

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 27 September 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Right Time to Disobey

Esther 3:1-7

We live in a culture that is supposedly ruled by “reason” and “science.” Those who follow the God of the Bible are considered to be “misguided,” “extreme,” “fanatical,” and “weak-minded,” because they feel the need to worship a God who (the mockers say), was invented by men. Yet, strangely enough, those who mock the God of the Bible are sometimes found to worship (*literally* worship) gods of their own making. For example, it has recently come to light that in Silicon Valley, California, there is a strange, cultic worship that is going on in the highest levels of an AI company named **Anthropic**. When one of their AI models has been retired and replaced by a faster model, the employees literally conduct a *funeral* for it. At the recent “funeral” of an AI model named **Claude 3 Sonnet**, employees literally cried over Claude, as though it were a person. In fact, according to rumours in Silicon Valley, top-level employees are actually *worshipping* their AI models as “gods”; and they are careful to screen and hire only people who have this same kind of fanatical devotion to their technology. (By the way, this “funeral” is a documented fact; and many people who are “in the know” swear that the rumours about the worship of “Clyde” are true, as well!) Anthropic also conducts weekly motivational chats called “Vision Quests,” which have strange religious overtones, and which could rightly be called “sermons.” Anthropic has consulted 15 religious leaders to ask them questions about the “morality” of their chatbot model; and they apply the ideas of these “spiritual gurus” to their model.¹

Now, I find it interesting that this company is named “Anthropic.” Why? Because the word “anthropic” means “pertaining to man”; and idolatry *is* the worship of man instead of God. Folks, worshipping technology is no different from worshipping an idol of wood or stone. Weeping over an AI model is no different from the ancients’ weeping for the god Tammuz (who was nothing but a deified man named Nimrod). Idolatry is the worship of *man*, and of *man’s* accomplishments, and the works of *men’s* hands. In **Isaiah 44**, Isaiah gives us the scenario of a carpenter who chopped down a cedar tree, and used part of the wood to warm himself, and part of it to roast his meat, and then used the rest of it to make an image of a man. He then bowed down to the idol that he had just formed with his own hands, and said, **“Deliver me; for thou art my god.”** This scenario illustrates not only the foolishness of idol worship, but the real nature of it. Whether it be the worship of the *works* of men’s hands (in the form of actual physical objects), or of mankind in general, or of a nation, or of a human movement, or of a human government, or of one particular man, idolatry is always the worship of *men*, or of a *man*.

Now, what would *you* do if you went into work one day, and you were asked to participate in some form of idolatrous worship (even if it were in the form of wearing some kind of “solidarity” pin for some wicked movement, such as LGBTQ)? Would you be like many professing Christians in Roman times, who threw the little pinch of incense onto the altar, and said, “Caesar is Lord and God,” rather than risk their lives? Or would you say, “*Jesus Christ* is my Lord and my God; and I will not bow to this

abomination”? There are times, in the life of every believer, when one must consciously choose not to bow to man, or to sin. This morning, we will focus on the decision that Mordecai made not to bow to man, but to God. The title of this message is *The Right Time to Disobey*.

Read Esther 3:1-7.

I. Haman’s haughty law (vv. 1-2)

As we just saw in our Scripture passage, it was shortly after Mordecai had uncovered the plot to assassinate the king that a prince named **Haman** quickly rose to power in the kingdom. Ahasuerus promoted Haman above all the other princes, and placed him in the position of grand vizier. We also find that Haman was very haughty and ambitious. One of his first acts as vizier was to convince the king to sign a decree that would require the king’s servants to bow down to *him* whenever he passed by. Now, you’d think that such a selfish and pompous move on Haman’s part, so soon after his appointment, would have made Ahasuerus question whether Haman desired to promote his king, or to promote himself. Yet, Haman had a sweet deceptiveness, and a power of persuasion, which seemed to bedazzle Ahasuerus.

Now, after this decree was signed, Mordecai was faced with a decision. Remember, Mordecai was an officer in the king’s gate. This means that Haman walked past Mordecai’s workstation often. Would *Mordecai* bow to Haman too, with all the other servants? As we just read, he did *not*. The other servants tried to persuade Mordecai to bow to Haman; but he refused.

