

“In the End – God Always Wins”

July 5, 2020

Esther 9:1 – 10:3

I. Introduction

As we come to the end of the Book of Esther, I am reminded of [Isaiah 55:11](#) where God said, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” [Turn to Genesis 12:1-3](#). Throughout Scripture God repeated these promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, and many others. Sometimes God kept His promises through miraculous means—like when He took the Jews out of Egypt following the 10 plagues or the raising up of mighty Samson or Elijah and his miracles. Sometimes God uses more ordinary means like raising up Esther and Mordecai to counter Haman’s plans or raising up the Allies to defeat Hitler and his plan of exterminating all Jews from the face of the earth. But no matter the method, in the end – God always wins.

Eleven months after Haman’s decree “To destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews-- young and old, women and children-- on a single day, ~~the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar,~~ and to plunder their goods” ([Esther 3:13](#)), “D-day” had arrived. But Haman’s decree had been negated 9 months earlier by “The king’s edict *which* granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies” ([Esther 8:11](#)).

This 2nd decree, that had been written by Mordecai, had changed the “D” from “destruction” to “deliverance.” The Jews had been given permission to resist their enemies and had been given nine months to prepare for the coming confrontation. The people in the Persian Empire who hated the Jews had planned on annihilating them, but, as we read in today’s Scripture, “the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.”

II. The Jews are victorious

The outcome of the conflict had been determined before it even began, God had promised an everlasting covenant with His chosen people, the Jews. His people would not be annihilated; the Jews would be victorious. The Jewish men were organized and armed. They were ready to meet any enemy who would attack them and their families and who would try to plunder them. God's hand was also there: "Because fear of the Jews had seized them" (Esther 8:17). In Deuteronomy 2:25 God had told Moses, "This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you." This was the fear that God had sent into the hearts of the Gentiles to keep them from fighting His people.

There was also another fear present: "All the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them." The leaders were in such awe and fear of Mordecai that they even helped the Jews defend themselves against the Persians. God had given Mordecai his high position and his great reputation, and Mordecai used his God-given authority to do the will of God.

Those that did attack the Jews were following Haman the Amalekite's plans, and this made them enemies of God. During two days of conflict, the Jews killed 800 of their enemies in Susa the capital city alone. It's rather astonishing that so many Persians would have dared to attack the Jews right in the king's own city; the city where both Esther and Mordecai lived. Perhaps they had been loyal to Haman and wanted the promised plunder. Perhaps they were angry that their hero had been killed and they were replying in kind. Since the Jews were not the aggressors and since the ten sons of Haman are named, it would seem that the ten sons of Haman had taken up arms and attacked the Jews and all ten of them had been killed.

The king seemed astonished that the Jews had killed 500 men in Susa on the first day. He may have thought that if this was the case, how many would they have killed throughout the rest of the provinces? But, instead of saying, *“That’s enough! Don’t kill anyone else,”* he asked Esther, **“Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted.”**

The queen then asked for one more day in which the Jews could defend themselves in Susa. She also asked that Haman’s ten sons, who had already been killed, be put on gallows. Perhaps Esther had heard that Haman’s supporters planned to attack again on the next day. The bodies of the ten sons on gallows would be a warning to the enemy. Perhaps the sight of the ten bodies would keep the Persians from attacking the Jews and would result in the saving of lives on both sides. The Jews in the other parts of the empire killed 75,000 in one day. This shows just how many people hated the Jews and wanted to destroy them in spite of the king’s and leaders’ support of the Jews. The author doesn’t record how many Jews were killed.

Three times it is written that the Jews **“did not lay their hands on the plunder”** (Esther 9:10, 15-16). According to Mordecai’s edict, the Jews were free to strike back without reservation, in retaliation. But they didn’t. Since this was actually war between the Amalekites and the Jews, perhaps they remembered that King Saul lost his kingdom because he took plunder when he fought the Amalekites in **1 Samuel 15:12-23** and they didn’t want to make the same mistake. They were not after wealth. They wanted only to protect themselves and assert their right to live safely in the empire. They were not the aggressors; they killed only those who first attacked them, and they took no plunder.

III. Celebration

It’s easy for a new generation to come along and take for granted the blessings that previous generations struggled and sacrificed for, That’s the reason we celebrate the 4th of July and Memorial Day. That’s why we celebrate Communion. So, in order to remind their children year after year that God had saved Israel from destruction, the Jews established the Feast of Purim.

