

## The Enemies of the Jews are Defeated

Call to Worship: Psalm 121

Hymn #80- *How Firm a Foundation*

1<sup>st</sup> Scripture: 2 Samuel 22

Hymn #86- *Now Thank We All Our God*

2nd Scripture: Esther 9:1-17

Hymn #89- *Come Thou Almighty King*

### Introduction:

Following the defeat and destruction of Haman, last time, we saw Esther pleading with the king on behalf of her people, with respect to the wicked edict that Haman had sent out to all of the provinces, with the king's seal. In that decree, it was written that all of the Jews throughout all of the king's provinces, were to be killed and destroyed (man, woman and child) and their assets plundered. Since the king's edict, once sealed, was beyond the reach of being revoked, King Ahasuerus gave Mordecai and Esther both his signet ring and his permission to write another decree, which could be used to counteract the first one. And they immediately did so, enabling the Jews to band together, to defend themselves, and to do to their enemies, all that was granted their enemies to do to the Jews, in the first decree. And so, the second decree had gone out to all the provinces, and the Jews everywhere began to celebrate with great joy. And "many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them" (Esther 8:17b). Clearly, the God of Israel had stepped in with great power, and was manifesting the glory of His great Name through these profound events!

This morning, we come upon that day, the "thirteenth day of the twelfth month," when both of the decrees reach their point of enactment. And here, we will find God, once again, giving victory to His people, as they overcome and defeat their enemies; all of whom chose to continue to follow the orders of the first decree.

## **I. A Summary of the Events that Occur in Chapter 9:1-17**

Again, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month arrives, and the appointed time for the execution of the king's decrees has come. The enemies of the Jews, still determined to follow the orders of the first decree, seek to overpower and defeat the Jews, but the very opposite (the "reverse") occurs, as the Jews overpower and defeat all of their enemies. The Jews banded together in each of the provinces and successfully defended themselves against all who sought their harm. And we are told in verse 2, that no one could withstand them, "because fear of them fell upon all people." Clearly, God had put a fear and a loss of confidence in the hearts of the enemies of the Jews, which crippled their ability to overcome the Jews. And furthermore, the officials, the satraps, the governors, and all who worked for the king, gave aid to the Jews, not so much because they desired to do so, but rather, because the fear of Mordecai had come upon them. Mordecai had become great in the king's palace and his fame spread throughout all of the provinces. He had both, the king's signet ring, and the highest rank among the king's officials, and no one wanted to cross him, or risk losing his favor, by failing to aid his people, as they were unrighteously attacked. Mordecai, we are told, became increasingly prominent and powerful in the kingdom of Persia. His exaltation seemed to avoid reaching a plateau; it just kept rising. And so, the Jews slaughtered and destroyed all who sought to harm them.

In the capital city alone, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, along with the ten sons of Haman, as Haman's curse makes its way to his wicked, Amalekite seed. And as the day draws to a close, these victorious results are given to the king, who then reports them to Esther. And then he asks her, if there is anything else that she would desire to be done. And she gives him two final requests. First, that the second decree would be extended for one more day, in case the enemies of the Jews seek to continue the battle the next day. And second, that the dead bodies of the ten sons of Haman, would be hung on the gallows, probably, as both a warning to those who would continue to seek to oppress and/or destroy the Jews, and as a means of attaching the sign of ultimate dishonor and curse upon the family of the wicked Haman. From the standpoint of God, this would go right in line with the curse that had been placed on the Amalekites, during the time of Moses and the Israelite wanderings in the wilderness, when the Amalekites had attacked the rear ranks of the travelling Israelites (Ex. 17:8-16).

The king honors both of Esther's requests. The sons of Haman are hung on the gallows, and the Jews in Shushan defeated and killed three hundred additional men on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month (the next day). And then, finally, we are told that the rest of the Jews in the provinces, gathered together to defend themselves, had rest from their enemies, and killed a total of seventy-five thousand of their enemies, the day before (on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month---keeping in mind that the additional request of Esther, would have been limited to Shushan, since it could never have reached the other provinces by the next day).

Following this, we are told that the Jews organized a day of rest, feasting and gladness, in order to celebrate their God-given deliverance and victory. And Lord willing, next week, we will look further into this glorious celebration, called "The Feast of Purim," which the Jews still celebrate right up into our present day.

Now brethren, before we consider a few applications based upon the events that have transpired here, I want to note one other important matter. Three times, we are told that when the Jews defeated their enemies, they did not "lay a hand on the plunder." We see this in verse 10, when they had killed the ten sons of Haman ("...but they did not lay a hand on the plunder"). And again, we see this in verse 15, where the Jews, who had killed their enemies in Shushan, "did not lay a hand on the plunder." And then, lastly, in verse 16, with reference to those Jews in all of the other provinces; after defeating all of their enemies, we are told that, "they did not lay a hand on the plunder." The exact language is here used three times, as if to stress the fact that although they utterly destroyed their enemies, they refused to touch any of the plunder. Now, why is this the case? Certainly, they would have been in no violation of the king's decree, if they took the plunder. Notice, what the decree stated in chapter 8:11-12:

"By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives--to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, *and to plunder their possessions*, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar."

The decree actually gave them the right to plunder the possessions of their enemies, and yet, they did not exercise this right? Why not? By law, they had every right to plunder the assets

of all who attacked them. Let me suggest to you two reasons for why they did not touch the spoil:

1) This further confirmed that the Jews only interest here was in their self-preservation. Throughout the chapter, we are reminded that they only destroyed those who sought to harm them (vs. 1, 2, 5, 16). All who stayed their hand from keeping the first decree, the Jews did not touch. Refusing to take the spoil, though by right they could have legally done so, certainly served to confirm their great integrity, as those who had no desire of rebelling against the king. It helped defuse a common accusation that had come against them, since the time they had been welcomed back to their land by King Cyrus; an accusation reiterated by Haman himself, namely, that they were a people who had no respect for the king and his laws...etc. Here, no doubt, their honor before the king grew ten-fold.

