

# Triumph

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Tonight we'll go ahead and pick up where we were four weeks ago in Esther.

And so they had to do something to try to counteract it to keep the Jews from being annihilated. And for some review, look at verses 3 through 6 of chapter 8.

They say, Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king, and she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamedatha, for which he wrote to destroy the Jews, who are all in the provinces of the king.

For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people, or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred? If you'll remember, the king granted Mordecai and Esther permission to issue another decree to counteract the one that Haman wrote.

[ 1 : 37 ] And verses 10 through 12 of chapter 8 summarize what Mordecai wrote in the second decree. They say, And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring.

Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers, riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods, on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

So tonight's verses fast forward to the day where the two competing decrees take effect. And we'll again see God preserving the Jews throughout this. This lesson will cover the first sixteen verses of chapter 9, so we'll stop in the middle of chapter 9.

But let's go ahead and read verses 1 through 16 of chapter 9 now. They say, Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, the reverse occurred.

The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm.

[ 3 : 09 ] And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples. All the officials of the provinces and the satraps and the governors and the royal agents also helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them.

For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful. The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them.

In Susa, the citadel itself, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, and also Parshandatha and Dalphin and Espathah and Parathah and Adalia and Erititha and Parshmotha and Arasai and Aradai and Vizitha, the ten sons of Haman, the sons of Hamanathah, the enemy of the Jews.

But they laid no hand on the plunder. That very day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was reported to the king, and the king said to Queen Esther, In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men, and also the ten sons of Haman.

What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your wish? It shall be granted to you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled. And Esther said, If it pleased the king,

let the Jews who were in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict, and let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows.

[ 4 : 38 ] So the king commanded this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they killed three hundred men in Susa, but they laid no hands on the plunder.

Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got reliefs from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them, but they laid no hands on the plunder.

All throughout scripture, we see that the teaching of those who try to destroy the Jews is that they will have a warning about what will happen to themselves. And that warning is, those who plunder you, meaning the Jews, shall be plundered, and all who pray on you, I will make a prey.

And that comes from Jeremiah 30, 16. So the day of the intended massacre had finally dawned, and it had been identified by Lot many months earlier.

Now though, the tables have been turned, and the people are about to learn a very important lesson. Because the Jews are going to triumph over their enemies in a complete reversal of circumstances.

[ 5 : 50 ] And as we look at that reversal of circumstances tonight, we'll see that reversal in four different ways. In the first section of the lesson, we see the reversal described.

So the reversal described is the first thing for your handout. And that reversal is described in verses 1 through 4. So listen to just verses 1 through 4 again.

They say, Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, the reverse occurred.

The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples.

All the officials of the provinces, and the satraps, and the governors, and the royal agents also helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful.

[ 7 : 02 ] You can see there that the conflicting edicts of Haman and Mordecai were against and in favor of God's people, and they came into play at the same time, raising the question of which edict would win the day.

The writer, though, doesn't leave us in suspense for very long. He tells us at the very outset how the day turned out. Those who had hoped to dominate and destroy the Jews were themselves destroyed.

We see that suspense had been deliberately eliminated so that the writer can highlight the main point of the chapter, and that point is that a reversal has been brought out in the fortune of God's people.

And like I said, we'll see how this reversal has been brought about. We can see there that there's quite a bit of massacre and bloodshed described in these verses and the other verses we'll study tonight.

And massacre and bloodshed are abuses about which Christians can never be happy. We need to remember, though, that we live in a harsh and sinful world where only the well-timed exercise of judgment places a restraint upon the escalation of sin.

[ 8 : 09 ] The Jews didn't initiate the hostility, and few, if any of them, had chosen to live in the Persian Empire. So if we find ourselves inclined to condemn the Jews for the slaughter of their known enemies, we should remember the complete destruction and annihilation with which they themselves had been threatened.

Even after the deliverance that Esther had been instrumental in bringing about, their lives were not all safe because Haman's associates and family remained alive.

So the Jews were acting in self-defense. They were not the aggressors here. And for proof that the Jews were acting in self-defense, we only need to look at the first sentence of verse 2.

And that sentence says again, the Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. So their aggression was focused only on

the people who tried to attack them.

And that's clear because it says they went to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And we see from verse 3 that the government officials sided with the Jews.

[ 9 : 17 ] It says all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the king's administrators helped the Jews. And they helped the Jews because the fame of Mordecai and his reputation had spread rapidly throughout the empire.

So how different is Mordecai's situation at this point than it was just a few months before? A few months before, he was in sackcloth and ashes because he was going to be killed with all the rest of the Jews.

