

The Book of Esther, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Deliverance and the Feast of Purim

Esther 9:1–10:3

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final lesson carries the weight of the whole book. The doctrinal stakes are God's hidden, faithful providence and His covenant commitment to preserve His people, the line through whom the Messiah would come. In a book that never names God, the great reversal of chapter 9 is the loudest possible testimony that He was reigning all along. Help students see that the deliverance of the Jews from Haman is one link in the long chain of God's faithfulness that runs straight to Bethlehem and to an empty tomb. The God who would not let His people be exterminated in Persia is the God who would not let death hold His Son.

A second and pastorally critical aim is to teach Purim rightly. Purim is a genuine Old Covenant remembrance, instituted by the Jews to mark God's deliverance, and it carries timeless lessons of gratitude, joy, and generosity to the poor. But it is not a feast God binds on Christians. We are not under the Law of Moses; its feast days were shadows fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:16–17; Galatians 4:9–11; Hebrews 8–10). Be explicit and gentle here so no one walks away thinking they must keep Purim, while also helping them treasure what it teaches. The enduring principle, remembering and giving thanks for God's deliverance, is supremely fulfilled in the deliverance Christ accomplished and is rightly remembered by the church in the Lord's Supper each first day of the week.

The formational aim is to send students out as people who know they have been rescued and live accordingly: grateful rather than entitled, generous rather than grasping, remembering rather than forgetting, and confident that the unseen God is still faithfully at work. The book ends with Mordecai seeking the welfare of his people. May this study end with each student seeking the welfare of others, out of overflowing gratitude for the deliverance God has worked in Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Esther 9:1 the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them was turned to the contrary. What does this great reversal reveal about God's faithfulness to preserve His people, the people through whom the Messiah would come, even when His name is never mentioned?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:1 sets the scene with deliberate drama. The day Haman had chosen by lot, the thirteenth of Adar, finally arrives, the day on which the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them. And then comes the hinge of the entire book: though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them. The Hebrew underscores the reversal. The very expectation of the wicked is inverted. What was meant for destruction becomes the occasion of deliverance.

This is the great reversal that the whole narrative has been building toward. Vashti's fall opened the door for Esther. The sleepless night of the king exalted Mordecai instead of executing him. Haman's gallows held Haman. And now the date set for genocide becomes the date of rescue. None of this is attributed to a miracle. It is attributed to nothing at all, on the surface, which is precisely the point. The God who is never named is everywhere at work.

For the church, this verse is a quiet anchor in seasons when God seems absent. We do not always get the parted sea. Often we get only the date that turned, the diagnosis that came back clear, the door that closed and the better one that opened, the thousand small providences we can only recognize looking back. Romans 8:28 stands in the same light: God works all things together for good for those who love Him, often invisibly.

It is worth saying plainly that this reversal is covenantal. God had promised to preserve His people, the line through whom the Messiah would come. Haman's plot was, whether he knew it or not, an assault on the promise of God. And God will not let His promise fail. The thread that runs from Adar in Persia runs all the way to a manger and a cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The great reversal as the literary and theological climax of Esther.
- God's hidden providence: deliverance without a named miracle or a named God.
- The covenantal stakes, preservation of the messianic line, behind the rescue.
- Connection to Romans 8:28, God working all things for the good of His people.

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you seen God turn a situation to the contrary in your own life, recognized only in hindsight?
- How does a book where God is never named actually strengthen faith rather than weaken it?
- Why does it matter that this rescue was about preserving the people through whom Christ would come?

Question 2

Student Question:

When God brings you through a hard season, is your first instinct to credit Him, or to credit your own cleverness, luck, or hard work? What would it look like for you to consciously hand the credit to God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:2–4 describes the Jews gathering in their cities to lay hand on such as sought their hurt, and no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell upon all people. Note carefully the framing: this is self-defense. The original decree of Haman had authorized the annihilation of the Jews; the counter-decree of Esther 8 authorized the Jews to stand for their life. They are not the aggressors here. They are a people defending their existence against those who came to kill them.

