

Esther 06-04-25B

We pick up our study now in the book of Esther, chapter 9. We've already seen that the 13th day of Adar has come, and the Jews and the malignant Persians are fighting it out tooth and nail, and the Jews win. They beat back their enemies, but you will notice they do not do to the Persians what the Persians had planned to do to them. The Persians were going to plunder them and take all of their stuff, send part of it to the king and keep the rest for themselves.

And it tells us that the Jews, in verse 10, killed, but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. This reminds us of what happened in Jericho, when God said, go in and kill the enemies, but don't take their stuff. The purpose is not to enrich oneself.

The purpose is not to sink to the level of these enemies. The purpose is to neutralize them, to eliminate them as a threat, but not to take their stuff. Only the people who are actively opposing the Jews are the targets.

They're not just going willy-nilly. You see on TV a lot of times when there's some sort of protest or some kind of angry mob, and there's just random acts of violence, and random acts of pillage and plunder and looting. Down in New Orleans, the hurricane hit, and right away there's people looting and busting windows and taking stuff.

And it's like, well, all bets are off, the rules are suspended, we can do what we want. This is not what the Jews do. There is self-control.

This is a surgical strike. They take out the people who are trying to take them out, but they don't take advantage. Even when God gives us the ability to defend ourselves, and to push back, and to hold our ground, and to defend our faith, it's not a license to be wrong. It's not a license to pillage and plunder. And the Jews don't do that.

And this is wise, isn't it? Because they still have to live in the Persian Empire on the 15th and 16th and 17th, and all the rest of the days of the month of Adar, and the months and years to come. And if they make themselves a stench in the nostrils of the Persians, if they do things that incite anger, and a desire for retribution and revenge, then this is going to become a civil war that will never end.

But nobody can fault them for defending themselves and killing those who are trying to kill them. And that's all they do. And they stop at that point. This requires self-control. This is due to the leadership of Mordecai. Because the same fear on the part of the Persians that falls upon them because of Mordecai also falls on the Jews. The Israelites, the people who look up to Mordecai, follow his leadership. And Mordecai sets the tone. He says, look, we are not animals. We're not uncivilized. We're not just going to take advantage.

I mentioned that we have this list of the ten sons of Haman given in verse 9, and the unique way in which it's recorded in Hebrew manuscripts. And of course, we don't know how far back that tradition goes, except that it goes way, way back. The oldest manuscripts that we've got of Esther have this particular arrangement of the enemies of Israel.

Now remember, their father Haman, when did he die? How many months ago? Ten months ago. Ten sons of Haman. What does the number ten put you in mind of? Especially thinking about life and death and deliverance from enemies and so forth.

Egypt? Flies? Lice? Frogs? Darkness? Hail? Boils? Ten plagues, right? How did those plagues work out? There were three sets of three, and then there was the tenth, which was the death of the firstborn, Passover and so on, right? It's interesting to me, and this is, I will freely confess, this is a little bit of a stretch, but I'm intrigued by this listing of the names of the sons of Haman, and so I looked at it. And I looked at the arrangement in Scripture and at the first letter of each of these names. Because they're listed down, it kind of makes you think of an acronym.

You've seen these things, the song about Mother, and M is for the Many ways she does this, and O is for, you know, where one letter stands for each thing, and when you go all the way down, why, it spells something. We have acrostic psalms where there will be a verse or a section that starts with Aleph, and then there will be a verse or a section that starts with Beit, and they go Aleph, Beit, Gimel, Dalet, Hay, Waw, Zayin, all the way down through the alphabet. Well, so I looked at this to see, well, does it spell anything? Why are these names all organized over on the margin of the text? And I don't know if you're interested in writing this down or not, but you can even see it in the English.

The first three are P-D-A, which is in Hebrew, it's Peh, and then Aleph, and then Aleph. I'm sorry, Peh, and then Dalet, and then Aleph. Then the second three are P-A-A, which is Peh, Aleph, Aleph.

The third three are also P-A-A, Peh, Aleph, Aleph. And the last one starts with the letter W. So we've got, if you break these into three, three-letter Hebrew words, you have Pah-dah, Pah-ah, Pah-ah, and then a W at the end. Well, there is no such word in Hebrew as Pah-dah, P-D-A, in the sense of Peh, Dalet, Aleph.

