

Slide # 1

Theme: God’s providential Care For His People

Outline:

Chapter 1 – Queen Vashti Deposed

Chapter 2 – Esther Becomes Queen

Chapter 3 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews

Chapters 4-7 Esther’s Courage – Haman’s Plot Backfires

Chapter 8 The Jews Avenged

Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

It is very difficult to completely destroy God’s chosen people Israel – yea IMPOSSIBLE! It is utter folly to try and do so. This endeavor is to challenge God with high handed rebellion and shows no regard for His Word, His character, or His covenant commitment. Few things could be more blasphemous than this.

From very early on in the Bible we have God’s Word that He will bless those who bless the Jews and curse them who curse them as found in Genesis 12:3.

Yet, in depraved rebellion Satan throughout history has had people step forward and try to prove God wrong. They without exception have all failed.

Esther is an OT story of God’s providential faithfulness to His people Israel – in spite of themselves. Who God uses in the story to accomplish the objectives of preserving His people is really besides the point.

The setting of the story is post-Babylonian exile after king Cyrus had decreed for the Jews to return to their homeland. However, a MAJORITY of the Jews were not so moved and remained in the land which became the massive empire of Persia.

In the providence of God Mordecai (a Jew) had a high position in the government and his cousin (Esther) became the queen.

In this context a man named Haman, who was a descendant of Agag who was king of the Amalekites during the time of king Saul, came to hate Mordecai who refused to bow before him.

Full of himself and full of hatred for Mordecai and the Jews, Haman devised a plot by which all the Jews in the empire were to be systematically killed on a certain day. In the end the plan backfired and the king had Haman hung on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

In addition, the king allowed the Jews to prepare to defend themselves against their enemies on the very day that had been set in law in which the Jews were to be exterminated.

When the day came the Jews killed 500 people in the capital city including the 10 sons of Haman; and also 75,000 people throughout the rest of the vast empire (cf. Esther, 9:6, 16). Esther, realizing there was still unrest against the Jews in the capital city asked that the Jews might have an additional day to defend themselves – which was granted – and so the next day the Jews killed 300 more of their enemies in the capital city area (cf. 9:15).

So, in summary the Jews killed most of their enemies on the 13th of the month of Adar, but in the capital city 300 more were killed on the 14th. And that brings us to 9:17 in our study.

Esther 9:17–32 (NKJV)

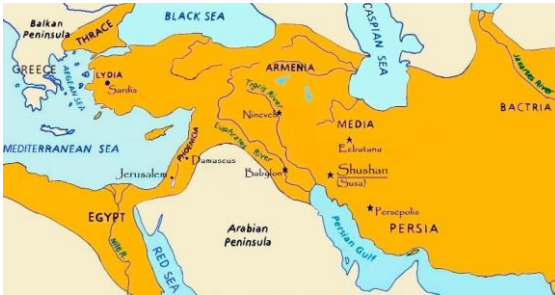
17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

This is speaking in reference to the Jews throughout the kingdom of Persia generally. They had victory over their enemies on the 13th and on the 14th rested and made it a day of feasting and celebration.

18 But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

In the capital city the Jews defended themselves on the 13th but then again on the 14th and then on the 15th they rested and made it a day of feasting and celebration. So, the Jews in the capital city had their celebration one day later.

Slide # 2



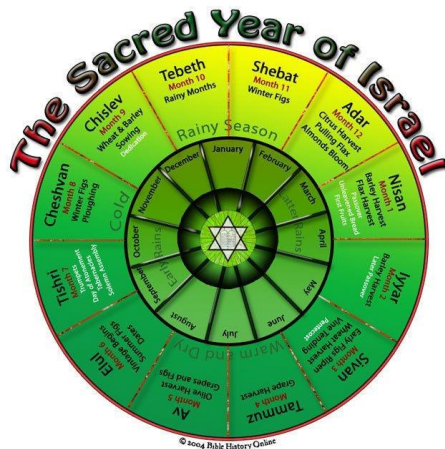
Footnote: It is interesting that the Jews to this day for the most part celebrate Purim on the 14th, but in Jerusalem (the Jewish capital) they celebrate it on the 15th.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

The word “holiday” literally means “a good day”. During the intertestamental period in the OT this day became known as “Mordecai’s day” because of the official role he had in the government and the official correspondence he sent throughout the land orchestrating it.