And then when he refused to bow down to Haman, he was going to be killed even before the rest of the Jews were killed. But now he's the second most powerful man in the empire, replacing Haman himself.

So Mordecai's personal reversal of fortune mirrors that of the Jewish people. So who would have thought when we first saw Mordecai refuse to bow down to Haman that he would one day take the place of Haman?

And verse 4 reminds us just how influential Mordecai has become. It says, For Mordecai was great in the king's house and his fame spread throughout all the provinces.

[ 10 : 21 ] For the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful. It's a little interesting, isn't it? Mordecai now has everything that Haman wanted. Everybody knew who Mordecai was throughout all the provinces.

So this brings us to the second section of our study tonight. And in verses 5 through 10, we see the reversal demonstrated. So the reversal demonstrated is what comes next.

Listen to verses 5 through 10 to see how it was demonstrated. They say, You'll notice I skipped the name of Haman's son there.

If you want to catch those names again, you can go back and listen to the recording later on. But we see, even though my reading of the verses wasn't comprehensive, the victory itself was comprehensive.

Mordecai's position ensured the success of his edict rather than the success of the decree from the disgraced and deposed Haman. So these verses highlight two important differences between the Jews and the people who sought to destroy them.

[ 11 : 44 ] It was men who died. There doesn't seem to have been a slaughter of women and children. And this contrast with what Haman wanted to do and what he wanted to unleash on the Jews.

Because if you remember, Haman's edict also targeted women and children. And even Mordecai's edict gave the Jews the right to attack the women and children. However, only men seem to have been the object of the defense.

And so that's the first and probably most important difference between the Jews and the people who sought to destroy them. The second difference comes at the end of verse 10.

That verse says, they laid no hand on the plunder. And we'll see that fact emphasized two more times tonight as we go through the rest of the verses. Of course, that differs from Haman because Haman had planned to confiscate the plunder from the Jews.

The Jews, though, were careful not to use material gain as a reason for their action. They simply defended their right to live. The author may also have had in mind the incident recorded in 1 Samuel 15, verses 17-23.

[ 12 : 50 ] If you remember that from our studies in 1 Samuel, that's where Saul disobeyed God by taking plunder from the Amalekites. And this time, the Jews were careful not to make the same mistake that King Saul did.

Something else stands out about these verses. Notice how much emphasis is placed upon the deaths of Haman's ten sons. The ten sons of Haman clearly tried to use the day to avenge the death of their father and reverse their own impoverishment because, remember, they had gone from being very rich to being very poor because Esther and Mordecai now controlled all of Haman's riches.

And we see even today that the patterns of reprisal and vengeance are deeply ingrained in the cultures of the Middle East. So survival of even one of these ten sons might have meant trouble for the next generation of Jewish people.

And by listing each of the vanquished sons of their mortal enemy, the Jews celebrated how complete the victory really was. Before we leave these verses, though, consider Haman's own reversal of fortune.

He had no seed left to carry on his unholy war against the seed of the Jews. And with the death of his sons, the loss of his position, and the confiscation of his estate in the previous chapter, all of the things that Haman boasted about in Esther chapter 5 are now gone along with his own life.

[14:16] So in both Haman and Mordecai, we see another illustration of a principle that runs throughout the Bible. And listen to what James 4.6 says for a reminder.

The end of James 4.6 says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And we see that by looking at what happened to Haman and Mordecai.

So we've seen the reversal described and the reversal demonstrated. In the third section of the lesson, we see the reversal discussed. The reversal discussed is what we'll talk about next.

And the discussion itself is between the king and queen. Here are verses 11 through 14. They say, That very day, the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was reported to the king.

And the king said to Queen Esther, In Susa the citadel, the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men and also the 10 sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces?

[15:21] Now what is your wish? It shall be granted to you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled. And Esther said, If it please the king, let the Jews who are in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict.

And let the 10 sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows. So the king commanded this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa and the 10 sons of Haman were hanged. To keep in mind, they were already dead here, but they were hanged after they were dead to be displayed for the people. So when the information about the scale of the slaughter in the capital came to the king, he seemed more impressed than perturbed by the news. And the king was so impressed that he offered unsolicited to give Esther whatever she wanted.

He said whatever she wanted would be given to her and what she wanted was more time for pressing the destruction of those who'd organized themselves against the people of God. She requested one more day for the Jews to carry out the edict and for the sons of Haman to receive dishonor as well as death.