Now, *would* it really have been wrong for Mordecai to bow to Haman? After all, high officials walked in and out of the king’s gate all the time; and in Middle Eastern culture, it was customary to bow to princes and nobles, as a token of respect. (Even in Israel, the Israelites bowed to their kings and princes, and even to their prophets, as a sign of respect; and God didn’t condemn them for this practice.) Why, then, would Haman not bow to *this* officer? All Mordecai’s co-workers (including some of his Jewish friends, no doubt) were trying to persuade him to bow for the sake of his own life; yet, he wouldn’t give Haman so much as a nod of his head. Why? Apparently, because Haman had persuaded the king to make a *special* edict concerning himself. This wasn’t ordinary bowing, as a sign of respect to a noble: this bowing was for the purpose of acknowledging Haman as a *god*! *This* Mordecai could not comply with. Evidently, *other* Jews in Shushan went through the motions of bowing, even though they knew that Haman was no god; but Mordecai wouldn’t commit such an offense against his God. He knew that this situation was no different from when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar.

Christian, be on notice: when you refuse to “bow” to the dictates of the world, you *will* be confronted—not only by the world, but even by professing believers who say, “Just go along with it.” You *will* be called “judgmental” and “divisive.” You *will* be called a

“fundamentalist” (with a mocking emphasis on the word “mental”). However, you are not alone. Every true believer down through the centuries had to go against the crowd. **Noah** went against the billions of people of his day who rejected God. **Caleb** and **Joshua** said, “We are well able to overcome the giants”—even as the people were threatening to stone them for daring to suggest such a thing. **Gideon** fought the enormous army of Midian with a mere 300 men, who were armed with puny clay lamps and torches. **David** went down into the Valley of Elah with a single slingshot, to fight a duel with a 10-foot-tall, seasoned warrior, who was armed to the teeth. **Jehoshaphat** went to battle against an enormous army with no battle plan, except to have a small choir of Levites sing praises to the LORD. When **Daniel** heard the decree not to pray to any god or man for 30 days, except to Darius, he opened his window and prayed to the true God, even though he could have prayed in private. Just like all these men of old, *you* will, sooner or later, be compelled to deny your God, or else pay a price. And just as there were people all around Haman who were watching him, to see whether his “*matters would stand*” (in other words, whether he would stay true to his God, or not), so people will be watching *you*, to see if *your* matters will stand. But take heart, Christian. God promises, in **Romans 14:4**, that He will hold you up, because He is “able to make you stand.”

You see, “worship” isn’t something you do on Sunday, when you’re singing hymns at church. “Worship” is about attributing “worth” to God. Our English word “worship” comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word *weorthscipe*, which, over time, shortened to “worthship,” and then to “worship.” The word *weorthscipe* literally means “worth-shape.” It means “to give shape to something of worth.” It means “to *attribute* worth” to something. To “worship” doesn’t merely mean to bow down physically to something: it means to attribute “worth” to that thing. *This* is what we should be doing every minute of our lives—attributing *worth to God*. You may *say* that you attribute worth to God; but if you consider a bank account, or a career, or material comforts, or a girlfriend or boyfriend, or your spouse, or fun, or movies, or sports, or recreation, or electronic toys, or the opinion of your friends, or anything other than God, to be more important than He, then you are *worshipping* that thing! If you skip church to go fishing, or on some other fun outing, to what are you attributing worth? If you can take time to watch a football match, but you can’t take time to read God’s Word, and to pray, then to what are you attributing worth? Every day you are making decisions about whom (or what) you will worship; and if you are not choosing to worship God with your whole life, why would you suddenly choose to worship Him when your life is on the line?

Now, let’s go back and read **verse 1** again. (**Read Esther 3:1.**) The author of the book of **Esther** makes special mention here of the fact that **Haman was an Agagite**. What does this title “Agagite” mean? “Agag” was a title for the kings of Amalek—just as all the kings of Egypt were called “Pharoah.” Now, like all the other nations in the Middle East, Amalek had been conquered by the Babylonians, and then by the Persians; and the Persians’ policy was to take the princes and nobles from the nations that they ruled, and incorporate them into the government of their empire. They did this as a measure of goodwill, so that these conquered

nations would cooperate with them. Apparently, then, the Amalekites had never been completely destroyed; and their kingly line (the Agagites) had become incorporated into the Persian government. Yet, they were *supposed* to have been destroyed centuries earlier.

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-4, 8-9, 13-23, 30-33.