The month of Adar (the 12th month on the Jewish calendar) corresponds roughly to our February/March.

Slide # 3



20 And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, 21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 22 as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.

Mordecai called on this to become an annual holiday for the Jews – even instructing them on how to celebrate the occasion. But note it very carefully that he called for a two day festival and not just one day. In doing so there would be no schism among the Jews on when they should celebrate.

People can fight over anything – even including how and when to celebrate. There is an old joke that says wherever you have two Jews you have three opinions. I am not at all sure Jews have a corner on this tendency, but you get the point. Even in victory it seems that the day to be celebrated could potentially have become an irritant among the Jews – and Mordecai used his influence to squelch this problem.

Note that everyone is to be included. Even the poor are to have a part in this celebration (cf. Est. 2:18; Deut. 16:11; Neh. 8:10, 12). It is a celebration of sorrow turned into joy – of mourning turned into holiday.

It is customary today for Jews to take food to their neighbors on the celebration of Purim, to eat “tri-cornered” pastries that supposedly are shaped like Haman’s hat, or some say his ears. It is a major time of feasting and celebration all while humiliating the memory of Haman.

Slide # 4



Slide # 5

**23 So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them,
 24 because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them;
 25 but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.**

This became a celebration of how the Jews were spared and how in the process the tables were turned on Haman who is once again described here as “the enemy of the Jews”. Three times in the book this is the description given to Haman (3:10; 8:1; 9:10).

Haman is a type of arch enemy of the Jews which will be ultimately realized in the Antichrist. But again, as with Haman, in the end the Antichrist will be defeated, and the Jews will be preserved. You just cannot beat God! To take on the Jews and try to annihilate them is to take on God – and God is up to the challenge – BIG TIME! No one ever defeats the God of covenant – the God of Israel. Only losers take on God and to take on Israel is to take on God!

Slide # 6

“In every generation, they rise up to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, always delivers us from their hands.”

– ***Jewish Passover Liturgy***

26 So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur.

This is most interesting because they named this famous holiday after a pagan ritual. It is a holiday that was not prescribed by God and yet has biblical roots in the sense that the historical occasion is rooted here in the book of Esther.

The word “**Pur**” was an Assyrian word meaning “**lot**” referring to something that is cast in order to make a decision (cf. Isa. 34:17; Neh. 10:35; 1 Chron. 26:14; Ps. 22:19; Jon. 1:7; Prov. 18:18). It is related back to the superstitious pagan practice applied by Haman in 3:7.

Slide # 7

Esther 3:7 (NKJV)

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they **cast Pur (that is, the lot)**, before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the **month of Adar**.

Esther 3:13 (NKJV)

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to **annihilate all the Jews**, both young and old, little children and women, **in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar**, and to plunder their possessions.

“Purim” is plural for pur as practiced by Haman. This is interesting because the entire holiday is traced back to the pagan ritual used by Haman to determine the timeline that the Jews should be annihilated.

Some Christians wonder whether it is appropriate to celebrate Christmas or Easter (which I prefer to call Resurrection Sunday) because much related to the traditions surrounding these holidays is steeped in paganism.

But here with Purim we have an example of celebrating a holiday that was not specifically prescribed by God and is in fact tied (in name) to the pagan ritual used by Haman to set the timing for the extermination of the Jews.

I think it becomes a matter of what one does with any given holiday. Anything that can be corrupted you can bet the BIG tent of Christendom will leaven thoroughly as brought out by Jesus in the parable of the leaven in Matt. 13:33.

The Bible says...

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

I personally think the coming of Christ into the world to be our Savior is worth celebrating, and the resurrection of Christ is something worthy of celebration. Whatever the world does it does not take away from the freedom we have in Christ for such celebrations as long as we keep it God-focused for His glory (cf. Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16; 3:17).

There is one other example of a holiday practiced by the Jews that is not specifically ordained of God. That is the Feast of Dedication mentioned in John 10:22 which was also known as the “Feast of Lights” or “Hanukkah”. Hanukkah in Hebrew means “Dedication”. This establishment of this feast is set in the intertestamental period in relation to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 175-164 BC) when the Jews under the Maccabees took back the temple. Jesus, in His day attended this feast and evidently had no problem with it.