But there's a curious little quirk in Hebrew called *matres lectiones*, where a vowel sound would be substituted in by the consonant, such as Aleph or Waw, and it would become a part of the word. And the final Aleph on those could just as easily be a Hay, an H. You would say it the same way. Pah-da would be Pah-dah, whether it had an Aleph or an H at the end.

And so, in my mind, it's kind of like a pun. Now, hang with me. I know you're starting to go, oh, gee, Hebrew, Aleph, oh, stop - you're killing me. But let me just finish this, and then we'll go on. If you go to the lexicon and you look at the word Pah-dah, P-D-H.

Now, this is P-D-A in this list. But P-D-H, which sounds exactly the same, so it would be a homonym or a pun on the word. You know what Pah-dah means in Hebrew, P-D-H? It means redeem, ransom. It's the word for redeem or ransom. Then we have two sets of P-A-A, which sounds like Pah-ah. Well, there is no P-A-A in Hebrew, but there's a P-A-H.

And you know what P-A-H means in Hebrew, Pah-ah? It means to cleave, to divide asunder, to cut off, to cleave in pieces, to chop something and chop it off. So in this list, if this pun is correct, if my sort of humorous perception of this is correct, it says "ransom, cut off, cut off." "Ransom, chop, chop."

“Ransom, cleave, cleave.” And those are the first nine sons of Haman. You have to ask yourself, why are these names given? Because even Persian scholars, they've tried to figure out etymologies. What do these words mean? What do the names mean? And it's very difficult. It's kind of obscure. And you look at the meanings and you say, well, so what? And most Hebrew people who look at this wouldn't know what the Persian names meant in any case.

But when they're written down the side this way and you look at the first letter and what it spells going down, “ransom, chop off, chop off,” that means something. And I think it's a possible reason why these names are listed.

And then at the end, you have this odd name that's unlike any of the others. You have to wonder what Haman and his wife were thinking when they looked down and they named these sons. You know, I've heard of families where everybody's name starts with the same letter.

But Haman and Mrs. Haman seemed to have a fondness for names that start with the letter P and names that start with the letter A, because nearly all of the eight of their ten sons, their name starts with either a P or an A. Then you've got Dalphon and you've got the old Vajezatha, the last guy. And his name is just completely indecipherable to me.

I tried looking at these, looking at the number values for the letters, because Aleph is the first letter, it means one in Hebrew. Waw at the end is six. Remember the mark of the beast is 666, waw, waw, waw, or www.

And the letter P or Peh in Hebrew, in post-biblical Hebrew, came to be used for the number 80, 8-0. So I added that up. I added all the letters up and got 255.

That didn't do much for me. It's one short of eight squared or eight cubed, I guess. But I do think that the idea of ransom for the people of God and the idea of being cut off in the double sense for the enemies of the people of God is kind of neat.

So I just give you that free, no charge. You won't find that in a commentary, it's a little too harebrained. But I like it and I'm going to give it to you because I get to do that. I make up the lessons. I can say whatever I want.

And I couldn't think of another single reason why we would have these ten names here. Except that, and this is not unique or original to me, this list very emphatically points out that Haman, although he was killed ten months earlier, his line, his entire offspring—remember, he's a descendant of Agag. There have been all these descendants of Agag coming all the way down to Haman, the son of Hamadatha. But his ten sons would have proliferated. Enemies of the Jews are chopped off. Ended, all ten of them. Now, you have to ask yourself, these guys saw their father heisted up onto this 75-foot-high cross back ten months ago. They heard the decree that came out when Esther petitioned the king.

Mordecai is elevated. They've had ten months. Ten guys for ten months could have done something. Change their mind, become Jews, leave. But they don't. They just hang around hoping one or another may fill their father's shoes, perhaps, or become important personages in the Persian palace. Personages in the Persian palace. Say that a few times.

What's the matter with these guys? Well, I ask myself the same question about the demons who follow Satan. Satan's obviously been defeated. He was crushed. The seed of the woman has crushed his head at the cross. And yet, the demons fight on. They're still opposing us. We wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers.

What's the matter with them? Can they not read Scripture? Can they not figure out that their doom is... Remember Martin Luther in *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*? "For lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." What's the matter with them that they can't figure this out?