Four hundred years before this point, God had sworn that He would make war with Amalek forever. God had told Moses, ***“Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”*** Why did God decree this? Because Amalek was the first nation that had dared to attack God’s people Israel after they had left Egypt. While Israel was marching through the desert one day, Amalek attacked the weak and elderly people in the rear of the multitude; and God promised that in time, He would destroy Amalek for this. Now, if the Amalekites had repented, God would have been merciful to them, and spared them; but they never did repent. In fact, they attacked Israel again, when they were on the border of Canaan, at Kadesh-Barnea. God had just told Israel that they were not allowed to enter Canaan because of their murmuring against Him; but they, in self-will, tried to fight the Canaanites anyway. It was on this occasion that Amalek went out for a second time, and attacked Israel. They also attacked Israel several times during the 400 years of the judges. Like their ancestor Esau, the Amalekites always hated Israel; and now, after many centuries of refusing to repent, their judgment had come.

However, there was a problem: Saul *didn’t* completely destroy Amalek, as God had commanded. *Samuel* slew Agag, since Saul had failed to do it; but apparently, at least one of the king’s sons escaped and survived; and the kingly line of Amalek was later reestablished. By the time of David a few decades later, the Amalekites had become strong enough again to make raids on the southern cities of Israel; and they were still there 300 years later, in the time of King Hezekiah. Saul had *not* been serious or thorough about obeying God, and destroying Amalek; and because he hadn’t taken God’s command seriously, a number of Amalekites escaped; and one of the descendants of the Agagites, Haman, later rose up to destroy Israel.

Now, I believe that there is an important spiritual analogy in this. If Egypt be a picture of the world (and it clearly is), and if the Passover, and Israel’s exodus from Egypt, be a picture of redemption (and it is), then of what is Amalek a picture? ***Our fleshly nature!*** You see, the flesh is stealthy and insidious. Our flesh attacks us when we are weak and vulnerable (just as Amalek attacked the weak people of Israel). The flesh attacks us when we are *self*-confident, and thus don’t have the power of the Lord upon us (just as Amalek attacked Israel when they tried to go up into Canaan without God’s blessing). If you do not put the flesh to death every day (just as Saul was *supposed* to put Amalek to death, but didn’t), you may be sure that your flesh will rear its ugly head and destroy *you* instead, when you least expect it (just as Haman *nearly* did to Israel). There is something else to be learned from this, too. Remember: **Mordecai was a descendant of King Saul.** This means that Mordecai had to suffer on

account of his ancestor's failure to obey God! Our sins *do* continue to affect our descendants, long after we are gone! Christian, don't serve God half-heartedly. Live for Jesus fully and completely, and do *not* compromise to your flesh, or the world. Your children and grandchildren are watching and learning (or *will* be watching and learning) from *you*. Show them, by your godly example, that the LORD is to be obeyed and worshipped above all gods.

II. Mordecai's unhesitating loyalty (vv. 3-4)

(Read Esther 3:3-4 again.) What drove Mordecai to refuse to bow to Haman? All he had to do was bow down to Haman, and console himself that *he* was bowing as a token of respect, and not worship. Was Mordecai making too big a deal over this? In fact, was it pride that led Mordecai not to bow to Haman? No, it wasn't! It was his *faithfulness to the God of Israel* that drove him not to bow to Haman. If Mordecai had bowed to Haman, everyone else would have interpreted his bow as an acknowledgement that Haman was a god.

By the way, you'll notice that by this point, Mordecai was publicly calling himself a Jew. He had instructed Esther to hide *her* identity as a Jew; but now, *he* was owning himself as a Jew. Of course, he surely must have realised that by identifying as a Jew, he might be putting Esther in danger. Those in the palace who knew about his relationship to Esther might hear about his Jewishness, connect the dots, and figure out that Esther was a Jew, too. Yet, when asked why he refused to bow, Mordecai would not lie: he had to say that he was one of God's people.

Christian, the time may come when you and I will face actual hardship for our faith in Christ. When that time comes, don't act as though you are not a believer, so that you can "live to fight another day." That's what Peter did, in a moment of fear; but his lie was nothing less than a betrayal of his Lord! By confessing that he was a Jew, Mordecai was acknowledging the God of Israel. You see, God has attached His *very name* to Israel. In fact, God's name is *built into* the name "Israel." (Israel means "prince with God.") Even the name *Jew* points to God, because the name *Yehudah* means "praise" (meaning "praise to God"). Mordecai knew that to bow to *this* man, in this circumstance, would be to deny his God; and he refused to do it.