The display of the bodies of Haman's son after their executions was also a warning to other enemies of the Jews. Those enemies needed to have terror struck into their minds and hearts to deter their animosity against the Jews.

[16:40] I would think that would probably be pretty effective when you not only kill them but you hang them up so that the whole town can see what you did to them. But those who deny the necessity for the drastic examples of judgment upon unrighteous fail to really understand the harsh realities of life in a world that's in rebellion against God.

The retribution was definitely harsh but it was also just. And because of the hardness of men and women's hearts, severe acts of judgment are sometimes inevitable in human history.

We have one more section to cover in the lesson tonight. In addition to being described, demonstrated, and discussed, the reversal was also documented.

And we see that reversal documented in verses 15 and 16. They say, the Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the 14th day of the month of Adar and they killed 300 men in Susa but they laid no hands on the plunder.

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.

[17:57] In these verses, the writer clearly wants to demonstrate what we touched on earlier. Do you see what he repeats throughout those two verses? The Jews laid no hands on the plunder.

And think about the situation the Jews were in. Having that strength of will could not have been very easy. Think about the temptation to get something for nothing and in fact, they were even authorized to take the plunder.

The Jews might have argued that if they didn't take the plunder for themselves, others would but they still didn't succumb to that temptation. Survival and not plunder was what they were fighting for and by their refusal to gather booty, they gave witness to the God whom they served.

They showed by their behavior God's justice and holiness. If they had taken their plunder, other people could have suggested that the reason why the Jews slaughtered their enemies was just to gain their possessions but when they left the plunder alone, such criticism was impossible. We talked about how back in 1 Samuel, the Jews' ancestors in the time of Saul had disobeyed God's order to not take the plunder and those Jews' ancestors made a mistake when they failed to obey God but now this generation wisely refrained from plunder when they had every reason and even the right to take their enemies' possessions.

[ 19 : 19 ] And this different behavior is yet another reversal in the story because obviously the Jews had learned something from their history. Thinking about what the Jews have learned is one thing though.

Let's consider what we can learn from these verses. And the first thing we see is that God is faithful to His promises. So God is faithful to His promises.

At the beginning of the lesson, we alluded to how tonight's passage would demonstrate the words of Jeremiah 30, 16. And in that verse, God promised Israel, those who plunder you shall be plundered and all who pray on you I will make a pray.

Because God has been faithful to His promises in the past, what does that mean about His promises in the future? They will come about. You are correct.

They will come about. We can be confident that what God says He will do, He will do. And we have examples all throughout the Old and New Testament that prove that. And tonight is just another example of that.

[ 20 : 25 ] The second thing we can learn from this passage is that we see a proper perspective on material possessions. So we see a proper perspective on material possessions.

We've already hit on it some, but three times in these verses, the writer pointed out that the Jews never laid hands on the plunder even though they had the lawful right to do it.

And by this careful avoidance of greed, the Jews showed that their principal joy and cause for celebration was God's deliverance. We need to remember that possessions are a gift from God and none of us would find life easy if we were without many of our possessions.

But possessions can also constitute a considerable snare. They can become a major preoccupation and they can become the root of covetousness which is idolatry actually.

And if that happens, they can choke out the effectiveness of God's word in our lives. In Matthew 6.33, Jesus said that seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

[ 21 : 30 ] And we see that illustrated in tonight's passage as well. The Jews were doing what God had commanded them to do. They had every right to take the plunder and yet they were still joyful by just obeying God.

So when you think about possessions, the key factor is whether we deliberately aim at adding to our possessions or whether we allow God to add possessions to us. And if we make the pursuit of possessions our goal, those possessions are likely to become too important and dangerous.

But if we put the kingdom of God first and we put doing what is right first, then he will add to us all that we need and often he will add far more than that. If that happens, then our possessions will be a blessing and not a snare.

So where our treasure is, there our hearts will be too. And if our hearts are genuinely with the Lord, then our treasures will be in heaven where he is. So that's why we can say we see a proper perspective on material possessions.

The third thing we see is a foreshadowing of God's judgment and mercy. So again, we see a foreshadowing of God's judgment and mercy.

[ 22 : 42 ] The judgment part is easy to see. After all, the Jews killed more than twice the population of Bartlesville. Mercy, however, is also evident even though we have to look a little bit to see it.

But as dreadful as those days must have been, they were not turned into a bloodbath because the empire-wide total of 75,000 dead needs to be seen in the light of the vastness of the king's domain. That was the largest empire in the world at the time. So even though 75,000 is a big number, especially if you're one of those 75,000, when you look at the whole empire, it's a fairly small number.

