

## **Esther Nine and Ten: Purim & Providence**

It's hard to believe we are coming to a close. What a story. A narrative with pure elements that have left many of us astonished that a drama such as this took place on the pages of our Bibles. Eugene Peterson writes,

Story doesn't just tell us something and leave it there, it invites our participation. A good storyteller gathers us into the story. We feel the emotions, get caught up in the drama, identify with the characters...They bring us into the spacious world in which God creates and saves and blesses...they offer us a place in the story, invite us into the large story that takes place under the broad skies of God's purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Our hearts have been captured and faith strengthened by what we have seen recorded in the power packed book of Esther. We have been brought into this narrative and are leaving it as different women.

Chapter Nine and Ten of Esther begin with a statement in verse one that is the perfect summary of how this book ends, "the tables were turned." Indeed they were, Esther walks in a new and confident, royal authority demanding decrees be done and no loose end is left untied. Mordecai is praised and honored by the King and is feared in the entire nation. The Jews defend themselves and take the victory by a landslide. All the while, beneath the surface of this script, we the readers know who the real hero is, our God. Only God could do what we have seen done in this book, the impossible.

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson, Eugene. Esther: Beth Moore 220.

One Jewish Rabbi wrote of the holocaust something that is a tremendous parallel to the ending of this attempted annihilation in Susa, "Our deliverer did indeed come. He just came a little later than we expected. Had our enemy had his way, none of us would have survived. Yet here we are." <sup>2</sup> God came in atomic power and deliverance with a timeless message of providence for the Jews in Susa. If you have been a part of this study, the enemy of your soul has been pushed back, here you are, and make no mistake, you have arrived for such a time as this. Thank you for your diligence. May God bless you with the courage, humility, and wisdom of Esther every day of your life and may you rise up and walk in the royal authority you have been given as a bride of Christ.

### **Scripture Reading: NIV**

<sup>1</sup> On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. <sup>2</sup> The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those determined to destroy them. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. <sup>3</sup> And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. <sup>4</sup> Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful. <sup>5</sup> The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. <sup>6</sup> In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and

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<sup>2</sup> Moore, Beth. Esther: It's Tough Being a Woman. 221.

destroyed five hundred men.<sup>7</sup> They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,<sup>8</sup> Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,<sup>9</sup> Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha,<sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>11</sup> The number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day.<sup>12</sup> The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted."<sup>13</sup> "If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be impaled on poles."<sup>14</sup> So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman.<sup>15</sup> The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>17</sup> This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.<sup>18</sup> The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.<sup>19</sup> That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.<sup>20</sup> Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far,<sup>21</sup> to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar<sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews got relief from

their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.<sup>23</sup> So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them.<sup>24</sup> For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur* (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction.<sup>25</sup> But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be impaled on poles.<sup>26</sup> (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them,<sup>27</sup> the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed.<sup>28</sup> These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.<sup>29</sup> So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim.<sup>30</sup> And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes' kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance—<sup>31</sup> to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation.<sup>32</sup> Esther's

decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.

### **Esther 10**

<sup>1</sup> King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. <sup>2</sup> And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? <sup>3</sup> Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.

### **Prayer:**

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the journey you have taken us on in the book of Esther. Thank you for all the things You have revealed to us about your sovereign power and glory and your heart for us. May we leave this study never forgetting the truths we learned about You and about this woman of faith Esther. Help us to walk in divine humility, wisdom, honor, and authority all the days of our lives. Forgive us for the moments in our lives we have acted in our flesh and have tried to take control. We relinquish control of our lives and hand it to You. We trust You, we love You. Fill us with divine purpose and destiny. May we never settle for less than Your perfect plan for our lives. Make us women of destiny. May we leave a legacy of deliverance for the lost and dying world around us and may we rescue many through a heart

abandoned to You. To You belongs all the glory, honor, praise. Amen.

### **Partner Assignment:**

This week you will be meeting with a girl from your small group to memorize scripture, re-read the text for this week, and continue to fill in your Purim Chart. Please use this time to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as sisters.

1. Memory Verse: Psalm 18:24-26
2. Please re-read Esther Chapter Nine and Ten
3. Fill out *Purim* Chart together. Keep all your *Purim* charts together so you can look through and see the progression of this incredible book and God's providence in and through each chapter.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sample Discussion Questions**

### **Pre-Article Questions:**

1. Do you think the saying's true, "All's well that ends well?" Please explain.
2. In what ways have your family's manner of celebrating the holidays brought you to a place of remembrance of the holiday's original intention or veered you away from the holiday's original intention?

### **Text Questions:**

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<sup>3</sup> Moore, 225.

1. What are a few reasons Esther may have asked for a second day to avenge their enemies?
2. Read Esther 9:16-19, why did the Jews in Susa celebrate and have their day of feasting on a different day than the Jews outside the citadel?
3. In what ways were the “tables turned” for the Jews in Chapter nine? Esther 9:22
4. If you could surmise the book of Esther in one sentence what would you say?
5. What are the last things we read about Esther and Mordecai in these chapters?

#### Application Questions:

1. “Dr. Levenson says the key is not that the Jews destroyed the enemy but that they assumed a new status of honor and dominion.”<sup>4</sup> The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. How have you grown in your God-given power and authority in Christ as a daughter of the King in the past nine weeks?
2. Three times in Chapter nine we read that the Jews refused to plunder the property of their enemies even though the edict permitted them to. This practice originated with Abraham. Read Genesis 14:17-23, why wouldn’t he receive from the king of Sodom? Compare with the most probable reason why the Jews didn’t plunder their enemies property in Susa.
3. Read Isaiah 28:5-6, do you see any connection to these scriptures and our Esther narrative? (A divine work through ordinary means, he is the spirit of Justice in Esther. Awesome). How has God, “The Spirit of Justice” brought justice in your life or the life of your

loved ones through ordinary people, places, and things?

4. “The Jews did not commemorate the day of their victorious battle, but the day on which they rested from their enemies.”<sup>5</sup> The Jews did not make an anniversary of their war but of their rest. Do you have a day set aside where you rest and focus on the Lord? If so, how does this day make a difference in your week? If not, what are some practical steps that can be taken to have a “Sabbath?”
5. What have you learned about God’s providence through the book of Esther? What are the three things you are going to never forget and take away from this study that will encourage your heart forever?

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<sup>4</sup>Levingson: Moore, Beth. 202

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<sup>5</sup> Berlin, Adele. Moore Beth. 206