lied in saying they did not obey the king. It was Haman’s own evil desire to destroy the Jews, but he played on Ahasuerus’ egotism by convincing him that they did not honour him and that their confiscated treasures would tremendously add to his own treasury.

Haman consulted astrologers and magicians to choose the best day on which to have the Jews killed, for he believed in lucky and unlucky days. Though they cast the lot to make the decision, God was ultimately in control (Proverbs 16:33). He gave His people eleven months to pray and call upon Him so that Haman’s evil plans would be overcome, allowing for enough time to get a counter decree issued by the king.

Using the king’s signet ring, Haman issued the death decree as though it came from Ahasuerus himself. The governors of all the provinces would have no choice but to allow such a pogrom to take place, since the official decrees of the Persian kings could not be changed. The incentive for people to kill the Jews was greed; the murderers would be permitted to take all the property of those they would kill. By the empire’s efficient postal service (a type of pony express), the news

quickly spread. No Jew was grieved more than Mordecai; after all, it was his defiance of Haman which had given fuel to the fire. The Jews responded by humbling themselves with fasting and wearing the garb of mourning. This signified their sincere supplication to God that He might intercede on their behalf.

Through a trusted attendant of queen Esther, Mordecai gave her the message of doom and her proper course of action in an attempt to save her people. She expressed her natural fear of going unannounced and uninvited into the king's personal chambers. As a security measure, anyone who did that was condemned to die unless he stretched out his sceptre in welcome. Mordecai's response shows his tremendous faith in God. His words implied that God had put her into that position "for such a time as this", and so to keep silent and not fulfill her responsibility toward her people would bring divine wrath upon her and her family, namely death (4:14).

With Mordecai's challenge, Esther agreed to go; she put herself into the hands of God, even if it meant sacrificing her life. She finally realized that God raised her to such a high position so she might be an instrument for His glory. Before she would petition the king, however, she asked that the Jewish community would fast three days for her, for such a miracle of the Lord could only come about by much prayer and fasting in a unified petition to God (Matthew 18:19-20). Their only hope was to take refuge in the Lord (cf. Psalm 46:1).

## **Prayer**

Lord God, just as Esther had come to the kingdom for such a time, even so You have a special purpose for our lives. Help us to co-operate with Your plan so that Your will may be done.