Well, look at these guys. Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, and the rest of these guys just hang around. And so on the 13th of Adar, the Jews go kill them. Lay them out. All ten of them. Dead. Well, now look at this in verse 12. The king said to Queen Esther, The Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men in Shushan the citadel. How did he know this? Look at verse 11. On that day, the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king.

Now, you think about it. This could kind of go either way. The king says, Oh, yeah, fine, defend yourselves. And then somebody comes in and says, Well, king, we lost half a thousand Persians. Half a thousand people right here in the capital city got slaughtered by the Jews today. And you think, Well, I wonder if the king's having second thoughts about granting Esther's request.

I wonder if the king's having second thoughts about giving the Jews permission to defend themselves. But he says to Esther, Look, your fellow Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men in Shushan the Citadel and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? If there's 500 dead here, I wonder who knows what's going on in the rest of my 126 satraps, my 126 other provinces besides the capital.

Now, what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. What is your further request? It shall be done. And you get the idea, Well, the king says, Hey, in for a penny, in for a pound.

We got some of them killed. What else do you want? So Esther, never one to be squeamish in the face of danger, or the king who holds her life in his hands, says, If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree. Killed 500 today, let's kill some more tomorrow.

Wow. This is a woman with sand in her craw. With some starch. If it pleases the king, let's do it all again tomorrow according to today's decree and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows. Now, wait a minute. They're already dead.

They've been killed. We've been told that twice, right? The people killed them, gave them all by name. The king says, Hey, 500 people killed and the ten sons of Haman are dead.

And Esther says, Let's do it all again tomorrow and let's take the corpses of Haman's sons and fly them like kites off that 75-foot-high gallows. Hang them all up there. Let them blow in the breeze like flags. Right? What is she thinking? Why does she want to do this? What's the purpose of the request? Intimidation. Demoralization. And it works.

Because the king commands this to be done. The decree is issued in Shushan and they hanged Haman's ten sons, took their corpses and sort of suspended them, probably one above another. Of course, Haman is long gone, right? I don't think much is left of him after ten months. But the ten sons go up there. So, ten months ago, we had one guy. Ten months later, we have ten guys all flying in the breeze on this gallows that was intended to be built for Mordecai.

The Jews who were in Shushan, verse 15, gathered together again on the 14th day of the month of Adar. 14th day remind you of anything? 14th day of Nisan or Abib is Passover, isn't it? Remember? Ransom. Redeem. Padah. They gathered on the 14th day of the month of Adar and killed 300 men at Shushan, but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. They didn't stretch out their hand and take advantage.

But see, there's 500 the first day. There's only 300 the second day. Why? Well, people walk out to get the paper and let in the cat. They look up there and here's ten sons of Haman flying in the breeze. 75 feet high. Visible throughout the whole capital. They say, This is not a good day to be against the Jews. And so, their heart goes out of them. Fear is struck in them.

And only the most militant, only those who are the most hateful and the most angry and the most motivated are going to still come out on that second day with the ten sons of Haman strung up there and try to fight the Jews. So all of the militant, dedicated, incorrigible enemies in the capital city show themselves and get bushwhacked on the 14th. The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies and killed 75,000 of their enemies.

But they did not lay a hand on the plunder either. The king said, We lost 500 guys in the capital city. I wonder what's going on in the rest of the empire. Well, 75,000 when the tallies all come in. But the Jews didn't take any of those people's stuff. Just killed the people who were trying to kill them. Fair fight. Equal weapons on both sides. But there's fear on one side and there's jubilation and trust in God on the other side.

This was on the 13th day of the month of Adar and on the 14th of the month, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. That's in the rest of the empire. Only in the capital city is there an extra day of fighting.

Now, think about this in terms of its foreshadowing of the battle between Satan and the demons and the angels and the people of God and all the rest of that. We've seen it in our studies related to the millennial kingdom. There is the initial defeat of the leader.

Satan was defeated at the cross. He's going to come back and have a brief sway, kind of like the 13th of Adar when the decree that Haman put forth motivates and empowers all of these enemies to show their faces. And that is going to resolve in the 70th week of Daniel, the tribulation period.

All of those enemies are going to be defeated, are going to be annihilated. Blood's going to run as high as the horses' bridles. It's going to take seven months to bury the dead.

