

ESTHER 9

VICTORY AND TRIUMPH!

The twelfth month finally arrived, and the day dawned upon which the decisive battle was to be fought between the Jews and their enemies; and in this battle, the Jews were victorious. Neither side was surprised, for notice was given long before; and so this was a fair trial of skill between them. Notwithstanding the king's second edict, the enemies of the Lord's people hoped to have power over them; their hearts were hardened, just as Pharaoh's was, and so they took up weapons to their own destruction. They had such an ingrained malice against the Jews that they determined to fight them, even though they fought to their own destruction. And the Jews were the conquerors! They gathered themselves together in their cities, and stood united in their defense – offering violence to none, but bidding defiance to all.

Under the influence of Mordecai, all the king's officers conformed to the latter of the two edicts; they helped the Jews, and this turned the scales on their side. They did this because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them, for he clearly had the blessing of both God and the king. His fame for wisdom and virtue went throughout all the provinces; in all places, he was extolled as a great man. Therefore, because they respected him, the king's officers helped the Jews.

But the greatest help that the Lord's people had was what He Himself did for them. He put a fear of them upon all people, so that no man could withstand them. None of the persons who attempted their destruction escaped, but they were all struck down with the stroke of the sword. On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, 500 men perished in the city of Shushan alone, as well as the ten sons of Haman. On the fourteenth day, 300 more were slain in Shushan, who had escaped the sword on the former day of execution. Esther obtained permission from the king for them to do this on the fourteenth day, for the greater terror of their enemies, and for the utter crushing of that malignant party of men.

The Jews throughout the rest of the kingdom, on the thirteenth day, slew 75,000 of their enemies in just and necessary self-defense. But special notice is taken of the fact that they did not even touch the spoil of the enemies whom they killed. The king's commission had permitted them to take this plunder (chapter 8:11), and they had a fair opportunity of enriching themselves with it. But they did not. This would make it clear to all that they aimed at nothing except the preservation of their own lives. The king's decree also empowered them to destroy the families of their enemies, even the women and children. But the laws of humanity forbade them to do that, even though their enemies had planned to do so against them. They slew none except those whom they found

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The victory of the Jews over their enemies – verses 1-19
- ❖ The annual commemoration of this day of deliverance is instituted by Mordecai and Esther, in the feast of Purim – verses 20-32

to be armed, and they mercifully left the plunder for the support to the women and children whom they spared. Herein they acted with a consideration and compassion which is well worthy of imitation.

It is not hard to imagine how thankful Mordecai and Esther were when the Lord caused the Jews to triumph over their enemies. How their hearts must have been full of joy and praise! But they also took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this monumental event to the coming generations, for the honor of God, and for the encouragement of His people to trust in Him at all times. The history of this event was written down, and copies of it were dispersed among the Jews in all the provinces of the empire. Moreover, a festival was instituted to be observed yearly by the Lord's people, from generation to generation, in remembrance of this wonderful work which He had done for them. Thus the children who would be born in years to come would be taught about this amazing deliverance; and then they would declare it to their own children, so that they might place their hope in Jehovah (Ps. 78:6-7). This festival was to be observed every year on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month. It was called the feast of Purim, which was derived from the Persian word *Pur*, meaning "a lot." This was because Haman had employed the drawing of lots to determine this to be the time of the Jews' destruction; but the Lord, Who determines the drawing of the lot, had established this to be the time of their triumph. The name of this festival would remind them of the sovereign dominion of the God of Israel, Who served His own purposes by the foolish superstitions of the heathen. The chief reason why the feast of Purim was to be observed was so that the memorial of the great things which Jehovah had done for His people might never perish from their descendants. God does not work wonders for a day, but to be had in everlasting remembrance. What He does shall be forever; and therefore, His doings should be kept in mind forever.

The feast of Purim was to be a day of cheerfulness, feasting, and joy – as well as a day for reading this whole narrative in the synagogue, and for offering up prayers to the Lord. When God gives us reasons to rejoice – especially in the good news of the Gospel of redemption by Jesus Christ – why should we not express our joy? Purim was also to be a time of generosity and charity. Those who have received mercy must express their gratitude by showing mercy to others; and opportunities for this are never lacking, for we always have the poor with us. Thanksgiving and almsgiving should go together; so that when we are rejoicing and blessing the Lord, the heart of the poor may rejoice with us.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for gloriously undertaking to work out salvation and redemption for us poor sinners – which was truly a deliverance that was far better and much more glorious than the saving of the Jews from Haman's cruelty in the days of Esther and Mordecai! Amen.