The fear of the Jews falling upon the people, and even upon the officials and governors, is again the unseen hand of God. The same God who turned the date turns the hearts. Mordecai's growing greatness (verse 4, he waxed greater and greater) is the public sign of the reversal that has overtaken the empire.

We must handle this narrative soberly. It is the record of a real historical conflict under the old order, in a violent age, where a people's very survival was at stake. It is not a template for Christian behavior, for we live under a new covenant whose King said to put up the sword (Matthew 26:52) and whose people overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). What we draw from it is not a call to arms but a testimony that God preserved His people when their existence hung by a thread.

And the deeper point holds: God kept His people alive. The line was not cut off. The promise marched on. That is the lesson, not the body count.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Jews acting in self-defense, not aggression, under the counter-decree.
- The fear of the Jews and Mordecai's rising greatness as marks of God's providence.
- Reading Old Testament narrative soberly without making it a template for Christian conduct.
- The new covenant ethic: put up the sword, overcome evil with good.
- The central takeaway: God preserved His people and the messianic line endured.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we honor the historical reality of this account without glorifying violence?
- What does it mean that even the rulers' hearts were turned to favor the Jews?
- How does the new covenant change the way God's people respond to enemies?

Question 3

Student Question:

Three times Esther 9 records that on the spoil the Jews laid not their hand (verses 10, 15, 16), even though the king's decree permitted it. What does this restraint teach us about the difference between self-defense and greed, and about the character God works in His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:5–10 records the defense in Shushan and names the ten sons of Haman who fell. Then comes a phrase repeated with striking insistence: but on the spoil laid they not their hand. The king's decree had permitted them to take the spoil of their enemies (Esther 8:11), yet they declined. This was not the law forcing restraint; it was the people choosing it.

The detail matters. Centuries earlier, King Saul had been commanded to devote the Amalekites and their goods to destruction and had instead kept the spoil, and it cost him his kingdom (1 Samuel 15). Haman the Agagite descended from that same Amalekite line. Here the descendants of those Saul should have dealt with rightly are met by Jews who, this time, refuse to be enriched by the conflict. The contrast is pointed.

Refusing the spoil declares the motive. This was about survival, not plunder. The Jews did not want it said that they had used the king's decree to grow rich off their neighbors' deaths. There is a moral cleanness in restraint, a refusal to let even a justified action become an occasion for greed.

For us the principle is timeless. There is a difference between defending what is right and exploiting a situation for gain. The character God forms in His people knows when to stop, knows that just because you can take it does not mean you should.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The threefold refusal to lay hand on the spoil as deliberate moral restraint.
- The contrast with Saul and the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15.
- Self-defense distinguished from greed and plunder.
- The witness value of restraint: motives made visible by what one refuses to take.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the Jews refuse the spoil the law allowed them, and what does that reveal?
- Where might you be tempted to profit from a situation simply because you legally can?
- How does the Saul and Amalek background sharpen the meaning of this restraint?

Question 4

Student Question:

Where in your own life are you tempted to take more than you need, or to profit off another's loss simply because you can? What would restraint look like for you there?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:11–15 records Esther's request that the Jews in Shushan be allowed a second day of defense and that Haman's ten sons be hanged. This can trouble modern readers, so it deserves careful handling. Esther is acting within the existing decree and within the realities of her time, ensuring that the threat in the capital, the seat of the conspiracy, was fully removed so it could not regroup against her people.

The hanging of Haman's already-dead sons was a public display, the ancient way of declaring a threat ended and a verdict rendered. We should not read this through the lens of a personal vendetta but as the formal, public conclusion of a real danger to an entire people. Once more, on the spoil they laid not their hand (verse 15), the restraint repeated.

It is fair and important to acknowledge that the ethics of warfare and justice under the old order are not identical to the ethics Christ teaches His church. We do not flatten the difference or pretend the account is gentle. We let it stand as sober history, and we let the New Testament shape how we ourselves are to live.

