

A New Name but an Old Enemy

In 1917, the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea, which today is the southernmost town of the country of Jordan, was held by the Turks. To the north, east and west were hundreds of miles of desert. In the summer months, the Turks had no fear of attack from the desert because they believed no enemy could ever cross that desert and survive. So, all their guns were focused on the Bay of Aqaba and a naval assault.

This is why on July 6th of 1917, when Lawrence of Arabia and a few hundred Bedouin soldiers attacked from the north after crossing that formidable desert, the Turks were completely surprised and quickly defeated. The Turks lost control of Palestine that day because they made two mistakes: they did not know their enemy and they did not have their weapons facing in the right direction. ⁱ

The apostle John, in his first epistle, warns us regarding OUR enemy:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared... (I John 2:18 NAS)

An “antichrist” is anyone who lives in opposition to the teaching, work and kingdom of Jesus. Ultimately, a single person will appear in this world who will become the ruler of a “new world order,” a world government, and he will be under the full control of Satan himself. He is described in detail by the prophet Daniel, the apostle Paul (who calls him “the man of Lawlessness”) and the apostle John in The Revelation of Jesus Christ where he is referred to as “the beast.” But what John is making clear is that, before this person of ultimate evil appears, there will be many others who are also doing the work of their father, Satan. We meet one of them today. His name is Haman. Our purpose in studying him is so that we don’t make the same mistake as the Turks. In order to defeat the enemy of God, we must know him and his ways and we must also have our weapons facing in the right direction. The first trait that Haman carries which he shares with all other antichrists, is...

I. His Hatred of the Jewish People.

There have been many world leaders who have hated the Jews throughout history, but the greatest anti-Semite of them all is Satan himself. His hatred of Jews began in the Garden of Eden when he was cursed by God because he deceived Eve. God said to Satan:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman,

And between your offspring and hers;

He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Gen. 3:15)

The genealogy of Jesus Christ in Luke traces His bloodlines all the way back to Adam. Adam may not have technically been Jewish but the Jews definitely descended from Adam. Satan knew the Messiah was coming to “crush his head,” so on multiple occasions he tried to wipe out the Jews through whom He would come. Pharaoh’s order to kill all the Jewish boys in Ex. 1:16 was done at Satan’s prompting. And now we come to Haman, the descendant of Agag, the Amalekite. In Exodus 17, the Amalekites attacked the Israelites. This was the battle where Moses was up on a

hill and Joshua was leading the men in battle down below. As long as Moses' hands were lifted up, the Israelites were winning. Aaron and Hur eventually had to hold Moses' hands up so Israel could win. After they did, God said to Moses:

Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. (Ex. 17:14)

Then Moses built an altar and said:

Because a hand was against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation. (*Ex. 17:16) ii

God took the Amalekite attack as a personal attack on Himself. Haman was a descendant of the Amalekites and also hated the Jews. Esther 3:5 and 6 tell us:

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

Haman and any of the anti-Semites who followed him, like Hitler or Stalin or Mohammed, should have known that, if they went after the Jews, God would go after them. Why should they have known that? Because God made an irrevocable covenant with Abraham. God said:

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen. 12:2-3)

God repeated this covenant to Abraham's son, Isaac, and to his son, Jacob, and to Moses. In repeating it to Moses, God specifically said:

And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD. (Ex. 6:8)

Now, let me address a very important point with which some Christians today disagree. Some Christians claim that the Jews broke this covenant when they disobeyed God AFTER they had been in the land for about a thousand years and that is why God exiled them. These Christians claim further that, since the Jews rejected Christ, God transferred this covenant to Christians. So now, we are the NEW Israel. This is called "Replacement Theology," meaning that Christians have REPLACED the Jews as the objects of God's promises. They base this theology on Romans 9:6 and 8, which say:

...For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel... In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. (Rom. 9:6, 8)

Well, that certainly sounds like Christians have "replaced" ethnic Jews, doesn't it? But here's the problem: Romans 9 has nothing to do with God's covenant with Abraham! The covenant with Abraham was NOT a covenant of salvation. It was a covenant of blessing and possession of the land. When God drove the Israelites off of the "Promised Land," yes, He did that because of their disobedience. But even

before He sent them into exile, He told them that one day He would bring them all back! Listen to Isaiah:

Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" And to the south, "Do not hold them back." (Is. 43:5-6)

First of all, this cannot be talking only about the Babylonian or Persian exiles because He says the Israelites are coming back to the land from every direction, something that only happened in 1948! But also listen to the prophet Ezekiel:

...I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again. (Ezek. 11:17)

The covenant with Abraham was a covenant of blessing and a promise that the land would belong to the Jews forever! And these are not the only prophecies that say this. There are dozens more.

But then, what IS Paul talking about when he says, *'not all who are descended from Israel are Israel'*? He's talking about salvation and he completes his thought in Rom. 11:

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself... God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew... Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! (Rom. 11: 1-2, 11-12)

Jews will be saved the same way Gentiles are saved, by putting their faith in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus. But only Jews have the inheritance claim on the land of Israel. And only Jews can claim that all the world was blessed through their ethnic blood because Jesus was ethnically Jewish – not Irish, not Swedish, not Italian. But when it comes to the forgiveness of our sin, all who place their faith in the work of Christ are *"Children of the Promise"*!!!

As I said, there are genuine believers in Christ, who believe that the Jews do not belong on the land of Israel today and that God is finished with them as an ethnic group. I must warn you, if you believe that, you have in essence cursed Israel and you will be cursed by God. He promised that that would happen. He will keep His word. He is a faithful God.