By way of precedent these examples argue for the idea that God is not necessarily opposed to all holidays that are not specifically prescribed by Him.

Ironically, what Haman practiced as pagan superstition was providentially overruled by God (cf. 3:7). He superstitiously thought his fate was being guided by “pur” (luck/fate) when in fact God sovereignly controls all. There is no such thing as “luck” – only providence!

Slide # 8

Proverbs 16:33 (NKJV)

The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

Slide # 9

The book of Esther gives us a segment of the history of the Jews which is not supplied elsewhere in the Bible. For instance, it is here that we learn about the origin of the Feast of Purim which, as we all know, is celebrated by the Jewish people to this very day.

– **Carl Armerding**

26b Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, 27 the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, 28 that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

And this is exactly what has happened!

To this very day the Jews celebrate the demise of Haman and the deliverance of the Jews on this occasion. They do so by reading the scroll of Esther in the synagogue complete with all kinds of interaction. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, they jeer and boo and use noisemakers to drown out the very mention of it. Some will shout out, "Let his name be blotted out" or "Let him be accursed".

Oftentimes plays are performed reenacting the demise and defeat of Haman. For this holiday the Jews often dress up with masks or various costumes. For the Jews Purim is party time at the expense of Haman!

Slide # 10



Slide # 11



29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.

Evidently there was some confusion or tension over when exactly Purim should be celebrated so a second letter was sent with the full authority of Queen Esther and Mordecai (the prime minister) behind it.

The first letter is mentioned in verse 20 and the second letter is referenced here in verses 29-32.

30 And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,

31 to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting.

It is thought by some commentators that verse 22 with its emphasis on sorrow turned into joy and verse 30 emphasizing peace and truth allude to Zechariah 8:19.

Slide # 12

Zechariah 8:19 (NKJV)

19 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘The fast of the fourth month, The fast of the fifth, The fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, **Shall be joy and gladness** and cheerful feasts For the house of Judah. Therefore love **truth and peace**.’

During the time of the Babylonian Captivity the Jews practiced a series of fasts denoting various calamities in Israel including the captivity. But with the return from Captivity a new day had dawned. Now their annual fasting was to be turned into times of joyful feasting and celebration involving love, truth, and peace.

This also pictures what has now happened to Israel in the time of Esther – the sorrow of the Jews was turned into joy – fasting into gladness – and falsehood and conflict into truth and peace.

Note that in addition to this being a holiday of uproarious celebration this second letter also prescribed “fasting and lamenting”.

Most believe that in this official letter it was also spelled out that a commemorative time of fasting should also be included in this holiday remembering the time of fasting that preceded their deliverance (cf. 4:3, 16).

Although no date is officially assigned here the Jews have traditionally observed the 13th of Adar as a fast day and then the 14 & 15 as a time of great celebration.

32 So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

This became a matter of the official records in the kingdom and for the Jews a recognized official requirement for them as a people.

Slide # 13

Prophetically, a final time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7), perpetuated by the future Antichrist in the Tribulation will occur. The return of the Messiah to establish His kingdom will elevate Israel to the most blessed nation of all time. - ***Tim LaHaye***

Indeed, there is lot in the book of Esther that mirrors their history, and which will yet transpire at the end culminating in the in the kingdom to come.

Years ago someone from the West asked a Russian Jew what he thought would happen if the Russians stepped up their oppression of the Jews? The Jew responded something like this: “***Oh, we would probably get another feast!***”

Asked what he meant by that he said: “*Pharoah tried to wipe out the Hebrews and the result was Passover; Haman tried to exterminate us as a people and the result was Purim; Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy us, and the result was Hanukkah. If the Russians seek destroy us we will probably get another holiday.*”

It is true that the Jewish people can no more be destroyed than God can be destroyed. The ultimate destiny of the Jewish people is ultimately tied to God’s covenant faithfulness. And thus, they continue to be a providentially persevered people to this very day. After all the God of Israel is YHWH – the covenant keeping God of the Bible.