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A new cast of characters is introduced in Esther. The place is Babylon. Immediately following the end of the Jewish captivity there, anyone who wished could return to Jerusalem. Some chose not to go back. Our “Six Hundred Year Story” continues here. The king of Babylon made a choice to put aside his current wife and find another. Those close to him recommended that he begin by collecting a huge harem made up of young ladies to be found in the kingdom. He could make his choice from this group. Esther was one of the girls forced into the palace harem. The king took a special liking to her and proclaimed her queen. She happened to be Jewish, but told no one this fact because her adopted father, Mordecai, had told her to keep her background a secret. He was a part of the inner court of the king, with access to some levels of government. At one point, Mordecai was privileged to information that exposed an assassination threat to the king of Babylon. Esther informed the king of the plot, giving Mordecai credit for the intelligence.

Haman appears in chapter three. A politically ambitious person, he was arrogant, proud, and despicable. His anti-Semitic feelings came to the forefront immediately. Mordecai showed him no reverence. Responding to the apparent disrespect, Haman made plans to have him put to death and destroy the Jews as well, because Haman knew Mordecai was a Jew.

The stage was now set to play out the final judgment of God upon Amalek. Six centuries are nothing to an eternal God. But a moment has passed for Him. His justice will not be postponed or delayed any longer. What has transpired here is not a random series of events with little or no significance. The characters in this story were specifically chosen by God, their positions not accidental, and their ancestry of special importance. Mordecai is introduced in the beginning of Esther as a son of Kish. Kish was Saul’s father. That places him directly into the same family tree as Saul, most likely a descendant of one of Saul’s brothers. Haman is labeled as an Agagite, a direct descendant of the king of Amalek, whom Samuel so efficiently dispatched six hundred years previous. Only God could orchestrate something this complex and perfect. The confrontation between Saul and Agag commences once again, this time with Mordecai and Haman, but with dramatically different results.

The plan put in place by Haman denoted a special day on which Jews could be killed at will. He had presented them to the king as a nuisance to be eliminated, and the king, ignorantly respecting his opinion, agreed to his plan. Esther was informed of the heinous proposal through Mordecai, and in response, invited the king and Haman to a banquet. Her secret intention was to ask for relief for the Jews. Haman was puffed up by the invitation, completely oblivious to the impending disclosure, and had a wonderful time the first evening. Esther put off the question that night, and extended a second banquet invitation for the following evening. Haman was elated and agreed to attend. He went home in high spirits until he remembered Mordecai. Through the night, Haman had a construction crew working to build a gallows seven stories tall, a challenge for any contractor during the daytime, and much more so at night. By morning, the project was finished.

Humor is not absent from the character of God. Irony and comedy mesh as the story unfolds. Haman had made plans to have Mordecai hanged publically on his brand new gallows. As he stepped into the king’s presence to request a public execution, he found that the king had suffered through a sleepless night. To combat his insomnia, he had a servant read the annals of his reign to him, and found that Mordecai was a hero who had never been rewarded for his actions. Before Haman could ask anything, the king looked to him for suggestions on how to honor a hero. Thinking that the king was referring to him, he recommended some wonderfully public appreciations, only to find out that the man who would be the recipient of all this fanfare was Mordecai. Adding insult to injury, he was the one responsible for implementing it all. (Now, is that a wry smile creeping across your face?)

Haman spent that day leading Mordecai around as a VIP. By the end of the day, he was mortified at the turn of events, but did not have much time to reflect upon it before he was whisked off to the second banquet with Esther. At the banquet, Esther shocked the king and Haman with her statements as she explained the problem with the newly implemented Jewish extermination program. She also surprised the king with the fact that she was a Jew. The king was furious with Haman and left to get guards. Haman, in pure terror, attempted to beg for his life. He stumbled as he began walking towards Esther, who was seated at the table, and fell on her just as the king walked back into the room! (That smile is getting bigger.) Haman’s fate was sealed, and he was hung on the very gallows that had been built for Mordecai.

That ends the “Six Hundred Year Story”. There are many lessons to be learned in the study of these scriptures. Through this story, we meet people of dubious character who failed, and we also encounter others worthy of admiration, those who succeeded in doing the will of God. The book of Esther is a shining example of a notable characteristic of God—His purpose and perfect will cannot be frustrated or stopped. He will accomplish that which He desires, and we can rest assured that God’s attention to details is capable of spanning centuries.



