

MENTOR



FOR LIFE

EXPERIENCING GOD

Famed 19th-century missionary, Hudson Taylor said, "Difficulties afford a platform which God can show Himself. Without them we could never know how tender, faithful, and almighty our God is." Taylor took the gospel to inland China. He knew something about struggle. But, he also saw God work.

This Week we finish with the book of *Esther*. Although God's name hasn't been mentioned once, we've seen him at work delivering his people from evil. As we saw back in Zero Week, the Lord laughs at kings and rulers who set themselves against him and his Anointed. Nothing we've encountered was too big for God. As we see today, God had orchestrated all these things so that he could use two humble servants to deliver his people.

ESTHER 9:16, 20–27 (SELECTED), 10:3

¹⁶ Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they laid no hands on the plunder.

²⁰ And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews... ²¹ obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, ²² as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³ So the Jews accepted... what Mordecai had written to them. ²⁴ For Haman the Agagite... the enemy of all the Jews... had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. ²⁵ But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year.

³ For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"All my words fall short, I got nothing new, How could I express, All my gratitude?...And I know it's not much, But I've nothing else fit for a King, Except for a heart singing hallelujah."

Those who have placed faith in Jesus Christ for salvation have been delivered from a great deal more than physical death. We must worship with a heart of gratitude, a key ingredient to the joy God has for us in this life. Scan the QR code to sing and express your thanks to God.



DISCUSSION

What would you say to someone who claims that the God of the Old Testament is too violent?

1. What descriptions are used to indicate the Jews acted with restraint against their enemies? (16)

2. What is Purim, why did it start, and how long will it continue? (26-27)

3. What role did Mordecai end up with and how was he regarded? (10:3)

4. What benefits do celebrations like Purim offer?

5. What reminders and traditions do you celebrate?

6. How do you keep God's Word and his activity at the center of those celebrations?

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

How are you supposed to treat your enemies? Although there are some *lessons* in our passage, there not many *examples* to follow. If you need help or a listening ear, talk to your Coach!

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STUDY NOTES

FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

On October 7, 2023, militant Hamas terrorists executed a coordinated attack against Israel's civilian population, including women and children. "*From the river to the sea*" is a rally cry for Palestinians and their supporters. It is not a cry for equality—it's a cry for extinction.

Immediately after, Israel struck back. Whereas Hamas primarily targeted unarmed, civilians, Israel targeted militants and their headquarters. They publicly announced their intentions, allowing civilians the opportunity to escape. Hamas not only killed women and children, but they even beheaded dozens of babies.

Neither side is completely innocent in this long and complex conflict. However, it has long been the case that if Hamas stopped fighting, there would be *no fighting*. If Israel stopped fighting, there would be *no Israel*.

The threat of Israel's extinction has occurred many times. The events in *Esther* are just one example. Their continued existence is evidence that God is still active in the world. That deliverance is something to celebrate.

Last Week, we discussed Mordecai's edict with the king's authority. Mordecai's decree allowed for a similarly brutal defense against Haman's evil order—to kill the *attacker*, their *family*, and take their *possessions*.

Perhaps Mordecai intended the edict to make any would-be attackers think twice, and perhaps it did. However, ***the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them.*** The author notes an incredible detail, ***but they laid no hands on the plunder.***

The Jews didn't plunder the spoils of victory. Perhaps this restraint came from the orders given to Israel as they took the Promised Land forbidding them from looting conquered armies. Regardless, they were both righteous and just in their defense, never going as far as vengeance.

MENTEES MUST FAITHFULLY EXECUTE PLANS

Mordecai recorded the defeat of Israel's enemies ***and sent letters to all the Jews.*** Had the Jews not executed Mordecai's plan, the nation would cease to exist. However, their faithfulness to the task generated a new plan to follow. In Mordecai's new communication, he obligated ***them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, as the days on which***

the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

The Jews accepted the new yearly holiday as a day of remembrance. Haman ***had cast Pur*** (also known as ***lots***) ***to crush and destroy*** the Jews. That plan turned ***on his own head***. In recognition of Haman's casting of Pur, this yearly celebration would be ***called Purim.***

Having received the plans, ***the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.***

The book of *Esther* ends in stark contrast to how it began. The book ends with the poor, orphan, foreign, woman as royalty—able to persuade the king. And her older cousin, Mordecai, who raised her as his own (also a foreigner), ***second in rank to King Ahasuerus.*** Instead of extinction, Mordecai now had the power and ***sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.***

THE FAITHFUL CAN BRING JOY

In the Old Testament, Israel had to defend itself and its land physically. New Testament believers fight for a spiritual kingdom with spiritual weapons of war (see the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:11–17).

Spiritual warfare is real and deserves our attention, not our fear. God gave believers the Holy Spirit to help us in our weakness (Romans 8:26). He's this same Holy Spirit, that produces fruit in our lives as we walk in obedience to Christ—Galatians 5:22–23 says, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”***

We fight with faithfulness and obedience. Our fighting produces spiritual fruit, not bloodshed. If you examine the Fruit of the Spirit, it can be summed up in one word, “satisfaction.” The world longs to experience that satisfaction, seeking it through relationships, substances, achievement and a lot of other means, none of which lasts. The only thing that lasts is that which the Lord does—like using two humble nobodies to save their people and recording their story in his eternal Word.