

The Book of Esther

Lesson 7: Deliverance and the Feast of Purim -- Esther 9:1–10:3

Mark the date on the calendar. The thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. Haman picked it by casting lots, certain it was the day the Jews would be wiped from the face of the earth. He had the king's signet, the law of the Medes and Persians behind him, and a gallows fifty cubits high already standing in his yard. Every advantage was his. And then the text says something that catches in your throat: it was turned to the contrary. The very day his enemies hoped to have power over the Jews became the day the Jews had rule over them that hated them. Same date. Opposite outcome. That is the great reversal, and the whole book has been bending toward it.

Notice how quietly God works in this book. His name is never spoken, not once, from the first verse to the last. There is no parting sea, no fire from heaven, no prophet thundering in the streets. There is only a sleepless king, a banquet, a tree planted for one man that ends up holding another, and a lot cast that lands exactly where God intended all along. If you have ever wondered whether God is at work when you cannot see Him, sit with this chapter. The Jews could not point to a miracle. They could only point to the date that turned. Sometimes that is how deliverance comes, not in lightning, but in a thousand small things quietly arranged by a hand you never see.

And look what the rescued people do with their relief. They do not gloat. Three times the text tells us, almost insistently, that on the spoil they laid not their hand. They defended their lives, but they did not enrich themselves on the bodies of their enemies. And then, when the danger passed, they did not throw a party of vengeance. They threw a feast of gratitude, and they sent portions to one another, and they gave gifts to the poor. That is the mark of people who know they were rescued and did not rescue themselves. The deeply grateful are the deeply generous. The ones who remember they were spared open their hands to the ones who have nothing.

So they named the days Purim, after the pur, the lot Haman had cast, and they wrote it down so their children and their children's children would remember. Here is the heart of it, and it presses on us still. We are not under the Law of Moses, and Purim is not a feast God binds on the church. But the instinct behind it, the holy stubbornness of a people who refuse to forget what God did, is the very thing the Lord's Supper kindles in us every first day of the week. We remember a greater deliverance than Persia ever threatened to undo, a rescue not from Haman but from sin and death, accomplished by One who did climb a tree in our place. The book ends with Mordecai great among his people, seeking their welfare. And the unseen God, never named, has been there the whole time. He still is.

Group Discussion: Esther 9 stresses again and again that the Jews defended their lives but laid not their hand on the spoil, and then turned their deliverance into a feast of gratitude, gifts to

one another, and gifts to the poor. What does the way these rescued people behaved teach us about how God wants the rescued to live?

Personal Reflection: Think of a specific deliverance God has worked in your own life, an answered prayer, a danger averted, a sin you were freed from. Have you actually remembered it and given thanks, or has the relief faded into forgetfulness? Name one concrete way you will mark and remember God's deliverance this week.

Read Esther 9:1–10:3

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?

5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?

10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 103:1–5, forget not all His benefits, remembering and blessing God for His deliverance; 1 Corinthians 15:57, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; Colossians 2:16–17, let no one judge you in respect of a feast day, which were a shadow of things to come, the body is of Christ; Romans 15:4, whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning; Galatians 4:9–11, Paul's concern over those returning to observe days and months and seasons

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