

There is a day of reckoning coming for each one of us. A day when we will stand before the judgment seat of God. **Hebrews 9:27** - ***“it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment”***. I know we don't like to think of that - but we need to. We need to think about this day of reckoning (that's coming in the future) so that we might be prepared for it and we might let it shape our lives in the present. And that's what we're going to be talking about tonight as we finish our study of **the book of Esther**. 2 characters going through a day of reckoning - 1 that was prepared and 1 unprepared. Differences. Prepare us...

### **Quick Recap:**

**1** - King Xerxes throws a party - his queen disobeys - so he gets rid of her

**2** - Xerxes then steals beautiful woman from Persia to make 1 the new queen - Jewish orphan named Esther is the winner (although she has hidden her identity and beliefs from everyone around her...)

**3** - Mordecai (Esther's cousin) saves the king's life but is not honored. Instead the king honors Haman the Agagite (Mordecai's enemy). Mordecai refuses to bow so Haman decides to kill him and all his people. Decree - 11 months...

**4** - Mordecai convinces Esther to plead with the king to change his mind. Esther eventually agrees and risks her life to go before the king. She then invites Haman and the king to a party.

**5/6** - Haman leaves the party and sees Mordecai (refuses to bow down).

Haman's family/friends give him the idea to impale Mordecai on 75ft stake the next day. That night the king can't sleep - reading - Mordecai saves life - Haman suddenly comes in - What should be done? - Do so to Mordecai...

**PRAY**

## **Haman's Day of Reckoning**

Haman is the classic example of someone who is almost completely blind to a coming destruction. Pearl Harbor - Trojan horse - 9/11... In all these cases, no one knew what was coming. They would have never imagined that such a fate could befall them. And they were all almost completely unprepared for it.

If you think about Haman, his life was going exceptionally well *just one day* earlier. He was powerful, wealthy, feared, loved. He had found a way to destroy his arch enemy Mordecai and get the revenge he so longed for. And the queen had invited him alone to another royal feast with the king. Everything was going right in his life. But then that thing happened in the middle of the night... Bad - Haman had no idea that it was about to get so much worse.

***7:1-2 — 1 So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."***

So the party is going like usual - lots of drinking - lots of eating. And once again the king asks Esther what all this about? (third time now). And he says once again that he give her anything she wants. And then it happens.

***7:3-6 — 3 Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king." 5 Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?" 6 And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.***

Can you imagine the look on Haman's face? Just imagine how shocked he must have been. He had never, not for one second, thought that Esther (the Queen was herself a Jew. That never occurred to him. And yet it was the fatal flaw in his plan. And Haman obviously realizes pretty quickly what was now at stake because v.6 says that he was terrified. Remember how crazy Xerxes is...But he actually does something wise here:

***7:7 — And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden.***

Xerxes takes a second to cool down. He needs to clear his head. I mean this is a huge decision. Remember Haman is not just any dude. This is the 2nd most powerful man in the world. Unfortunately the king has been drinking for the past 2 days so his judgment probably isn't exactly clear. But can you imagine that? Standing before a drunken judge who will examine the evidence to decide if you should live or die? Not a great place to be. And Haman realizes that so he turns his attention to the Queen:

***7:7-8 — 7 but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. 8 And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?"***

So Haman is obviously terrified. But instead of pleading with the king (his friend), Haman falls down before Esther to seek mercy. But clearly Haman is not at all concerned about what he's done...He's only concerned about himself. He's trying to save his own skin here (no real repentance). But it's too late now.

The king comes in and probably sees Haman grabbing at the Queen as a sign of mercy. But that's not the way he interprets it. He thinks Haman is trying to assault Esther (surely a capital offense) and now the king has reason to judge Haman. And the king's judgment is swift and final:

***9 As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.***

This is an almost unbelievable turn of events. If you would have told Haman about it the day before - he surely would have thought it impossible. He had no idea his judgment day was so close. And he wasn't ready.

### **The Jews Day of Reckoning**

So the main enemy in the story has been defeated. His body is hanging from the stake - but his plot against the Jews is still in effect. The order to kill all the Jews on the 13th day of 12th month is fast approaching. But unlike Haman, Esther and all the Jews knew this day was coming far in advance. And because of that, they had time to prepare and make a plan:

***3 Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. 4 When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king. 5 And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king.***

So Esther once again approaches the throne of the king uninvited. She risks her life for the sake of her people (if you weren't here...). But Esther doesn't approach the throne like she did last time. She now approaches boldly. She doesn't call for a fast or tremble with fear. Esther now understands that the King is the only one who can save her and her people. And this is how Xerxes responded:

***7 Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew...8 "You may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."***

So the king transfers power here. He gives his power to Esther through his signet ring. But the earlier edict about wiping out the Jews cannot be overruled even by the king. So what then would Esther write?

***10 The king's scribes were summoned at that time...And an edict was written... saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods... 13 A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies.***

So they write an edict that will enable the Jews to defend themselves without fear of governmental repercussions. The Jews would now be ready to defend themselves. And listen to what happened:

***9:1,16 — Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery***

*over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them...16 Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they laid no hands on the plunder.*

So the Jews were prepared for their day of reckoning and were not destroyed but instead destroyed their enemies. They were saved.

### **Your Day of Reckoning**

As I said at the start - each one of us has a day of reckoning coming. We will all stand before God and be judged. But will it be like Haman or will it be like Esther and the Jews. Because the truth is - you don't really know when this day will come. It could be like Haman and happen tomorrow...Or it could be 80 years from now. The question is - will you be ready or not?

Because like Esther - we have been told in advance about the coming judgment...Whatever reason - you're here tonight - God warning you...

**BI: God warns us about His judgment in the future to help us prepare for it in the present.**

And think about how Esther dealt with the reality of her coming judgment. In the end, she did not pretend that it didn't exist. She did not seek some way around it. Nor did she assume that she would somehow be let off the hook. Do you remember what Esther did when she was faced with her day of reckoning? She goes to the source of the judgment - the king himself. She goes to the king to plead for mercy. And this is what we must do as well.

Because God has provided us a way to escape his judgment. You see in Jesus our judgment has been paid for in advance. The trial was held and we stood before the Judge and we were all found guilty - yet Jesus stepped in and took the punishment that we deserve. On the cross, He bore the wrath/judgment of God against our sin. But these benefits do not occur automatically.

***John 3:36 - "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."***

We must believe in and obey the Son of God to have eternal life and have judgment of God removed from us. Jesus died to make people ready to meet God. And because of Him, we don't have to fear God's judgment but can contemplate our day of reckoning with sober confidence.

**PRAY**