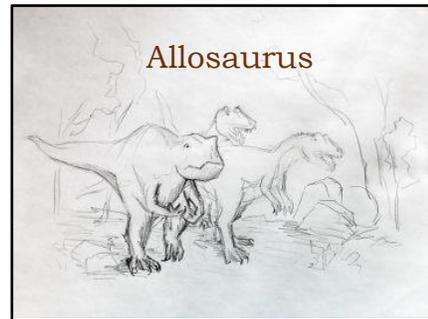


Unfinished Business
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Esther 3:6b

(BHS)		(NIV)
וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמָן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-כָּל-	1	Haman looked for a way to destroy all
הַיְהוּדִים	2	Mordecai's people,
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מַלְכוּת אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ	3	the Jews,
עַם מְרָזְקִי:	4	throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.
	5	

Obviously, lines 2 and 5 relate. You can easily sound out Haman and Mordecai. The rest are first-year vocabulary. But the king's name is a problem. It was Persian and spoken with Persian (not Hebrew) phonemes. Probably sounded like "Khshayarshan." This was more or less approximated in the Hebrew: אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ. The scribes did the best they could. But then we take that and approximate the approximation into an English version that doesn't have an equivalent for several of those Hebrew characters, and invent the kludgy "Ahasuerus." That sounds like a dinosaur to me. No one in antiquity was ever actually called that. So, some modern translations like NIV give up the whole attempt and just use "Xerxes."



The book of Esther presents us with the figure of Haman, a rather sick personality at home in the Persian royal court. He was glad that the people in Susa showed him respect by bowing to him. But he just couldn't stand the fact that in the whole city, one man (except the king of course) refused to do so: Mordecai the Jew.

Just as an aside, for you to feel good about yourself, how many people have to like you? If 99 folk smile when you come along, but one scowls, doesn't it bother you? We crave people's respect and approval. It is a spiritual weakness, and we should repent of it, but it is understandable. We are just like Haman in that respect.

But where we are not like him is in what we do about it. We don't scheme to destroy a person who isn't impressed by us. And beyond that—when we encounter a person like that, we don't put in motion a plan to destroy not only that person, but that person's whole family and ethnic group. Haman was murderously evil in that respect.

You may be aware that Esther is the only book of the Bible that makes no reference to the God of Israel at all. True, the people are religious. They fast and believe in fate. But God isn't personally involved. So how would you preach the book of Esther?

There are a number of ways to preach Esther, but let me show you just one. It is the way that Esther folds back into the mainstream of redemptive history. First of all, take a look at how Mordecai is identified in 2:5, "Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish." Mordecai was a Benjaminite descended from Kish. Kish was King Saul's father (1 Sam 9:1 – 2). So Mordecai was descended from Saul's immediate family.

Now, who is Haman? "King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite" (Esth 3:1). He is descended from Agag, the king of the Amalekites whom Saul had been commanded to destroy.

But Saul spared Agag and kept his possessions. See 1 Samuel 15. Samuel came along and rebuked Saul for that, then killed Agag. So Saul never fulfilled God's command. It was left hanging. This was the beginning of Saul's downfall.

There was unfinished business between the houses of Agag and Saul for half a millennium. This unfulfilled command reached its final resolution in the conflict between Haman and Mordecai. This is why Haman is presented as having such deep animosity for the Jews. This is also why it was important that the Jews not repeat Saul's sin—so they ignored the plunder (Esth 9:10).

The Bible says that in the "fullness of time," Christ came to redeem us and to adopt us into his Father's family (Gal 4:4ff). God plays the "long game." He has a long-term strategy for the world.

So don't be impatient or imagine that he isn't working his will. Things take time. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Take heart! Things might not be going great right now. You might be burdened by things that cause you to doubt. But your heavenly Father knows what he is doing. And in the fullness of time, you will see the wisdom in his unfolding plan. And matters will fall into place for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!