

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C1314 – April 17, 2013 – Esther 9:1-19
Jewish Victory

Tonight we come to Esther 9 and looking ahead, when we complete Esther in the next few weeks we'll turn to Ezra. Why Ezra? Because Ezra 1-6 records what happened before Esther and it will give you the historical background that clarifies why I've approached Esther the way I've approached it. A decree had been issued by Cyrus for the Jewish people to return to the land and align their lives with God's theocratic program. But Mordecai, Esther and all the other Jews in the Diaspora didn't want to align their lives with God's will. They wanted to maintain their businesses and hold title to their lands and keep living it up in the dispersion. Their interests were the things of the world and not the things of God. Worldly speaking, it would have been a great sacrifice for them to abandon all they had and start anew in the land of Israel. So the majority didn't. But Ezra records that there were Jews who did. They gave up everything, went back to the land of Israel and aligned themselves with God's plan for their lives. They made sacrifices and there are great and important lessons from those sacrifices.

So that's where we're headed, but for a couple more weeks we are looking at the Jews who did not align their lives with God's purpose by returning to the land. That lesson, fundamentally, is that God still loves Israel and God still cares for them, even when they are in disobedience. The message is an extremely touching one when we realize that in Exile they no longer hold any position of favor with God; they, on their part, had forfeited all legal claims to God's protection over their lives. They did not remember God's city Jerusalem or care about God's house the Temple or obey God's dietary laws or keep God's feasts, and yet God still loved them and protected them. The manner of His love and protection during such times is providential. He works behind the scenes to orchestrate perfect timings, as for example, when the king could not

sleep on the very night before Haman planned to execute Mordecai and the royal chronicles concerning Mordecai's loyalty to the king was read resulting in his exaltation rather than execution. This is providence and this is the clue as to why God's name is not mentioned even once in the entire book. When God is working behind the scenes His name is not mentioned. But to all who have eyes to see He is actually the main character of the book. So the lesson is that God governs His people providentially when they do not love Him and remain faithful to Him.

God's faithfulness and even blessing was observed last week in Esther 8 when God turned the tables in favor of Mordecai and Esther. Haman had plotted to destroy Mordecai by impaling him on a stake 75 feet high but it turned out that he was the one impaled on the stake. Haman had prepared to confiscate Jewish possessions on the day of their extermination but it turned out that his possessions were confiscated and given to the Jewess Esther. Haman's position as second only to the king was turned over and awarded to Mordecai, the Jew he hated most. And finally, Haman's plan to destroy and kill and annihilate every Jew was countered by a decree giving Jews the right to destroy and kill anyone who attacked them on that day. These turns of events depict on a small scale the turn of events that will in the future occur on a large scale. Eventually the Gentile nations who have sought to destroy and plunder the Jews will themselves be destroyed and plundered by the Jews and the kingdom will belong to the Jews.

But the scale we are studying tonight is the small scale turn of events that looks forward to that future turn. Beginning in Esther 9:1. **Now in the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar), on the thirteenth day.** Why that day? That was the day that Haman had decided at the beginning of the year was most propitious for destroying the Jews. It just happened to be at the end of the year. How did he decide that day? He decided by going down to the priests of the Zoroastrian religion at the turn of the new year and having them roll the die according to their belief that Chance gave rise to Fate. The result was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. That die, in Haman's mind, revealed the best day for him and all anti-Semites to have success in killing Jews. What Haman did not know is Prov 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD." So actually the **thirteenth day of the twelfth month** was decided by the LORD and not Chance giving rise to Fate. There is no such thing as Chance or Fate. There is

only Personal Sovereignty. So why did God's Personal Sovereignty decide on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month? For several reasons we can discern from the text. First of all, being at the end of the year it gave Esther and Mordecai plenty of time to act responsibly on behalf of the Jewish people and do something to divert the path of destruction. Human acts are important in history and do play a role in the fulfillment of God's sovereign plan.