The Jews in the provinces finished fighting on the 13th day of Adar (March) and spent the next day celebrating. But since the Jews in Susa were defending themselves on the 14th day, they didn't get to celebrate until the 15th day. In the beginning the days of celebration were different depending on if you lived in the city or in the country. Mordecai later issued a letter that instructed all the Jews **“to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar”** (March).

The name “Purim” is the plural of the Persian word *“pur”* which means “lot.” It comes from Haman’s casting lots to determine the day when the Jews would be destroyed in **Esther 3:7**. Purim is the response, a celebration of God’s people to God’s omnipotent faithfulness to the promises of the covenant. **“These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews-- nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.”** It is necessary that the children be taught the meaning of Purim so that the message of the feast—the sovereignty of God—would not be lost in future generations.

Not only did Mordecai the prime minister send a letter of instruction to the Jews in the empire, but Esther also sent a letter, she **“wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim.”** Perhaps some of the Jews in the provinces didn’t want to change from their original day of celebration and it was necessary for both Mordecai and Esther to issue letters to keep peace in the nation. They went as far as to have this matter **“written down in the records;”** perhaps **“in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia.”**

IV. Closing Summary

The Book of Esther finishes with a closing summary. King Xerxes was still king. He still reigned over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. This was still the same country, Persia, and the same capital, Susa. There were still taxes. Mordecai was still the prime minister—**“second in rank to King Xerxes.”**

We are told four things about Mordecai. His position didn't go to his head, he was "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." God continued to use Mordecai to help the Jewish people—he worked for their good. The Jews were aliens who lived in a foreign land only by the permission of the government. And as foreigners they experienced all kinds of harassment and abuse. Mordecai saw to it that they were treated with fairness. The last words in the NIV: "spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews," implies that there were still forces at work in the empire opposing and threatening the Jews, but Mordecai represented them at court and protected them. The Complete Jewish Bible puts it this way, "He sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all their descendants."

V. Conclusion

Writing of non-Christians, Paul wrote in [Romans 3:18](#), "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Because of lack of fear of God, Haman and 80,000 plus Persians died. This is one of the problems with our world today—with the marches and riots, with the violence we see around us, with the attitude of "it's all about me"—there is no fear or reverence of God. Like Pharaoh said to Moses in [Exodus 5:2](#), the general attitude is "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him?" Instead of fearing God, as [Judges 21:25](#) puts it, "Everyone did as he saw fit."

But have those around us seen anything in our lives that would make them want to fear the Lord? When troubles or difficulties come your way, do you act like all the non-Christians you know? [Turn to Isaiah 43:1-3a](#). [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) says, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Later the writer of Hebrews reminds Christians in [Hebrews 13:5](#) that, "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Do you in your actions as well as your words demonstrate your fear, your reverence and trust in God? In your actions, is your life filled with "the peace that passeth all understanding"

(Philippians 4:7) that only a child of God can have? Is the power of God seen in your life? Sadly, instead of the godless world being afraid of the church and Christians, the church is afraid of the world and so imitates the world that it is difficult to tell the difference between the two.

Turn to Ephesians 6:10-13. Until the Lord returns and makes a new heaven and a new earth, the cycle of deceiver and deliverer will continue over and over. We are in a battle. But as the Book of Esther reminds us, God may seem distant and uninvolved, but He is neither. God is very much at work—raising up men of character like Mordecai who faithfully invest themselves in others. God is also preparing women of courage, as He did Esther, to play a role of tremendous importance, a position which only they can fill.

As we've seen in Esther, God moves invisibly, yet with invincibility, bringing His sovereign plan to completion. It may include delays that seem unfair, human decisions that lack compassion, harmful deeds that bring about pain, and hurtful disappointments that make us question God's goodness. But as we've seen in Esther and other Scriptures, God moves with persistence and He refuses to be distracted. In the end, God always wins. Our task as His children is to fear Him and trust Him. As Habakkuk wrote in **Habakkuk 3:17-19**: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to tread on the heights."

In the beginning of the story, Esther and Mordecai had started out trying to blend in with everyone around them; no one knew that they were God's chosen people, the Jews. But in time, God gave them the opportunity to be used by Him—they had to make a choice to do God's will and identify as Jews or to remain hidden. Wisely, they both chose to obey God and because of their willingness to suffer for Him, God raised them up to be queen and prime minister of Persia. In **Jeremiah 29:11** we read, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give

you hope and a future.” God doesn’t make mistakes or miscalculations. Paraphrasing what Mordecai told Esther, *“And who knows but that you have come to this position for such a time as this?”* In **Joshua 24:15** Joshua challenged the Israelites, **“If serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”** It’s your choice but remember in the end—God always wins.