Their glowing radioactive bones are going to be marked with stakes so the people don't get near them. Very interesting to see the fate of the enemies of the people of God. And then it seems like everything's okay, but in the capital city, a day later, the day of the Lord, a thousand years later, at the end of the millennial kingdom, just at the capital, there's going to be this big Gog Magog rebellion and the enemies of the people of God are going to surround the camp of the saints.

And in the capital, at that time, fire from heaven is going to come down and consume them. And that sort of corresponds to the 14th day of Adar here where, in the capital city, these primary leader enemies are slain. So, there's an interesting corollary, interesting parallels here in ancient days to what is yet future for us.

Now, verse 18, the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the 13th day as well as on the 14th, and on the 15th of the month, they rested. So, the ones in the outlying regions fighting the minor enemies, they defeat them on the 13th and they're resting on the 14th. People in the capital did two days' worth of battle and rest on the third day.

So, the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwall'd towns celebrate the 14th day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting as a holiday and for sending presents to one another. Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews near and far who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar 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.

So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun as Mordecai had written to them. Because Haman, the son of Hamadatha 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. But when Esther came before the king he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which had been devised against the Jews should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Now, so what? Why do we care? A lot of people were concerned for the ten months after the plot of Haman was hatched and put into effect with that decree and hope for the future was established by the second decree at the instigation of Esther and Mordecai. But there was a lot of uncertainty for those ten months, wasn't there? And then there was a great day of conflict. And that day, which had been designated and marked out as a day of defeat and destruction and despair, instead became a day of feasting and joy and celebration. What the enemies of God's people meant for evil, God worked out for good.

Have you ever had things come into your life that look evil, that look dark and hopeless? Things that look like, well, there's just no good that can possibly come of this. It might be people. It might be circumstances.

What can possibly come from this? This is just trouble with a capital T. Think about those ten sons of Haman. All of them are lined up to take their daddy's place. Had one Haman.

Now you've got ten. It's like the Medusa. Chop off one head and a bunch more grow up in its place. Now you've got ten Hamans ready to come against the Jews. And all ten of them are destroyed. And what do you have? You have ransom. You have redemption. And you have the cutting off doubly. Two days. Two times. In the capital city where the sons of Haman dwell, there's two days of destruction, two days of cutting off of the enemies.

That's what God intends for you and for me. That's one of the great benefits of being a believer. It's one of the great benefits of being a Christian, is that it doesn't matter what life throws at us. It doesn't matter what dark forces and evil people and bad situations throw at us. What looks like trouble is actually meant by God for our good, for our benefit.

And what we thought was going to be a day of dread is going to end up being a holiday, a day of feasting and celebration. Why? Because God works all things together for good to those who love Him.

Now, all of that is off the table. All of that is out of the picture if we don't pay attention to the things of God. If we don't love Him enough to pay attention to His Word and try to think about it and live by it day by day, that benefit is lost to us.

There's not going to be a day of deliverance for us. There's not going to be cursing turned to blessing for us. There's not going to be a day of victory and joy and celebration for us because we've decided not to attend, not to be a part of God's great victory over sin and over evil.

We can exploit that victory over sin and over evil and over death every single day. That's why Jesus went to the cross. Not just so we could not go to the lake of fire, but so that day by day we could have a life of peace, a life that seizes and lays hold of God's goodness by faith and that builds a potential for celebration now and in the ages to come.

It's a great, great opportunity. So many people miss it. So many Christians miss it.

Why? They don't know who the ten sons of Haman were. They don't know what happened that established the Feast of Purim. They haven't been looking at God's Word.

They haven't seen God's grace. They haven't looked at God's power. They haven't watched God in a ten-month span turn the destruction of His people to the victory of His people.

But you and I have seen it, and you and I can learn it and remember it and apply it. It's a pretty simple thing to do. We just have to remember it.

It just has to be meaningful. It just has to be something that we think about and bring before God in our prayers. And if it makes a difference to us, it's going to make a difference to God in our blessing and our opportunity both now and in the kingdom to come.

Well, we'll pick up and finish our study of Esther next week. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for this great record of victory and celebration on the part of Your people because of their faith in You and because of Your great grace and provision. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths in our hearts. Help us to remember them in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.