

Purim: Truth or Coincidence
Esther 9:17-32

INTRO: Does the feast of Purim celebrate a mere coincidence in the history of the Jews or does it commemorate the truth of God's Sovereignty?

Is there room in a Biblical world view for the "pagan" ideas of coincidence, accident, chance, or luck? No there is not!

The very word Purim comes from the word "pur" or "lot"—a kin to the roll of the dice. The Purim holiday gets its name from the fact that Haman cast lots to determine when the Jews should be destroyed. Haman found out that there is no good time to hate the people whom God loves.

So many people today believe as Haman did. They believe that life is determined by luck, by chance, or by the power of the human will. Just as God was in control in Esther's day, He is in control now and will be forever. Proverbs 16:33 tells us that you can cast the dice, live by chance, but God will work out His divine plan in spite of us.

Purim is a time of celebration, a time of victory and praise.

I. VSS 17-28, THE COMMAND TO CELEBRATE PURIM

A. Vss 17-22, The characteristics of the celebration of Purim.

1. Vss 17-18, Purim is a time of resting, feasting, and being glad. In other words, a holiday!
2. Vs 19, This verse re-emphasizes what we have learned in vss 17-18, and also notes that Purim is a time of generosity, a time of sending gifts.
3. There are several lessons that we need to learn from these verses:
 - a. All that is said in vss 17-19 tells us that victory has been won.
 - b. The Christian who lives by the Spirit's control experiences the fruits of the spiritual victory. This being has the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26). Without the fruit of the Spirit we will become bitter (Eph 4:30-31).
 - 1- The Jews experience these joys because Haman, a picture of the flesh, had been put to death.
 - 2- You will never experience spiritual victory until the flesh is put to death and the Spirit reigns as pictured by Mordecai sitting in the Prime

minister's seat.

3- The book of Esther draws a sharp contrast between life in the flesh and life in the Spirit. When Haman, a picture of the flesh reigned, there was confusion, hatred, envy, weeping, dejection, and despair. When Mordecai, a picture of the Spirit, sat upon the Prime Minister's seat, there was rest, gladness, joy, peace, feasting, and generosity.

4- There is a real and vast difference between happy feelings and victory. Ray Stedman said: "Victory does not mean freedom from weariness, sickness, sorrow, heartache, pressure, defeat, or danger in the Christian's experience. Rather, in the midst of these things we shall, at the same time, experience an inner quietness of joy, of gladness, of peace and rest. It is an experience going on right at the same time that outward circumstances are troubling and making it difficult" (Message of Esther 2).

B. Vss 23-25, These verses are a recognition of victory. To live victoriously, the child of God must recognize, remember and rehearse the victory.

1. Recognize the victory. In this we recognize the Sovereignty of God in the life of each of the characters in the book of Esther. God arranged it all for the good of His people:

- a. God arranged for the noble Queen Vashti to lose her place.
- b. God arranged for a competition to replace Queen Vashti.
- c. God arranged for Esther to enter the competition.
- d. God arranged special favor for Esther among the other women.
- e. God arranged for Mordecai to have access to both Esther and the affairs of the kingdom.
- f. God arranged the lot that was cast to give 11 months warning before the evil event (Es 3:12-13).
- g. God arranged that the decree command that the Jews be killed by private hands, instead of by army of Persia— which would have been much more difficult to

- stop.
 - h. God arranged that Haman restrain his anger and not kill Mordecai immediately (Es 5:10).
 - i. God arranged for Esther to delay her request; first asking for a banquet with the king and then another banquet.
 - j. God arranged for Haman's anger to come to a peak on one particular day.
 - k. God arranged for Ahasuerus to have a sleepless night.
 - l. God arranged for Ahasuerus to pick up a certain book in his sleepless night.
 - m. God arranged for Ahasuerus to read the passage about Mordecai in the particular book.
 - 2. Remember the victory. Purim is a remembrance. Purim does not bring victory; it is a remembrance of what God has done for the Jews. The Lord's Supper does not save; it does not bring victory; it is a remembrance of the death of Christ who is our victory. Baptism does not save; it reminds us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
 - 3. We need to rehearse the victory. We need to tell others about victory in Christ. The Jews still celebrate Purim, next year (2008), they will do so on March 21. They rehearse the events of the book of Esther in this celebration. When the name Haman is read, the congregation hisses, stamp their feet, and rattles noisemakers saying "Cursed be Haman." When the name of Mordecai is read, the congregation applauds and praises saying, "Blessed be Mordecai." As Christians, we need to tell the world about Christ. We need to sing praises to His name and shout His praises.
- C. Vss 26-28, Purim is to be a perpetual celebration. The Jews have a tradition that says that Purim will be the only feast celebrated after Messiah comes. Passover and all the other feasts will cease; but not Purim.
 - 1. We are to continuously celebrate what Christ has done for us on the cross and through the resurrection.
 - 2. "This reflects the truth that to walk in the Spirit is normal for both time and eternity. We must teach it to our descendants as well, that our children may see what it means to walk in

victory over resentment, jealousy, impatience, envy, lust, self-love, self-seeking, pride, self-pity, and all other experiences of the self-life” (Stedman 4).

- II. VSS 29-32, CONFIRMATION OF THE COMMAND BY QUEEN ESTHER
 - A. The confirmation of Esther means that there is to be a commitment by the people of God. A commitment to remember the way that God delivered His people. Every generation was to hear the good news of deliverance.
 - B. As Christians, we need to commit ourselves to a life of faithfulness to our precious Savior (Rm 12:1-2).

CONCLUSION: Victory is ours in Christ. Let us recognize the victory; remember it; and rehearse it.

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