Accordingly when Mordecai recognized that Esther may have been raised up for such a time as this he encouraged her to act on behalf of her people to deliver them. When she did, a decree was issued in the third month giving the Jews the right to defend themselves against their enemies on that day. Second, so that the Jews would have plenty of time to prepare to act in self-defense against their enemies. They too would have an opportunity to act significantly in history to prepare for that day. And for eight or nine months they did prepare both physically in tactics and use of weapons as well as mentally, for to kill someone in battle requires mental preparation and decisiveness in the heat of attack. So for at least those two reasons God's Personal Sovereignty decided through the casting of the die the **thirteenth day of the twelfth month.**

On that day verse 1 says, **when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them.** We learn for the first time in this verse that there was a large number of anti-Semites throughout the Persian kingdom. Haman was only their most powerful and vocal opponent but Satan through him had stirred up a lot of anti-Semitism in the kingdom such that they had enemies throughout all the provinces of the kingdom. Apparently Satan had been busy too during these months stirring up anti-Semitism and readying would be attackers for that one day. But the text says **it was turned to the contrary.** The tables were turned and the Jews gained the upper hand. Most remarkably, who of all people is not mentioned in verse 1? God. God's name is unmentioned where you would most likely expect it. Why? Because they did not recognize God as the author of this drastic turn of events. God's work is hidden by what we call providence when Israel doesn't recognize Him and is under divine discipline in Exile among Gentiles!

The situation was paralleled after WWII when the allied nation's compassion for the people of Israel was aroused due to the death of more than six million by the Nazi's. This resulted in a determination to establish a homeland for the refugees. In 1948 this was realized when on May 14, the British relinquished control of the land and Israel proclaimed statehood. Before the day was over, however, war broke out and Israel was attacked by Arabs from every side. Eventually an armistice was reached on Jan 7, 1949 permitting Israel to keep additional land she gained during the conflict. In one way it all appears to be accomplished by man but in reality the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland after 2000 years and their victory in that first war were all providentially orchestrated by God.

The situation was paralleled again in 1967 when the Arabs surprise-attacked the Jews. *Life* magazine reported the following, "Astounding was the only word for it. In 60 hours the war that exploded upon the Middle East became a fact of history. Tiny Israel stood in the role of victor over the surrounding Arab nations that had vowed to exterminate her...Seldom in military history has victory been so efficient or so visibly decisive in so short a span of time. So swiftly did Israel mount her assault that her adversaries were deprived of the means of winning almost before the world awakened to the fact that a war was in progress."¹ Again, it may appear to have been accomplished by man but actually the victory was due to God's providence. We as Christians who believe in the sovereign rule of God and His Christ can see this but the modern Jew who has even lived through it cannot. The vast majority of Jews are secular agnostics. When asked about the establishment of the state of Israel or their victories in wars the overwhelming response among Jews is that it was brought about by human hands, and that God, if He even exists, had little to do with their victories.

It is that same attitude that abounds in the pages of Esther. There is not one mention of God as the source of their circumstances, turns of events or victories over their enemies. They credit themselves for the victories. And yet the chief contribution of Esther is that we may learn that no one except God could have authored their circumstances, no one but God could cause such drastic turns of events and no one but God could give them victory over their enemies. This is the way God works when Israel is in unbelief; providence, not miracles, providence, there is a wide difference. Providence is secret workings, miracles are open workings. Providence takes years to unfold,

miracles unfold suddenly. And in these pages we learn about God's providence. That is the way God worked for them then and that is the way God is working for them now. Only when the majority of the Jews have returned to the land and God determines to turn them to Himself will He begin to work miraculously on their behalf. Until then we wait and we watch as we see God's providential work to ensure their existence in the midst of tumultuous Gentile nations.

Verse 2, The Jews assembled in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm; and no one could stand before them, for the dread of them had fallen on all the peoples. In striking parallel to Rahab's report that the Canaanites dreaded and feared the Jews in the days of Joshua, so **those who sought to harm** Jews in the Persian kingdom also dreaded and feared the Jews. Why? First, because the king's most recent decree showed that he was pro-Jewish. To be anti-Jewish would be a dangerous position in a kingdom ruled by a pro-Jewish king. Second, because Mordecai was now second only to the king and Mordecai was Jewish. Third, and most importantly, they likely detected the God of the Jews working on their behalf in a way unheard of in the Persian kingdom. Surely Haman's wife and friends detected that the God of the Jews was working on their behalf against him and therefore he would surely fall. In short, if God was so orchestrating the circumstances against those who hated the Jews, how could they possibly stand against them? Nevertheless, even in modern times, when Israel has won five wars in such an astounding fashion, they still plot to destroy the Jews. However, the dread of the Jews has fallen on many Arab nations because of God's work on their behalf.

