

PURIM

Christians and Purim

What is Purim? As Christians, we can learn a lot about God's plan of redemption by becoming familiar with the observance of Purim. Purim is a Jewish holiday that was initiated by and commemorates the events recorded in the book of Esther. This holiday is in the final month of the Hebrew calendar. In Jewish communities, Purim celebrations may resemble Halloween but that is not at all the case; the focus is not on death and satan, rather the focus is on the hidden nature of the miracles of Purim. This is the inspiration for the costumes worn on



the holiday as people dress up and attend a synagogue to hear the reading of the account of Esther that is found in the Bible. Just as God is hidden in the Book of Esther, the people who anticipate God's work of redemption in the end-times hide themselves in costumes to emphasize how He has chosen to work during these times. We are not hidden in costumes but we are hidden in our Savior. *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. - Col 3:3*

"The story of Purim is told in the Biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem. King Ahasuerus loved Esther more than his other women and made Esther queen, but the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, because Mordecai told her not to reveal her identity.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech that is all too familiar to Jews, Haman told the king, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from those of every other people's, and they do not observe the king's laws; therefore it is not befitting the king to tolerate them." Esther 3:8. The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went into the king. He

welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman and his ten sons were hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai." Quoted from *Judaism 101* © Copyright 5756-5771 (1995-2011), Tracey R Rich

God Hides Himself

Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior! – Isaiah 45:15 –

At times, it would appear that God is unseen in our circumstances, however, the account of the Israelites being delivered from a decree of annihilation in the book of Esther would show us this "hidden" God at the height of His mercies!

The Purim celebration for the Jewish people is a celebration of God's deliverance over the Israelites. It's important to note that although God was sought out by Esther and He answered, His answer required the Jewish people to do something; fight in order to protect themselves. Because the king's edict was irreversible the only thing that could be done to resolve this death sentence was to give the Jews permission to fight. In the book of Esther 8 we see Esther boldly going to the king's throne room to ask him to help her people. She interceded for the people both in prayer and fasting as well as facing the king, knowing she may die if he didn't receive her. King Ahasuerus responds with unforeseen favor.

⁷Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he [tried to] lay his hand on the Jews. ⁸"You yourselves write [a decree] concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal [it] with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke." – Est 8:7-8 NKJV –

The King's Favor

God, through King Ahasuerus, answered with favor and allowed the enemy of His children to be caught up in the very snare he (Haman) had for them. He then gave the same power to Esther to make a decree just as Haman had, only this one would give the people the authority to fight, thereby bringing a form of deliverance!

⁹So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which [is] the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third [day]; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces [in all], to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. ¹⁰And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed [it] with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback,

riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds. ¹¹By these letters the king permitted the Jews who [were] in every city to gather together and protect their lives--to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, [both] little children and women, and to plunder their possessions. ¹²on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which [is] the month of Adar. – Est 8:9-12 NKJV –

Sealed with the Holy Spirit

We are sealed with the King's signet ring, the Holy Spirit. (See 2Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). When Jesus took the cross on our behalf we became a royal priesthood and inducted into the army of God. As such we are hidden in Christ with power, authority and destiny to release God's Kingdom purposes in the earth. To be inducted means to be formally installed or put into a position of office. However, we have an enemy, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* - John 10:10 Just as the king gave Esther all authority by allowing her to make a decree sealed with his signet ring, allowing the people to fight; so we have been given all authority to fight the enemy of our souls through the Blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit! *Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. Luke 9:1*

Faith or Circumstances

Queen Esther could have got caught up in her circumstances and not gone forth on behalf of the people but instead she set her face like flint towards the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and declared, *"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"* - Est 4:16 NKJV

We can learn much from Queen Esther by not looking at the things we see but looking with faith towards the hidden God; *"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."* 2 Corinthians 4:18

The things we can see with the natural eye are temporary but the things in the spirit are eternal. Though we often can't see God's ways in a situation because they are often hidden, He is always present. At times when it appears we can't see, hear, or sense the presence of God in a situation and we find ourselves crying out *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out!* – Rom 11:33 But He tells us that if we will seek Him we will find Him. Esther sought the Lord on behalf of the Jewish people and deliverance came.

All too often we quote Jeremiah 29:11 as a comfort verse, and it is, however, let's look at the rest of it.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find [Me], when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. – Jer 29:11-14

It is in the times of deepest despair that we find ourselves crying out, praying to God for deliverance and it is these times that He promises to listen. He tells us that if we rend our hearts and not only our garments, He will hear us. This means we search for Him in the secret places and not just as an outward appearance. When we do this, He will be found and will bring us out of captivity!

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