Haman had this in common with all antichrists – he hated the Jewish people. But he had something else in common with them. It was...

II. A Thirst for Power.

Satan, of course, had this thirst as well. In fact, he wanted the ultimate power. He wanted to displace God – and he still does! This is described in Is. 14:

**You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.** (Is. 14:13-14)

All antichrists throughout history have had this same drive deep within them and Haman was no exception. Neither was King Xerxes! We've already seen his inflated ego in the way he dealt with his first queen, Vashti, and now Haman plays on that ego with a plan that is fueled by his own hatred of the Jews. Haman says to the king:

...There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver (that would be 375 tons! \$240 million!!) into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.

So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman... the enemy of the Jews. "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please." (Esther 3:8-11)

Does that send a cold shiver up your spine? It should! It wasn't even about the money! Both Haman and the King simply could not allow anyone who disagreed with them to live. It's been estimated that fifteen million Jews were living in Persia at the time, which means that, if their plan had been carried out, it would have been a holocaust twice as big as Hitler's. This isn't just arrogance, this is demonic arrogance. The king sends out an edict telling the people in all his provinces to *"...destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews – young and old, women and little children – on a single day..."* (Esther 3: 13) What kind of government thinks that way? How can we relate to such horror? How does a person come to have such a low view of life?

This past March, Emily Letts, who is a counselor at an abortion clinic, filmed her own abortion and posted it on YouTube because she said, "I wanted to show it wasn't scary and there is such a thing as a positive abortion story." After her "procedure" she said, "I knew the cameras were in the room... but I forgot about them almost immediately. I was focused on staying positive and feeling the love from everyone in the room. I know that sounds weird, but to me, this was as birth-like as it could be. It will always be a special memory for me."

John Stonestreet, struggling to find the logic in this, commented through the Breakpoint radio program by saying, "But nothing is mentioned about the other person whose story it is. The child, whose life is being taken, never appears in the video... All we hear about is Emily and how she feels so good and guilt-free... For the baby, it was nothing like a birth. No, it was just the opposite." ⁱⁱⁱ

How does a person come to have such a low view of life? Satan is alive and well today, my friends, still tempting, still deceiving, still seeking to destroy life. We have apparently not progressed one inch beyond the immorality of King Xerxes and Haman. The spirit of antichrist is alive among us.

There are certainly other traits which all antichrists share, but before we leave this chapter, we need to consider another question:

III. How Can We Resist and Defeat This Enemy?

In the weeks to come, we will take a longer look at both defensive and offensive strategies that can be used against the enemy of God and of life itself, but let me conclude today with one foundational truth, which is this: **Satan is a defeated**

enemy! He lost any hope of accomplishing his goal at the cross and Christ gained the complete victory! Jim Logan, in his book, *Reclaiming Surrendered Ground*, writes this:

The enemy has no power over God's children except that power we permit him to have. Eph. 4:27 says, "...do not give the devil a foothold." Eph. 1:19, 20 say, "...his incomparably great power [is] for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead." ... Don't miss the point. The same power God used to raise His Son is the power He gives you and me to live a victorious Christian life. ^{iv}

The key to resisting and defeating the enemy of God is to know who you are in Christ! Satan's first deception is always to play a head game with you. In modern warfare, this is called "Psy-ops" – Psychological Operations. But this, too, is as old as the hills. Alexander the Great, the Greek King who eventually defeated the Persian empire, used "psy-ops" regularly in battle. If his army was outmanned and retreating, he would give orders that his armorers construct oversized breastplates and helmets that would fit men 7 or 8 feet tall. As they were retreating, they would leave these items behind for the pursuing army to discover. When the enemy would find these oversized helmets and breastplates, they would be terrified at the thought of fighting giants and would abandon their pursuit! ^v

This is the kind of thing our enemy does with us. He tries to get you to believe that he has overwhelming power and unending strength. He wants you to think you can't win! The opposite is true. He's already lost and you have, in Christ, overwhelming power over him. So, how do we practically apply this truth?

Dr. Neil Anderson of Talbot School of Theology writes this:

You are a child of God, [if you've surrendered your life to Christ] you have been justified and positionally declared righteous by Him because of Christ's finished work and your faith in Him... We don't serve God to gain His acceptance; we are accepted, so we serve God. We don't follow Him to be loved; we are loved, so we follow Him. It is not what we do that determines who we are; it is who we are that determines what we do. "*Dear friends, now we are children of God...*" (I John 3:2). To live the victorious Christian life, you have to believe what is already true about you. ^{vi}

Do you know who you are? Do you realize the power of your identity in Christ? We have nothing to fear; we have no need to panic when the enemy attacks. We simply need to stand our ground in the power of His name. Mordecai and Esther had every reason to "cut and run" when they learned of Haman's scheme. But they did just the opposite. We'll see that next week. Col. 2:9-10 say this:

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Did you hear that? That is true! Believe that, devour that, live that this week. Let's pray...

ⁱ “Knowing Your Enemy,” *PreachingToday.com*

ⁱⁱ The first half of this verse is the alternate reading from the NIV

ⁱⁱⁱ John Stonestreet, “I Filmed My Abortion,” *Breakpoint*, May 14, 2014

^{iv} Jim Logan, *Reclaiming Surrendered Ground* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), p. 38, 159

^v Tim Downs, *Head Game* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), p. 309

^{vi} Neil Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), p. 63