

February 1, 2012

Old Testament: Mordecai—The Humble Will Outlast the Proud

- SERIES: Old Testament
 - This week: Mordecai—The Humble Outlast the Proud

- Sometimes, you'll run across someone being a little too proud or cocky in life, and it comes back to bite them...it's almost funny at times...
 - Jose Canseco—begged manager to let him pitch in a game
 - ◇ May 29, 1993 he pitched 33 pitches in a blowout loss to the Red Sox
 - ◇ July 9, he had Tommy John surgery to repair damage caused by those 33 pitches
 - Or how about this video of another pitcher
 - ◇ **SHOW VIDEO**

- This is the story of a man named Mordecai
 - Mordecai's story is tied directly to a woman named Esther
 - ◇ We read about their story in the OT book of Esther

 - King Xerxes gives a grand banquet lasting seven days
 - On 7th day, he sends to have Queen Vashti, who was beautiful to look at, come before all the people—but she refused to come
 - The king's closest advisors told him that the queen had done a great wrong, and that if the king didn't want women throughout his kingdom disrespecting their husbands the way Vashti had disrespected the king, then he must issue an edict never allowing Vashti into the king's presence again, and proclaiming men as the ruler of their households.

 - A search for a new, beautiful young virgin queen was made.
 - Mordecai, a Jewish exile, had a young cousin whom he had taken in as his own daughter when her mother and father had died. Her name was Hadasseh, but she was called Esther.
 - In short time, Esther won the favor of the king and he placed the royal crown upon her head—but she never let anyone know that she was an Israelite by way of Mordecai's instruction to her.

 - One day, Mordecai overheard a conspiracy plot made by two of the

- king's officers that they were going to kill the king.
- Mordecai told Queen Esther, and the plot was discovered and taken care of, with Esther giving credit for the discovery to Mordecai.
- The King chose to honor a noble named Haman to be his second in command, and commanded that people kneel down to honor him.
- But, Mordecai would not kneel down to him.
- Haman is enraged, and plots to not only kill Mordecai, but the entire Israelite people in the region.

➤ ESTHER 3:8-11

- Haman said to King Xerxes, "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. **9** If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, ... **10** So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman ... the enemy of the Jews. **11** ... the king said to Haman, "... do with the people as you please."
- A decree was issued that every Jew—both young and old—should be killed and annihilated on a single day, the 13th day of the 12 month.
- Mordecai made a plea with Esther to go into the king's presence and to beg for mercy for the sake of her people, the Israelites.
 - ◇ She was scared. She relayed the following to Mordecai:

➤ ESTHER 4:11-16

- "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." **12** When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, **13** he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. **14** For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And **who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?**" **15** Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in

Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

- ◇ Some of the wisest words ever were spoken there by Mordecai: "who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"
 - When we are being over-run with fear to do the right thing, we need to ask ourselves, "Has God placed me here, right now, for such a time as this?"
 - Maybe you're the only person able to do the work that need to be done—and God has placed you there for just such a time.
- Well, Esther does go before the king, and she requests that the king and Haman join her for a banquet.
- Then, when asked what she wants from the king, she requests one more banquet the next day, where she will then answer the king's question of what her petition is.
- Haman went home feeling good, but then he saw Mordecai, who didn't kneel, and he got ticked again.

➤ ESTHER 5:10-13

- Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, **11** Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials.**12** "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. **13** But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."
 - ◇ Though he had so much, Haman's pride was ruling his life and keeping him from happiness.
- His wife suggested building a gallows 75 feet high for Mordecai to be hung upon, and so Haman had the gallows built.
- That night, the king couldn't sleep, so he asked that the chronicles—the record of his time as king—be read to him. He heard of the plot

upon his life that Mordecai had exposed, and he asked, "What honor and recognition did Mordecai receive for this?" The answer was that nothing had been done.

- When Haman came in that next day, the king asked him:

➤ ESTHER 6:6-14

- "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" **7** So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, **8** have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. **9** Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!' "**10** "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." **11** So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" **12** Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, **13** and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him--you will surely come to ruin!" **14** While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

- Then, at the time of that day's banquet, the king asked the queen this:

➤ ESTHER 7:2-10

- "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted." **3** Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life--this is my petition. And spare my people--this is my request. **4** For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king. "**5** King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to

do such a thing?" **6** Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. **7** The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. **8** Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. **9** Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Hang him on it!" **10** So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

- Shortly after this, a new decree was made, ordering the Jews to defend themselves, which they successfully did.
- Mordecai was lifted to a very high place in the land.
- ◊ This is the final verse in the book of Esther:

➤ ESTHER 10:3

- Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

➤ There are some awesome attributes that Mordecai, the humble one, displayed throughout this story—things that were non-existent in Haman's life.

- He brought in his young girl cousin as his own child after her parents died—parenting a child, and especially one not your own, is of the most humbling of experiences
- He did his moral and civil duty to make someone aware of a plot to kill the king—and he did so without calling for something in return
- Mordecai doesn't seek revenge on his enemy, but rather goes through the proper channel—the queen and the king—to get help
 - ◊ In so doing, he humbly gives wise advise to the queen that she is not special on her own right, but that God has given her a place of authority for “such a time as this”.

- **He looked for open doors from God to do good rather than to**

simply promote one's own self advancement.

- ◇ In everything Haman did, he sought self-advancement rather than opportunities to help others...
 - His need for people to bow to him
 - His need to kill the people he hated
 - His pride in being so great that only he and the king were invited to the queen's banquet

- ◇ **In the end, because Haman only looked out for himself, he was treated in the way he treated others—ultimately with death.**
- ◇ **Mordecai, on the other hand, looked out for others first, and was treated as he treated others—ultimately being given honor and authority.**

➤ How do you look at the opportunities given to you in life:

- Do you constantly look to how you can gain advantages in every area of life, looking out for yourself above all others?
- Or, do you opportunities in life to do good for others and give God glory in all that you do?
 - ◇ Are you humble and for others and God first?
 - ◇ Or, are you full of pride, placing yourself and your needs first in every matter?

➤ PRAY

- 1) I've been like Haman, treating another person wrongly and trying to do whatever I can to bring them down and make my own situation better. I need to seek forgiveness and let go of my pride.
- 2) While I haven't maybe been like Haman, I've still been guilty of a prideful heart and I don't take every opportunity I have to build up others at the expense of myself in any way. I want to learn humility that truly puts God and others' needs above myself.