

Joseph and Esther

Lesson 13 (Esther)

Esther 9-10

The Tables are Turned (Esther 9–10)

Esther 9:1 mentions an important day: the 13th day of the 12th month. What was supposed to happen on this day according to the first royal decree (Esther 3:13)?

What was supposed to happen on this day according to the second royal decree (Esther 8:11–12)?

For the Jews, this was a never-to-be-forgotten day in history. Those who hoped to defeat and destroy the Jews were themselves defeated! The tables were turned on the enemies of the Jews. The destroyers were destroyed. Can you think of another example from Israel's history where the ones seeking to destroy the Jews were themselves destroyed (Exodus 14:23–31)? _____

The same God who delivered the nation Israel in the days of Esther is the same God who providentially watches over the nation Israel today (though most Jews are blinded by unbelief—Romans 11:25). A modern example of this took place in 1967 when the tables were turned on the Jews' enemies, the Arabs:

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. Middle Eastern alliances, balances of power, even political boundaries, were of a new shape, as though mutated by a Biblical cataclysm. 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....The Israelis experienced an ecstasy which is given to few people of any generation to know (*Life*, June 16, 1967, pages 33,38a).

What is true about the One who watches over Israel (Psalm 121:4)?

As the Jews gathered to defend themselves against their many enemies, was the Persian government for the Jews or against them (Esther 9:2-4)? _____ How many enemies did the Jews kill in Shushan the palace (Esther 9:5-6)? _____ Who else was included in this slaughter (Esther 9:10)?

Haman was not satisfied to kill Mordecai only. He wanted all the Jews to perish (Esther 3:6). As things turned out, Haman was not the only one to die. His ten sons and thousands of other Jew-haters (anti-Semitic people) followed him to the grave. Did the Jews have permission to make themselves rich by taking the spoil and booty of their enemies (Esther 8:11)? _____ Did they do this (Esther 9:10,15,16)? _____ Their greatest desire was simply to defend themselves, not to enrich themselves.

The king was amazed at the great destruction which took place in the capital city. "If they have killed 500 here, how many have they killed elsewhere?" (Compare Esther 9:12.) What was the answer to the king's question (Esther 9:16)? _____ How many days did it take for the Jews in Shushan to defeat their enemies (Esther 9:13-15)? _____ How many additional enemies were destroyed on the second day (Esther 9:15)? _____ How many days did it take for the Jews in the other provinces to defeat their foes (Esther 9:16-17)? _____

According to the queen's wish, what was done with the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons (Esther 9:13-14)?

_____ This means their dead bodies were impaled or crucified on crosses or trees.

According to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, what did it mean for a person's body to be hung on a tree? (Circle the correct answer.)

- It meant God's blessing was upon him.
- It meant God's grace was upon him.
- It meant God's mercy was upon him.
- It meant God's curse was upon him.

Why was God's curse upon Haman and his ten sons (Genesis 12:3)?

According to Galatians 3:10, upon whom is God's curse?

Has any sinful man ever kept God's holy law perfectly (compare James 2:10–11)? _____ Are you a lawbreaker or a lawkeeper? _____ Who was made a curse for you and Who paid the death penalty that lawbreakers deserve (Galatians 3:13)? _____ Did He hang on a tree for you (Galatians 3:13; Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24)? _____ Because of what He has done, what is now upon the believer—God's curse or God's blessing (Ephesians 1:3)? _____ We deserve to be **cursed**, but by the grace of God we are **blessed**!

God's curse was certainly upon Haman. Can you find a verse in Esther chapter 9 (between verse 20 and verse 32) which perfectly describes the "boomerang effect" as it worked in the life (and death) of Haman? Verse _____

The Jews experienced an amazing turn of events. According to Esther 9:22, their sorrow turned to _____ and their days of mourning were turned into days of feasting and rejoicing! Was the opposite true of Haman (compare Esther 5:9 and 6:12)? _____ The Lord can take that which seems to be a disaster and turn it into something of great joy and blessing. To the Lord's disciples, the crucifixion seemed to be the world's greatest disaster. Did God turn things around (John 16:20)? _____ Can God take the things that seem like disasters in your life and turn them around? _____ More importantly, can God turn **you** around (compare Acts 26:18)? _____

The Jews celebrated this great deliverance (Esther 9:17–19), and Mordecai and Esther wanted this celebration to be continued on a yearly basis. What name was given to the Jewish holiday (Esther 9:26)? _____ This name was a reminder of that dreadful day of destruction (chosen by Haman through the casting of the lot, or **pur**), which was turned into a wonderful day of deliverance.