In preparation, verse 2, the Jews **assembled in their cities**, the Hebrew means they gathered in battle array. This occurred **throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus**, all 127 **provinces**, including Judah where the returned exiles dwelt. The purpose was single-fold, namely, **to lay hands on those who sought their harm**. Surely we are to understand from this expression that the Jews intended to go on the offense and not merely wait to be attacked. And surely in many cases the best defense is a strategic offense. The reason is justifiable considering vv 2, 5 and 16; the Jews already knew many of those who hated them and so rather than wait for them to come and attack them they took it upon themselves to assemble and initiate an attack.

When they did the text reports that none of their enemies **could stand before them**. The reason simply being, terror and dread had overcome them due to the reasons mentioned above and they were unable to fight with the kind of vigor and skill normally available to them. Fear destroys your ability to perform valiantly.

Verse 3, **Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who were doing the king's business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them**. The leadership recognized from the most recent decree that the king was now pro-Jewish and even the king's top vizier, **Mordecai**, was a Jew. So they threw in with **the Jews** and fought alongside them. This was likely a pragmatic approach to the situation, they were politicians and politicians know that if you're going to last long in political office you better act in accord with those in authority. So their **dread of Mordecai** was a motivating factor to aid the Jews.

Now we're not told what kind of assistance they gave the Jews, whether militarily, financially or morally but likely it was a combination of all three. And here again, who is strangely absent from verse 3? When you would most likely expect to find God mentioned as the one who was helping them, His name is absent and instead the princes, satraps and governors are present. Yet are we not to understand from this that it was God who was providentially helping them by turning the hearts of these princes and satraps and governors in favor of the Jews in order to carry out His protection of them? Surely. Verse 4 shows that God had exalted Mordecai to the position of greatness and spread his fame for nine months such that the dread of Mordecai fueled their assistance of the Jews. **Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater**.

Verse 5 reveals the results of God's behind the scenes work, **Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them**. Again we see that Haman was not the only one who hated them, there were many in the Persian kingdom **who hated** them. How many hated them? In v 16 we read that they killed 75,000. So anti-Semitism was widespread in the kingdom. **Thus the Jews...did what they pleased to those who hated them**.

Though this statement offends many people it must be understood in the context what their enemies intended to do to them. There had apparently been a long-standing hatred and persecution throughout the empire. Mordecai's commanding Esther to keep her Jewish identity concealed is one of the evidences that such a long-standing hatred existed. So when the day arrived the Jews did whatever they pleased to strike down **their enemies with the sword**.

Verse 6, and here we get the numbers. **At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men**, there were apparently large pockets of resistance in Haman's hometown. On this day **five hundred** of those **men** were struck down. In verse 7 ten additional men are named on top of the **five hundred**. All of the names are Persian with the possible exception of **Adalia**. These are the ten sons of Haman in which he boasted; **Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, 10the ten sons of Haman**. In reality it was only a matter of time before the ten sons of Haman tried to take vengeance on the Jews. Jews had been the cause of their father's humiliating display on the impaling stake. Jews had received their inheritance. So they had vengeance in their heart but when the day of vengeance came, in a dramatic turn of events, they were killed.

But, at the end of verse 10, the Jews **did not lay their hands on their plunder**. Even though it was written in the decree that the Jews could plunder whomever they killed they did not take advantage of this opportunity in any of the provinces in which they killed their enemies. "The deliberate decision not to enrich themselves at the expense of their enemies would not go unnoticed in a culture where victors were expected to take the spoil. The very novelty of such self-denial would be remarked upon and remembered, and taken as proof of the upright motives of the Jewish communities."ⁱⁱ This restraint in all the provinces shows the purity of their motives. If the Jews' intent was to initiate a war then plundering the enemy would naturally follow. But this restraint shows that their intentions were ultimately to defend themselves by ridding themselves of their enemies.

Verse 11, **On that day the number of those killed at the citadel in Susa was reported to the king**. Those numbers would have included the 500 men plus the additional 10 sons of Haman. Observe that no women or

children are mentioned so it seems that objection from chapter 8 that Mordecai and Esther were consumed by blood lust when they assigned women and children to death has no substance. Verse 12, **The king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman at the citadel in Susa. What then have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces!** After sharing his report with her, including the important mention of Haman’s ten sons who were a great threat to Mordecai, he then inquires of her whether she has received some reports from other provinces in the kingdom.

