

Learning to Trust God's Unseen Hand

A Study of Esther

Esther 9:20-10:3

Lesson #12: Be deliberate and careful in remembering how God is at work in your life.

Introduction: With the dark days of Haman behind them, Esther, Mordai, and the rest of the Jews took necessary steps to remember and celebrate what God had done in saving them from destruction.

Verses 20-32

- Mordecai recorded the events; perhaps in the court annals or in the letters he sent.¹
- In verse 22, “Giving presents of food to one another and gifts” emphasizes community. As a group the Jews form a major character in the story although they have no specific speaking role. It was for their survival that Esther was brought to the court—“for such a time as this” (4:14). They were to celebrate by giving portions of food to each other and by giving gifts to the poor. The responsibility to help the poor is repeated throughout the Bible.²
- Notice the meticulous nature in which the events were recorded.
- Also verse 22 could be considered an allusion to the work of Christ. Psalm 30:11, John 16:20-22, Isaiah 61:1-3

The Feast of Purim

- Purim—the Feast of Lots—was an exilic-era feast celebrating the Jewish deliverance from Haman’s plan to massacre them. The name itself is quite interesting because it could be considered an anecdotal response to the arbitrary choosing of the date of their destruction, yet when the lot is cast into the lap, its decision is still from the Lord. Proverbs 16:33, 19:21.
- Gerleman has suggested that Purim is an exilic equivalent to the Passover. While this is not commonly accepted, Purim did celebrate salvation (Schellekens, “Accession Days and Holidays,” 117).
- Purim was characterized by celebration, not sacrifice. The feast occurred on the 14th and 15th day of the month of Adar (February—March). It was a feast of excess, with the 13th of Adar was a day of fasting. The book of Esther was read in commemoration of Purim—typically on the night before.³

¹ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, electronic ed., vol. 10, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 364.

² Breneman, 364.

³ John T. Swann, “Feasts and Festivals of Israel,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015).

- Expressive of the many reversals that occur throughout the book, Jews during the days of Purim are permitted to wear various costumes that exhibit a role reversal of one nature or another. They dress in the clothes of a Gentile king (to represent Mordecai), in the clothes of the wife of a Gentile king (to represent Esther), and even in the clothes of Haman. Jewish men may wear women's clothes, Jewish women may wear men's clothes.⁴
- During the days of Purim, the text of Esther is read aloud—the scroll being folded to read as a letter (representative of the many letters mentioned in the book) rather than rolled as with a Torah scroll. Furthermore, while that text is being read, the congregation is permitted to make noises of all kinds (frequently with a grager [rattle]), particularly when Haman's name is read so that the sound of that name may be drowned out.⁵

Verses 1-3

- This postscript to the book focuses attention on King Ahasuerus and Mordecai and directs the reader to the book of the official records ("chronicles") of the kings of Media and Persia for further information (cf. 1 Kin. 14:19, 29). For some reason Esther's name is not included in the postscript. Mordecai is esteemed as an ideal Jewish statesman. His importance as a model for the Jews and in the establishment of the Feast of Purim was acknowledged in the apocryphal Book of Maccabees, where Purim is called "the day before Mordecai's day" (2 Macc. 15:36).⁶

I. Do not undervalue the power of journaling.

- A. In at least 13 separate occasions, the text uses words such as "letters, written, recorded, etc..."
- B. In order to remember well, we write. Writing out our walk with God is very important because we have a detail of what God is doing in our lives and the practice of writing helps us to focus on the details.
- C. Journaling also helps to integrate our lives with the scriptures. Every event has a purpose.

II. In proper ways, remember important spiritual anniversaries.

- A. Just as the Jews made efforts to remember the salvation of God through the feast of Purim, so too, we can and should, remember days where God does major works in our lives.

⁴ Barry C. Davis, "Expositions of the Book of Esther," in *Ruth & Esther: God behind the Seen*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 341.

⁵ Davis, 341–342.

⁶ R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Orlando, FL; Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 689.

- B. Dates such as salvation, baptism, and other spiritual events should be remembered appropriately. But do not make them more than what they should be. Cf. Luke 19:9, Galatians 2:14-16, 4:8-11.

III. Use your story to inspire others.

- A. We end with Mordecai being remembered and exalted among his fellow Jews. The last sentence of the book gives his purpose for being remembered...he used it not for him but for the welfare of his people.
- B. As we chronicle God's work in our life, we must not use it for our self alone, but for the welfare of others. We share our story as a testimony to encourage others.