

The Jews Are Delivered

Esther and Mordecai secure a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves, turning mourning into celebration and establishing the feast of Purim.

Esther 8:1-17 • Esther 9:1-32 • Esther 10:1-3

CHARACTERS: Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus, The Jews, The enemies of the Jews

THEMES: Deliverance, God's providence, Celebration, Reversal, Remembrance

ON THAT DAY, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy. Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had revealed their relationship. The king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

But one problem remained—Haman's decree still stood. Esther fell at the king's feet, weeping, and besought him to reverse the evil plan Haman had devised against the Jews. The king held out the golden scepter to Esther, and she arose and stood before him.

'If it please the king,' she said, 'and if I have found favor in his sight, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces.'

The king explained, 'A decree written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked. But write as you please concerning the Jews, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring.'

The king's scribes were called on the twenty-third day of the third month. Mordecai wrote in King Ahasuerus's name and sealed it with the king's ring. Letters went by swift couriers on horseback to all 127

provinces: the king granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and defend their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate any armed force that might attack them, their little ones, and women, and to plunder their goods. The appointed day was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—the same day Haman had chosen for their destruction.

A copy of the decree was published as law in every province. Mordecai went out from the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple. The city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor. In every province and city where the decree came, there was joy and feasting among the Jews. Many people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the day the king's command and decree were to be executed—the day the enemies of the Jews hoped to overpower them—it was reversed. The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. They assembled in their cities throughout all provinces to attack those who sought their harm. No one could withstand them, for the fear of them fell upon all people. The princes, lieutenants, governors, and the king's officials helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them.

In Shushan, the Jews slew 500 men, including Haman's ten sons, but they laid no hand on the plunder. The king asked Esther, 'What more is your petition?'

She answered, 'Let it be granted to the Jews in Shushan to act tomorrow also according to this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.'

The king commanded it to be done. On the fourteenth day, the Jews in Shushan slew 300 more men. Throughout the provinces, the Jews slew 75,000 of their enemies but took no plunder. On the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews in all provinces, ordaining that they should keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar yearly as days when the Jews got rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned for them from sorrow to joy and from mourning to a holiday. They should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending portions to one another and gifts to the poor.

The Jews undertook to continue what they had begun and what Mordecai had written. For Haman had plotted to destroy them and had cast Pur (that is, the lot) to consume and destroy them. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that Haman's wicked device should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Therefore they called these days Purim, after the name Pur.

Mordecai the Jew was next to King Ahasuerus, great among the Jews and accepted by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed. God's providence had turned certain destruction into glorious deliverance. Though His name appears nowhere in the book, His hand is visible on every page.