Now in my estimation, and I wasn’t there, but I take it that she had a dissatisfied look on her face and that is what prompted the king to ask, **Now what is your petition? It shall even be granted you. And what is your further request? It shall also be done.**” We don’t know but something prompted the king to make this offer and whatever it was it implied that she was not satisfied and something more needed to be done. And his statement to her that whatever she requests **it shall also be done** shows clearly that Esther has the full favor of the king and the king has only one interest, satisfying her.

Now verse 13 is her request and it’s one of the most controversial verses in the book. **Then said Esther, “If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict today; and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.** People read this and they conclude that Esther was a vile, vindictive woman. How could she want another day added to the edict and how could she desire the ten sons of Haman who were already dead to be impaled upon stakes? As to the first objection, evidently Esther was aware that there were more than five hundred enemies of the Jews **in Susa** and that some plot had been planned to get revenge on the Jews the next day. Therefore she requests that **tomorrow also be granted to the Jews...in Susa** to defend themselves. It should be noted that her request is tempered by the fact that it was **in Susa** alone that she made this request and not all the provinces of the kingdom. As for the second objection concerning impaling the ten *already* dead sons of Haman, this may be a deterrent to warn anti-Semites not to attack the Jews the next day. Such impaling’s were in fact designed to warn others not to commit the same offenses. So rather than picturing Esther as a bloodthirsty

Jael as her enemies have done, we have a woman who wants to limit the amount of blood spilled the next day.

So, verse 14, the king commanded that it should be done so; and an edict was issued in Susa, and Haman's ten sons were hanged. Again, we suspect as a deterrent. Verse 15, **The Jews who were in Susa assembled** meaning they gathered in battle formation, **also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.** Putting the numbers together, on the thirteenth day they killed five hundred men plus the ten sons of Haman, on the fourteenth day they killed three hundred men. The total was 810 men, none of whom were children or women, and on neither day did they **lay their hands on the plunder** even though the decree authorized them to seize the plunder. So the act of restraint is obvious despite the enemies of this book who paint the Jews as the architects of genocide, when in fact from the text we see that the Jews motives were not ill-intentioned, they merely wanted to defend themselves against those who would kill them if they didn't and who refused to plunder what belonged to others.

Verse 16, **Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.** The report from all the other provinces came in and in all 127 provinces, **75,000** total had been killed. Observe that all **75,000** were **of those who hated them.** And the way the text reads there may have been more who hated them that were not killed, we don't know.

Now the Greek Septuagint translation differs from the Hebrew. The Septuagint says 15,000 and so many people try to argue that 75,000 is wrong and an exaggerated figure. However, the lower figure in the Greek Septuagint must have come much later because Josephus' writings from the 1st century which were based on it and Syriac editions both use the higher figure of 75,000. Further, when we calculate the average number killed in each province by dividing 75,000 by 127 we come to the number killed as 590 per province. This is a reasonable figure for one day's battle considering that in Susa alone the first day 510 were killed. Also we must consider the fact that Persia was a very extensive kingdom, the most extensive in history at

least since the time of the global Flood. So 75,000 is not an unreasonable number killed in the day's fighting. What such figures reveal is that anti-Semitism was widespread throughout the kingdom. Perhaps Haman's anti-Semitism and earlier decree had fanned the flames of latent anti-Semitism throughout the kingdom leading to the bloody day.

But, once more at the end of verse 16, **they did not lay their hands on the plunder.** Three times the text repeats that the Jews did not take advantage of the full wording of the decree, instead they showed self-restraint. This restraint would leave a lasting impression on other people groups in the Persian kingdom. The Jews were not vindictive people, they defended themselves but they were only willing to go so far.

And once more, in all those provinces one person is shockingly absent. God is not mentioned as the one who delivered the Jews. The credit is given to the Jews who fought. But knowing what we know God had been at work for years to exalt Mordecai to greatness and thereby strike fear into their enemies. It was the circumstances behind the victory that ultimately secured the victory. And the principle behind God orchestrating the circumstances in favor of the Jews comes directly from Gen 12:3, those who disdain the Jews will themselves be cursed by God. And so it was when on two days 76,310 of those who hated the Jews were destroyed.