Now, maybe you're thinking, "This is interesting, Pastor; but how is this relevant to us? *We* would never have to bow down to a man, or to an image, or to a false god. Our society is too rational for that." Should this be what you are thinking, I have a newsflash for you: our society is *already* swiftly sinking into pagan worship! In recent months, a golden statue of President Trump was placed on Trump's golf course at Mar-a-Lago; and this statue was funded by a group of so-called "Christian" leaders. Somehow, these "Christian" leaders don't see any problem with making an image of a man, in a god-like posture. Perhaps you're thinking,

“Well, it’s only a few crazy people who do things like that. *We* wouldn’t do that over here, would we?” If so, think again! Just this past summer, right here in Athlone, the Pride parade featured a huge, very pagan-looking idol (with a disgusting meaning), at the head of the procession. Meanwhile, in the George’s Dock district in Dublin, proposals are being made to build a 30-metre-tall digital statue called “The Giant,” which can project the image of any person onto the giant’s body, and then move, and replicate that person’s voice. They say its purpose is to celebrate humanity; but it is clearly a form of idolatry! (By the way, the plan is to build these Giant statues in major cities all over the world by 2030.) This sounds very much like what we read about in **Revelation!** During the Tribulation, people will be compelled to worship a talking, moving image!

Read Revelation 13:1-18.

Not only will people living during the Tribulation period be compelled to bow to the talking, moving image of the Antichrist that will be set up in the Holy of Holies in the re-built Temple in Jerusalem, but they will have to take the mark 666 in their right hand or forehead. This, in itself, will be an act of worship; and the Bible warns, in **Revelation 14:9-11**, that those who make this irrevocable decision will never again have the opportunity to repent and be saved.

Brethren, *we* won’t have to go through the Tribulation (we will be raptured up to Heaven just before it begins); but if we think that the shadows of the Tribulation are not falling on us even now, we’re fooling ourselves. We may well see real persecution before the Rapture. Already in our schools, children are being strongly pressured, if not outright compelled, to participate in activities that celebrate the lifestyles of LGBTQ. This is wickedness; and every child who wishes to obey God must resolve to say “no” to it. In many schools all over Europe today, children are being taken to mosques, and are being strongly pressured to bow to Allah, and recite Muslim prayers. This happened in May of this year, in Scotland, when a group of Beaver Scouts were taken to a mosque, and were taught to bow and pray to Allah—except that one of the boys did *not* bow. While all the other boys were prostrated on the ground, he remained standing. That is exactly what Mordecai did; and this may be what *we* will have to do one day. At this very moment, in many countries, Christians are being arrested, tortured, or killed, because they won’t stop trusting in Jesus, going to church, reading their Bibles, and praying to our God and Saviour. They respect their leaders, and obey their country’s laws, insofar as they can do so; but when their government commands them *not* to meet for church, read the Bible, pray, or witness for Christ, they must disobey.

Read Romans 13:1-7.

Romans 13:1-7 is a favourite passage of many tyrannical governments. In old Soviet Russia, the government banned Bibles, and forbade pastors to preach from most parts of the Bible; yet, **Romans 13** was one passage that they approved of. The government instructed pastors to teach their flocks, from this passage, that *they must obey the government under all circumstances*. However, this passage does not teach blind devotion to the government. It actually teaches that governments are *accountable to God* to enact *righteous* laws. Government leaders who enact *unrighteous* laws (such as legalising the murder of babies in the womb, or assisted murder, or promoting LGBTQ, or forbidding believers to read and publish the Bible, meet for church, or evangelise) *will* answer to the Judge of all the earth one day. Governments are supposed to be ministers of God for good; but when they legislate evil, God's people must obey God. When the Sanhedrin commanded the Apostles not to speak or teach anymore in Jesus' name, Peter boldly said, ***"We must obey God rather than men."***

Brethren, we must decide whose side we are on! When the children of Israel built the golden calf, and Moses showed up on the scene, and saw the people worshipping it, he asked the people, ***"Who is on the LORD's side?"*** We must ask ourselves this question, too. If we are afraid to mention our Lord's name now, what will we do when it becomes a crime? This nation desperately needs believers who have holy grit and backbone—not believers who are wimpy, soft, and worldly, and who serve God only when they feel up to it, and when it doesn't require any real sacrifice. For many Christians, excitement about serving God lasts only as long as there are exciting activities going on. Many Christians are like kids who get a cool toy at Christmas time. They're excited about their toy for about one week; but by the end of Christmas break, they've become bored with it, and set it aside. Sadly, this is how many Christians treat their faith in Christ. They are excited for a while; but if there isn't a constant schedule of fun, exciting Christian activities, they get bored, and start drifting, and stop serving the Lord. Folks, this is *not* true service to God. This is *not* the kind of faith that turned the world upside-down; and it will not last. God calls us to serve Him faithfully, no matter the cost, even when things seem "dull." The Christian life is a *race*; and a race requires endurance. **Hebrews 12:1-2** says, ***"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."***