2) This act also confirmed their sincere love *for* and faith *in* their God. The material gain that could have been grasped through this great victory, was indeed tremendous, but like Abraham, when he refused to take so much as a "thread" or a "sandal strap" from the plunder of his enemies (in Gen. 14), the Jews were here content to rejoice in the preservation granted them by their God. It was to God's honor that they turned their hearts away from material gain here. The Jews were concerned that God be glorified in the work which He had done here.

Consider this, in light of King Saul's failure to respect the ban that had been placed on the cursed Amalekites, when he had been given the victory over them (1 Sam. 15:1-9). He could not help himself, as he valued their prized possessions more than his relationship with God. In a very real sense, the Jews of Esther's day, honored such a ban, on the plunder of their accursed enemies, though there was no direct command calling them to do so. However, they may have had this in mind, as they surely knew that the Amalekites were a cursed people, according to the Law of God, given by Moses (Ex. 17:14-16; Deut. 25:17-19). The hanging of Haman's sons might help testify to this fact as well (although Mordecai and Esther composed the second decree).

Needless to say, the Jew's refusal to so much as lay a hand on the plunder, spoke well of their integrity before the nations, as well as of their faith in the living God. It added to the testimony, which stated that this great deliverance was a work of God, and not men. It pointed

the arrow at *God's* power in the deliverance and *not* the *Jews*, who derived every bit of their strength from their invisible God!

## **II. Applications drawn from the recent events that have transpired**

1) Again, witness the principle of "reversal" here, coming full circle now. The enemy has set his plans in motion to destroy Mordecai and the Jews, which would in turn flush out the line of Judah, out of which the Christ/Messiah would come. But our sovereign God turns every wicked plan around, unto the reverse destruction of His enemies. The wicked, proud Haman is humiliated and hung on his own gallows, along with his ten sons. The enemies of the Jews, who were set on destroying them, are themselves destroyed by the Jews. The lowly Mordecai is exalted above and beyond the position of Haman, being given his home, the signet ring of the king, and an increasingly greater position than Haman had ever attained. Mordecai is given the great honor and respect that Haman coveted, and that, without trying. And the lowly Jewish orphan, Esther, is made Queen, given the favor of the king repeatedly, and made the deliverer of God's people.

2) All of this is done to a greater end. Indeed, the preservation of the people of God is a noteworthy end in all of this. And indeed, God's righteous dealings with the wicked, contain a noteworthy end in all of this. But God has providentially taken things beyond the realm of human possibility and into the realm of displaying His divine power, so that the greatest end of all, namely, the end of glorifying His great and glorious Name, would be achieved! The Creator righteously pursues His own glory, in a world that has grossly failed to give Him His due honor and praise. And brethren, if we miss this great purpose, and limit everything to the realm of human beings, then we do a great disservice to the text, and to God Himself! Indeed, the greatest reversal of all, is God reversing the attempts of the enemy to rob Him of His glory!

And brethren, as small of a matter as it may seem, the Jews refusing to lay a hand on the plunder, was a glorious capstone to their bowing themselves to the dust, so that the glory of their invisible God would be clearly made known. How easily they could have cooperated with their flesh, and pinned their deliverance (and the divine favor upon them), to something within their own nature, but God forbid that it should ever be the case! God forbid that the shovel and the

shaping tools should ever stand before the great and glorious sculpted sand castle; God forbid that the brushes, the paint and the palette should ever stand before the finished painting...and take a bow, as if they had any thought whatsoever, invested in the beauty of the final product! Rather, they remain in awe over the fact that their master could use them, but pieces of wood, plastic and swatches of paint, to express the glory of His infinite wisdom and beauty, in a fine work of art. Brethren, let us ever be about concerning ourselves with the glory of God! Let us ever be jealous to see Him glorified! Let us ever be about revealing the invisible reality of God through the visible means of us! Let us consciously look for ways to part with our God-given benefits even; to leave behind the luxurious plunder, when by doing so, we can point others to the invisible power and glory, working behind the scenes. If we are not jealous to this end; if we are not consciously jealous to this end, we will always fall into the humanly fallen default mode of seeking our own glory. We will always, naturally, take advantage of the *invisible* nature of God, in order to *visibly* stand out, as those who have done, what He alone has truly done. And people who are so prone to visible, felt idolatry, will be glad to associate that glory with us. People, who revel in and love secular humanism, would be happy to close their nostrils to the glorious fragrance of Christ, only to inhale our earthly stench, if by this means, they can avoid coming to the conviction of their own sin, leading them to genuine repentance and faith! Brethren, let God's glory be the paramount motive, in all that we do...for it is right and proper! He is our Omnipotent Creator! And He is our gracious Redeemer!

Read Psalm 96. Brethren, in all of our lives; in all of the divine working of God in our lives, we ought to be pulling back the curtain of this world, so as to proclaim the truth revealed in this Psalm! We ought to strive to make Christ, the glorious God and Savior, who sits in the heavens at the right hand of God, known to our dark, fallen world! Oh, that the fear of Christ would break through every province of this world, as the fear of Mordecai had done then, so that sinners would bow the knee today, and be saved, before it is too late!

### **The Gospel**

Amen!!!

**Benediction:** Jude 1:24-25