Verse 17, in all the provinces **This was done on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.** But verse 18, **the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth of the same month, and they rested on the fifteenth day and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.** 19**Therefore the Jews of the rural areas, who live in the rural towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending portions of food to one another.** So the two days of resting, feasting and rejoicing differed among Jews in the Persian kingdom and this difference will be remedied next week when an official Persian decree is sent forth to establish Purim. But before it was established you had the difference in which day it was celebrated, whether the fourteenth or the fifteenth. The thing that was the same was the manner of celebration. They had a feast and sent presents to one another, something like our Christmas. And so next time we'll see the feast of Purim

or lots that was decreed as the first non-Torah feast which paved the way for other feasts like Hanukkah to be added and become a part of Jewish culture around the world.

In summary, on the day decided by Haman as most propitious for destroying the Jews God turned it to the contrary so that the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. In each city throughout the kingdom they assembled in battle formation to defend and defeat those who hated them. They fought like invincible warriors because the dread of them had fallen on their foes through Mordecai's exaltation. On that day the Jews killed five hundred in Susa alone, plus the ten sons of Haman. However this was not satisfactory to Esther who requested another day as well as the impaling of the ten sons of Haman above the city as a deterrent. On the next day the Jews killed three hundred more in Susa. The total number killed in other provinces was 75,000 bringing the total to 76,310 of those who hated them. And yet they did not take any plunder. They showed restraint and earned the respect of other people groups in the kingdom. And so God remained true to the principle of Gen 12:3 and delivered Israel from their enemies after which the Jews celebrated God's providential deliverance by giving gifts to one another on the fourteenth in the rural villages and on the fifteenth in the city of Susa.

Alright, conclusions, what can we learn from Esther 9:1-19? First, God's promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, that those who disdain the Jews will be cursed, is shown to be in effect even when the Jews are in disobedience living outside the land among their enemies. The Jews had no legal right to God's protection, having forfeited that when God sent them into Exile as divine discipline at the hands of the Babylon army. When Babylon was defeated by Cyrus the Persian he gave them the right of return, a right Jews like Esther and Mordecai had not exercised. God had also commanded the Jews to flee back to the land of Israel and build the temple. Most did not. It was too much sacrifice to give up their luxurious lifestyles (as evidenced by Haman's desire to plunder them) and start their lives over in obedience to God. And yet even though they disobeyed God and His will for their lives, God loved them and protected them anyway. What a marvelous God we have who keeps His promises and loving-kindness for the sake of His people and His name (Ps 106:44-46).

Second, when the majority of Jews are in disobedience outside the land God's deliverance of them is not seen to be miraculous but providential. By providential we mean that God has put into place people like Mordecai to put fear and dread into other nations or a superior military to outfight their enemies when defending themselves. We saw that in the time of Mordecai and the author recognizes tacitly that, behind the Jews victory over their enemies God was providentially protecting them. This principle is the same principle in effect today in Israel's deliverances in the 1948 war, the 1967 war and the 1973 war. In all of those wars Israel appeared to be at a severe disadvantage. But God had providentially put pieces in place to strike fear into the Arab armies. God raised up great military leaders early in Israel's modern history, He equipped them with great fighting skills to ward off their enemies. These providential means of God's protection over Israel will remain in effect until the number of Jews in the land exceeds those outside the land. Presently more and more Jews are making *aliyah* (immigration) as the world turns increasingly anti-Semitic. When the number of Jews inside the land exceeds that outside the land God will begin to use miraculous rather than mere providential means. I think this will occur sometime after the rapture of the Church. When it does God's miraculous deliverances of Israel will produce phenomenal turnings to the Lord. The veil being lifted many Jews will recognize that Jesus is the LORD's Messiah. Many from other nations as well will see clearly that God is miraculously working on behalf of the Jews and will turn to faith in the Jewish Messiah. For example, the battle of Gog of Magog in Ezekiel 38-39, will occur sometime after the rapture. God miraculously intervenes to protect Israel and the result is a great number of Jews and Gentiles coming to salvation. But until the number of Jews in the land exceeds those outside of the land God will continue to work only providentially on their behalf. Understanding this point is vital to eschatology.

ⁱ *Life*, June 16, 1967, pp 33, 38a, cited by John Whitcomb, *Esther and the Destiny of Israel*, p. 112.

ⁱⁱ Constable, T. (2003). Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible (Es 9:1). Galaxie Software.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2013