Underneath the hard details, the steady theme persists: the threat against God's people was thoroughly, finally broken. The conspiracy that aimed at extermination collapsed completely. The people God promised to preserve were preserved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Esther's request understood within her historical context, not as personal vengeance.
- The public hanging of Haman's sons as a formal declaration that the threat was ended.
- Honest acknowledgment that old-order justice differs from the ethic of Christ.
- The repeated refusal of spoil reinforcing the people's restraint.
- The complete and final breaking of the conspiracy against God's people.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we read troubling Old Testament details honestly without explaining them away?
- What is the difference between justice that ends a threat and vengeance that feeds a grudge?
- How should the teaching of Jesus shape our response to those who oppose us?

Question 5

Student Question:

Esther 9:22 describes the days as those in which the Jews rested, and the month that was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day. How does Scripture present God as the One who turns sorrow into joy, and where do we see this finally and fully accomplished in Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:16–19 turns from defense to celebration. The Jews throughout the provinces rested on the fourteenth day and made it a day of feasting and gladness; those in Shushan, who defended themselves on two days, rested on the fifteenth. This is why Purim came to be observed on different days in different places, and the text carefully explains the origin of the variation.

Look at what the celebration consists of: feasting, gladness, and sending portions one to another (verse 19). This is not a victory rally bristling with revenge. It is a meal of gratitude and a sharing of good things. The first impulse of the delivered people is to gather, to give thanks, and to give to one another.

The word rested is significant. After the dread and the danger, there is rest. Deliverance brings peace, and peace overflows into joy. Scripture knows this rhythm well: God acts, His people rest and rejoice and remember.

For the church, the model is instructive. When God delivers us, the fitting response is not self-congratulation but glad thanksgiving expressed in community, a shared table and open hands. Joy that stays private and self-focused has missed something. Biblical joy gathers and gives.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The two days of Purim explained by the timing of defense in city versus provinces.
- Celebration marked by feasting, gladness, and sending portions to one another.
- Rest as the fruit of deliverance, and joy as the fruit of rest.
- The communal, generous shape of grateful celebration rather than private revelry.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it say that the rescued people celebrated with sharing rather than revenge?
- How does deliverance lead to rest, and rest to joy, in the rhythm of the believer's life?
- When God blesses you, does your joy gather others in, or stay turned inward?

Question 6

Student Question:

When sorrow has turned to joy in your life, how readily does the joy spill over into gratitude and generosity toward others, the way it did for the Jews who sent portions and gifts to the poor?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:20–22 is the heart of the chapter. Mordecai writes these things and sends letters to all the Jews, instructing them to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar yearly, as the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from

sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day. The reversal is now framed in unforgettable language: from sorrow to joy, from mourning into a good day.

And the prescribed observance is specific: days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. Read that last phrase slowly. Built into the very institution of this celebration is care for the poor. The remembrance of God's deliverance is not complete until it reaches downward to those in need. Gratitude that does not become generosity is not yet biblical gratitude.

This is one of the great enduring lessons of the book, and it transcends the Old Covenant. The God who rescues makes His rescued people into rescuers, in their measure. Those who were poor and powerless before God's deliverance now open their hands to the poor and powerless around them. This is the gospel pattern as well: freely you have received, freely give (Matthew 10:8).

Note too the language of remembrance and writing it down. The Jews were determined not to forget. Memory is fragile and gratitude leaks away; so they fixed the deliverance in an annual observance and a written record. The principle that we must intentionally remember what God has done is timeless, even though the particular feast is not binding on us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unforgettable summary: from sorrow to joy, from mourning into a good day.
- Gifts to the poor written into the very institution of the celebration.
- Gratitude completed only when it overflows into generosity toward the needy.
- The deliberate discipline of remembering and recording what God has done.
- The gospel echo: freely received, freely give.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is care for the poor built into a celebration of deliverance?
- What practices help you actively remember God's deliverance rather than forget it?
- How does being rescued by God obligate and free us to become generous to others?

Question 7

Student Question:

The feast was named Purim after the pur, the lot Haman cast (Esther 9:24–26). Why is it significant that the people named their celebration after the very instrument their enemy used to plot their destruction, and what does that say about God overruling the schemes of the wicked?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:23–28 explains the name and the permanence of the feast. The days are called Purim, after the name of Pur, the lot Haman the Agagite had cast to consume the Jews and to destroy

them. There is profound irony here. The people name their feast of deliverance after the very instrument of their intended destruction. Every year, the word Purim would remind them that the lot Haman cast in confidence landed exactly where God intended.