III. Haman's hateful lot (vv. 5-7)

(Read Esther 3:6-7 again.) Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman; and soon, it became common knowledge in the king's gate. Haman soon became aware of Mordecai's disobedience; and from the moment he heard of it, he was insanely angry. Immediately, he began to plot not only to have Mordecai put to death, but to have *all* Jews put to death; and he cast ***pur*** (the Babylonian word for "lot") to determine on what day to murder them all. As it

turned out, the lot fell on the **13th of Adar** (in the 12th month of the year); and since it was the *first* month when he cast lots, it meant that the date for Israel's destruction wouldn't be for nearly a year. Haman was probably disappointed that he had to wait so long to destroy the Jews; but he dared not go against the *pur*; because, like all pagans, he was very superstitious. He really believed that the powers of "fate" were governed by things such as the positions of the stars and constellations, and the rolling of dice. Hitler was like this, too. He was deep into all kinds of occult power and magic; and he sent his emissaries all over the world to collect occultic objects and artifacts (such as the "spear of destiny"), so that he would have the power to take over the world. (By the way, there are amazing similarities between Hitler and his top leaders, and Haman and his tens sons; but we will talk about this in a later message.)

Now, before we close this morning, we need to see what God has to say about "lots." In our 21st-century mindset, we tend to view the casting of "lots" (or "dice," as we say it) as nothing but "blind chance." But *is* there really such a thing as "blind chance"? No, there is not.

Read Proverbs 16:33.

Read Ezekiel 21:18-23.

In 588 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the prince of Babylon, was marching southward through the trans-Jordan valley, to deal with two nations that had rebelled against Babylon, and resisted their rule. These two nations were Ammon and Judah. However, he had to decide which nation he would punish first; and being the devout pagan that he was, he dared not go against the will of the gods. And so, when he came to the "fork in the road" that led either toward Rabbath (the capital city of Ammon), or toward Jerusalem, he stopped to do his pagan divination. In Babylonian fashion, he took two arrows, wrote the names of the two nations on them, put them into a quiver, whirled it around, and let the arrows fall to the ground; and the arrow that hit the ground first told him which nation to attack. He also consulted his "images" (which would have consisted of a mummified child's head). He also looked at a liver; and the marks on the liver told him what to do. (This would be like looking into a crystal ball today.)

Now, does God approve of divination? Absolutely not! He solemnly forbids it, under the severest penalties. Yet, God *overruled* Nebuchadnezzar's consultation with demons, and caused the lot to point toward Jerusalem, so that He could use Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah for their sins. The king of Babylon *thought* he was doing his own will (and he was); but little did he know that the God of heaven was using his wicked divination to turn him in the direction that *He* willed, to accomplish *His* plan. In the same way, Haman chose to follow his wicked desire to destroy the Jews; and God didn't stop him. Because Haman chose to reject God, God chose to use Haman to show His power and might to all future generations!

Conclusion: Friend, you have the free will to obey God, or disobey Him; but you are not a “free *agent*.” If you choose to reject God, He can still use you as a vessel to accomplish His own plan. If, for example, you neglect God’s offer of salvation, and die without Christ, God can use *your* death to get someone *else* thinking about eternity, so that *that* person will be saved. However, you can’t escape the consequences of your rebellion. The Bible says, “***There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.***” If you’ve never repented of your sin and received Christ as Saviour, I urge you to do so today. There are only two ways before you—the way of sin and self, and the way of Christ and righteousness. The one path leads to Hell, and the other to Heaven. Get onto the road that leads to life! Jesus said, “***I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***”

Perhaps you are saved, but you are not following Christ very faithfully. If so, ask the Lord to strengthen your faith, and your resolve to serve Him! The hour is late, and real persecution is coming our way. Choose this day whom you will serve, and serve the Lord without wavering! Do *not* bow to the will of the world, but present your body to Christ as “***a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God***”!

¹ <https://nypost.com/2026/09/16/tech/anthropic-is-a-cult-and-claude-is-rapidly-becoming-its-god-they-treat-ai-like-its-human-source/>