

March 9

Scriptures: Read Esther 9 & 10

Key Verse: "... the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday..." (Esther 9:22)

Overview

Almost nine months after Mordecai issued the second decree, the fateful day arrived. Now, however, the Jews were zealous, encouraged, and organized, so they might protect themselves against their enemies who would attempt to kill them and take their possessions in accordance with the first decree of Haman. All the leaders of the provinces, however, gave support to the Jews, for they feared and respected Mordecai whom the king had raised to great power, and they knew that the true intent of the king's heart was in favour of the Jews. By this time, it was also public knowledge that the queen was a Jewess. Nonetheless, throughout all the provinces, a great number who despised the Jews rose up against them on that day which Haman had "cast Pur" (the lot), but the Lord was not only in control of the lot (Proverbs16:33), but He was in control of the outcome. Since God was with His people, "no one could withstand them" (9:2).

The Lord changed the whole situation around for the good of His people. Satan's evil scheme of the destruction of God's people could not prevail, because they had turned to their God to deliver them. In this great victory, God was glorified throughout the whole world. The seed of David was preserved from extinction, so that the promised Messiah would indeed come according to God's plan.

The sadness was turned into great rejoicing, the fear into boldness, the mourning into feasting, the turmoil into peace. God is truly sovereign in the lives of His people. The joy that believers experience today is also because of God's deliverance — the deliverance from sin through His Son, the Lord Jesus (John 15:11; 17:13).

It is noted twice that the Jews did not take the plunder, although the decree had stated they could (8:11; 9:10, 15). In such a way, they showed to all that their actions were purely defensive; also, by not taking the plunder, it would be turned over to the king, so they enriched the king, and in so doing showed him their appreciation for his part in saving their lives.

In the capital city of Shushan, the Jews killed five hundred men who rose up against them, including the ten sons of Haman who would have desired to avenge the death of their father. At the end of the day, king Ahasuerus was happy to see the victory of the Jews, but he was likely still concerned about their continued safety, so he asked Esther if there was any other request he might grant her. She may have heard that there were still more enemies of the Jews in Shushan that had escaped and may have been planning another attack. Therefore, she requested that on the next day the Jews might again destroy their enemies. The king granted her request, along with the public hanging of Haman's ten sons, that his family might be put to shame and serve as an example of the terrible fate that awaits those who try to destroy God's people.

Mordecai and Esther made a decree for all the Jews throughout the land to joyously celebrate both the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month, when God gave them rest from their

enemies. Mordecai called the feast “Purim”, the plural form of Pur, meaning “lot”, for by lot Haman came to choose the thirteenth day of the twelfth month as the day for the destruction of the Jews (3:7), but as Mordecai knew, lots are ultimately decided upon by God (Proverbs 16:33). In the course of the feast, they were to remember Haman’s evil plan, Esther’s courage and love for her people, and the mercy of God who heard their prayers, saw their fasting, and gave them deliverance. The joy was to be expressed by the giving of gifts to one another, especially remembering the poor in their giving (Hebrews 13:16).

The feast is still celebrated by Jews today. As part of the celebration, the whole book of Esther is read, and whenever the name “Haman” comes up, everyone boos and hisses; but when the name “Mordecai” is read, the people cheer and clap. It is an occasion especially enjoyed by the children and often accompanied by the wearing of silly costumes — something that began as a mockery of Haman.

The close of the book shows the great contrast between Haman and Mordecai. It tells of Mordecai’s greatness, but also his love and concern for his people, the Jews. He worked for their good and sought their peace. Even the heathen king Ahasuerus enjoyed great prosperity and power, which is considered a blessing from God. When Mordecai was elevated to the second man in the kingdom, he proved himself an able and talented leader. His fame spread and his power and influence increased. Joseph and Daniel were similarly blessed by the Lord in a foreign land because of their faithfulness and uncompromising positions in refusing to bow to evil.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that You turn sorrow to joy and mourning to a celebration. We pray for the Jews of today. May their joy be great in the discovery of their Messiah and Saviour.