Proverbs 16:33 illuminates this perfectly: the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Haman thought he was leaving the date to chance. He was, without knowing it, submitting it to God. The pur was in God's hand all along. Naming the feast Purim is a permanent confession that God overrules the schemes of the wicked.

The text stresses permanence: these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, and that they should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. This was a binding Old Covenant observance, taken on by the Jewish people and their descendants. It is important to recognize it as exactly that, a real institution under the old order, faithfully kept by the Jews to this day.

For the Christian, we admire the resolve to remember and the confession of God's sovereignty woven into the name, while understanding that this particular feast was given to and bound by the Jewish people, not commanded of the church. The lesson we carry forward is the truth it proclaims: God turns the weapons of the wicked back on themselves and disposes even the lot.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Purim named after the pur, the lot, turning the enemy's weapon into a memorial.
- Proverbs 16:33: the lot is cast, but its disposing is of the Lord.
- God overruling the confident schemes of the wicked for His people's good.
- Purim as a genuine Old Covenant observance bound by the Jews on themselves.
- Admiring the resolve to remember while recognizing the feast was not given to the church.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of naming the feast after the lot Haman cast?
- How does Proverbs 16:33 reframe what Haman thought was chance?
- What truths from Purim endure for us, even though the feast itself was not given to the church?

Question 8

Student Question:

Esther 9:22 names sending portions to one another and gifts to the poor as part of the celebration. Who are the specific poor or struggling people God has placed within your reach, and what is one tangible gift you could give this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 9:29–32 records that Esther the queen and Mordecai confirmed the letters of Purim a second time, with full authority, writing to all the Jews with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of fasting and their cry. The double confirmation underscores the seriousness and permanence with which the observance was established. This was no casual tradition but a carefully authorized, written institution.

Note the mention of fasting and their cry alongside the feasting. The celebration of deliverance did not erase the memory of the distress that preceded it. Honest remembrance holds both: the mourning and the joy, the fasting that cried out to God and the feasting that thanked Him. A remembrance that only celebrates the happy ending, and forgets the anguish out of which God delivered, becomes shallow.

Esther's role here is worth pausing over. The young woman who once hid her identity now writes with royal authority to secure the memory of God's deliverance for generations. The arc of her courage, from the trembling decision of chapter 4 to this confident pen, is one of the quiet beauties of the book. God took her obedience and gave it lasting fruit.

The timeless principle is the value of fixing remembrance in something durable, written, repeated, passed down, so that the next generation knows what God has done. Faith is meant to be handed forward, and that requires intentional means of memory.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The second confirmation of Purim establishing it firmly and permanently.
- Fasting and crying remembered alongside feasting; both anguish and joy held together.
- Esther's arc from hidden and trembling to confident and authoritative.
- The importance of durable, repeatable means for handing faith to the next generation.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important that the remembrance held both the fasting and the feasting?
- How does Esther's growth across the book encourage you in your own walk?
- What durable practices help your family or church pass faith to the next generation?

Question 9

Student Question:

Purim was a real Old Covenant remembrance that the Jews bound on themselves and their descendants (Esther 9:27–28), yet Christians are not under the Law of Moses or its feast days (Colossians 2:16–17; Galatians 4:9–11). How do we honor what Purim teaches about remembering God's deliverance without binding it, or any Old Covenant feast, as a required Christian observance, and how does the Lord's Supper rightly channel that same instinct to remember?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the heaviest matter in the lesson, and it must be handled with both clarity and gentleness. Purim was a real Old Covenant remembrance. The Jews bound it on themselves and their descendants throughout every generation (Esther 9:27–28). Modern Jewish people still keep it. The question the careful student must ask is direct: are Christians obligated to keep Purim, or any feast of the Old Law? The answer of Scripture is clearly no.