According to Esther 9:27 this holiday was to be observed every year by three groups of people:

1. The Jews
2. Their seed (their children or descendants of future generations)
3. Those who would become Jews (see Esther 8:17--such people are called proselytes)

These days were to be "Remembered" and kept throughout every generation" (Esther 9:28). They were never to forget this great deliverance and turn of events!

The Holiday of Purim

Purim is the feast of Esther mentioned in Esther 9:27-28. This special day is still observed by Jewish people. This is a very happy day for the Jewish people as they remember the wonderful way in which God delivered the Jews in the days of Esther. In Jewish synagogues the book of Esther is read during this holiday. The Jewish people remember Haman's wicked plot to destroy all of the Jews throughout the world and how God worked things out so that His people were delivered. This special day should remind us that the Jewish people are indestructible. God has a wonderful plan for the Jewish people and this plan will be fulfilled. No Haman or Hitler or Antichrist or anyone else will prevent God from keeping His promises to the nation Israel.

What was something else the Jews were never to forget (Deuteronomy 15:15; 24:18)?

Were they commanded to celebrate this great deliverance by observing the day every year (Exodus 12:14-18)? _____ What was this holiday or holy day called (Leviticus 23:5)? _____
 What great deliverance should believers never forget today (1 Corinthians 11:24-25; compare 2 Corinthians 1:10; Colossians 1:13; Galatians 1:4)?

This memorial should be more often than once a year (compare 1 Corinthians 11:26)!

The greatness of Mordecai is mentioned in Esther 10 (see also Esther 9:4). Can you think of someone who would have loved to have Mordecai's power and position (compare Esther 5:11-12; 6:7-9)? _____
 _____ Mordecai used his power and position, not to lift himself up in pride, but to seek the welfare of the Jews, both by his words and deeds (Esther 10:3). What should the believer seek (1 Corinthians 10:24,33; Romans 15:1-3)?

Mordecai was "next" to the king (or "second to the king"--see Esther 10:3). What other Jews were given exalted positions in the kingdoms

of this world?

1. Genesis 41:37–45 _____ (Egypt)
2. Daniel 5:29; 6:1–3 _____ (Babylon and Media Persia)
3. Nehemiah 1:11; 2:1 _____ (Persia)

Review of Esther

How did God providentially work (working behind the scenes—using people, events, circumstance, etc.) to cause the following events:

1. The removal of a queen
2. The choice of Esther as queen
3. The choice of the day of destruction
4. The safe entrance of Esther before the king
5. The remembrance of Mordecai's lifesaving deed
6. The fall of Haman
7. The countering and overcoming of the irreversible decree
8. The remarkable turn of events from destruction to deliverance, from sorrow to joy

God works and moves in mysterious ways! The same God who worked in Esther's day is at work today—working in events and circumstances, kings and kingdoms, and in the lives of men, women, boys and girls—including you! Our study of Esther has illustrated the truth of the following poem (written by another woman named "Esther"):

Things Just Don't Happen

Things don't just happen to us who love God;
They are planned by His own dear hand.
Then molded and shaped, and timed by His clock.
Things don't just happen; they're planned.

We don't just guess on the issues of life,
We Christians just rest in our Lord.
We are directed by His sovereign will
In the light of His Holy Word.

We who love Jesus are walking by faith,
Not seeing one step that's ahead,
Not doubting one moment what our lot might be,
But looking to Jesus instead.

We praise our dear Saviour for loving us so,
For planning each care of our life,
Then giving us faith to trust Him for all,
The blessings as well as the strife.

Things don't just happen to us who love God,
To us that have taken our stand.
No matter the lot, the course, or the price,
Things don't just happen, they're planned.

—Esther L. Fields

This concludes our study on **JOSEPH** (God working all things together for our good and His glory) and **ESTHER** (God working "behind the scenes" fulfilling His all-wise plan). Are you trusting this God to work out every detail of your life for His glory and for your good?

Bible Visuals, Inc. produces visualized Bible lessons, including two lessons on the life of Joseph and one lesson on the book of Esther. The illustrations are very helpful for children and even teens, and would work well with the lessons in this series. The address is Bible Visuals, Box Z, Akron, PA 17501-0153. Their material is very sound and true to the Word of God.