Christians are not under the Law of Moses. That law, with its feasts and holy days and new moons and sabbaths, was a shadow of things to come, but the body, the substance, is of Christ (Colossians 2:16–17). Paul wrote that Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, nailing it to His cross (Colossians 2:14). He was deeply concerned for the Galatians who, having known God, turned back to observe days, and months, and times, and years (Galatians 4:9–11). The Hebrew writer labors to show that the old covenant is obsolete, replaced by a better covenant established on better promises (Hebrews 8–10). Jesus did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17), and what is fulfilled is no longer binding as law.

So we must be plain: no one should walk away from this study thinking they are commanded to celebrate Purim. To bind an Old Covenant feast on the church is to misunderstand the finished work of Christ and to step back under a law from which He freed us. This is not coldness toward our Jewish heritage in the Scriptures; it is faithfulness to the gospel that says the shadow has given way to the substance.

And yet, having said that clearly, we do not throw away what Purim teaches. The enduring principle, deeper than any feast, is that the rescued must remember and give thanks for God's deliverance. That instinct is right and good and timeless. Romans 15:4 tells us these things were written for our learning. What we learn is not a date to keep but a God to thank.

Where, then, does that instinct rightly land for the church? Supremely in the deliverance Christ accomplished, a rescue not from Haman but from sin and death, and in the memorial He Himself gave us. Every first day of the week the church gathers at the Lord's table to remember His body and blood, to proclaim the Lord's death till He come (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). That is the church's appointed remembrance of the great deliverance. Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). Purim points, in its own old-covenant way, to the unkillable joy of a people God refused to abandon, and that joy finds its true and lasting home in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Purim as a genuine Old Covenant observance bound by the Jews, not given to the church.
- Christians are not under the Law of Moses; its feasts were shadows fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:16–17; Matthew 5:17).
- Paul's warning against returning to observe days and seasons (Galatians 4:9–11).
- The old covenant made obsolete by the better covenant in Christ (Hebrews 8–10).

- The enduring principle that the rescued must remember and give thanks (Romans 15:4).
- The Lord's Supper as the church's appointed weekly remembrance of the greater deliverance (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).
- Victory and deliverance finally accomplished in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Discussion Prompts

- Why are Christians not obligated to keep Purim or any feast of the Old Law?
- How does the Lord's Supper rightly channel the instinct to remember God's deliverance?
- What does Purim teach us that endures, even though the feast itself is not binding on the church?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole book of Esther, the hidden providence, the great reversal, the courage of Esther, the faithfulness of God to a people who could not see Him at work. Name one specific way the Lord has used this study to form you, and one concrete change you will carry forward as someone who knows they have been rescued.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Esther 10:1–3 closes the book in just three verses, yet they are weighty. King Ahasuerus lays a tribute on the land, and his acts, with the greatness of Mordecai, are written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. The text invites the reader to verify the record. This really happened, in real history, under real kings.

The closing portrait is of Mordecai: great among the Jews, accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed. The man who once sat in sackcloth at the king's gate now stands second only to the king, and he uses that position not to enrich himself but to seek the welfare of his people. Greatness, in this book, is measured by service. The exalted one becomes the protector and benefactor of the many.

Notice how the book ends as it has run throughout, without naming God. There is no closing doxology, no thus saith the Lord. And yet every reader who has followed the story knows beyond doubt that God has been the true actor all along. The hiddenness is the message: God is no less sovereign when He is unseen. He governs the rise of Mordecai as surely as He governed the fall of Haman.

So the book that began with a pagan king's lavish banquet ends with a faithful man seeking peace for his people, and the unnamed God reigning quietly over it all. It is a fitting picture for every believer who serves God in an ordinary world where heaven seems silent. He is there. He is faithful. And the deliverance He worked for His people in Persia was one more step toward the deliverance He would work for all people in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The book grounded in verifiable history, the chronicles of Media and Persia.
- Mordecai's greatness measured by seeking the welfare and peace of his people.
- Exaltation as a platform for service rather than self-enrichment.
- The book ending, as it ran, without naming God, yet testifying everywhere to His hidden, faithful providence.
- The deliverance in Persia as one step in God's saving work fulfilled in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Mordecai's use of his greatness teach us about godly leadership and influence?
- How does a book that never names God strengthen your confidence in His unseen providence?
- Looking back across Esther, how has this study changed the way you see God at work in your own ordinary life?