But what made the difference between whether people lived or died that day? Have you stopped to think about that? The difference was whether or not they associated themselves with the people of

God.

And the same thing can be said about the final judgment day to come. No doubt, some of the non-Jews who supported the Jews out of fear of Mordecai originally had planned to side with Haman and take some of the plunder for themselves.

[ 23 : 51 ] But they were given the opportunity to change their ways. And that's a picture of how unrepentant sinners alive today still have the opportunity to change their ways.

So once again, what made the difference between judgment or mercy is whether or not you associate yourself with the people of God. The fourth thing we see is we see the need for a much greater deliverer.

So we see the need for a much greater deliverer. through God's providence, Mordecai and Esther engineered a very impressive victory for God's people.

But that victory, even though it was great, was still temporary and incomplete. The Jews have received rest from their enemies all around, but there's really one enemy that's still there.

And when you think about it, he doesn't seem like an enemy right now, but that enemy really was King Ahasuerus himself. Even though he's tried to distance himself from it, it was his callous indifference that enabled Haman's edict to be signed into law in the first place because he believed it was Haman's.

[ 24 : 59 ] He believed Haman's statement that it was in his best interest not to allow the Jews to live. So Haman received his just desserts and God the great king intervened to give the people rest that King Ahasuerus would have denied them.

But King Ahasuerus remained untouched. He was still in charge and he was still exercising in power and might in his own self-interest. If you think about the people alive at that time, the present fate of God's people rested on Mordecai and it was good news for God's people that now Mordecai was second in rank to King Ahasuerus and he was able to seek good for his people and speak peace to all of his seed because the position once filled by the enemy of the Jews was now occupied by one of their own.

That was good news but it was not the best news because they would only truly have rest from their enemies all around if somebody permanent was there to protect them. When they finally have that rest, the king will surely no longer be named Ahasuerus but he will be a king who embodies the virtues found in Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 is a coronation psalm and it's dedicated to the prosperity of Solomon at the beginning of his reign and no New Testament writer applies any of this psalm to Christ but still the Davidic kings and the Messiah's rule occasionally merge into each other.

So to get a feel for Psalm 72 here are just the first seven verses and from them we can see how the writer describes the perfect king. He says, Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son.

[ 26 : 39 ] May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.

May they fear you while the sun endures and as long as the moon throughout all generations. May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

In his days may the righteous flourish and peace abound, till the moon be no more. Even though they're not talking about the Messiah there, doesn't that sound like what conditions will be like when the Messiah comes?

True rest will come when the one who seeks good and speaks peace is not second in rank to anyone but himself reigns as the true king. And the text shows us that as great the reversal of the book of Esther is, it's not yet the great reversal of full redemption.

It was a great deliverance to be sure but any deliverance that rests upon the influence of a single individual who will inevitably grow old and die is only at best partial and temporary because the empire itself had not been radically transformed.

[ 27 : 56 ] We still need a greater reversal yet, one which results in the coming of the true king, the prince of peace whose reign will never end. So putting the four learnings from this passage together, we can summarize the passage like this.

The events celebrated by Esther's generation and their descendants provided a foreshadowing within history of the judgment of the wicked and the deliverance of God's people but neither of these

was comprehensively accomplished during Esther's day.

We talked about it already but the complete fulfillment of the judgment of the wicked and the deliverance of God's people awaited the coming of one even greater than Mordecai, the one who would be the prince of peace for whom Isaiah looked.

The coming one would still the raging of the sea of wickedness once and for all and would proclaim a full and final peace to those who were far away and those who were near. This coming one, when you think about it, did not utterly destroy the historic enemies of God's people.

Instead, he destroyed the hostility between the people and God. He came not as a mighty warrior but as the prince of peace. In Christ, former Amalekites and Jews are now brought together into the glorious peace that flows into one new people of God.

[ 29 : 15 ] It's kind of interesting when you think about it, when you think that the prince of peace didn't come to destroy the enemies, he came to destroy the hostility and bring everybody together. And of course, we know that that peace has a great cost because peace was established for us by God declaring holy war on his own son.

And that was what was happening on the cross. God the Father laid upon his son Jesus the guilt of the sins of all of those who would become his people. And of course, we know from 2 Corinthians 5.21 that God made him to be sin who knew no sin.

So having laid our sin on his shoulders, God the Father then poured out the full measure of his wrath against Jesus. And all the ugliness and pain of the entire history of holy war were concentrated into six hours of agony and burning darkness on the cross.

You know that Jesus' body was not merely tortured and brutalized by the Romans to the point of death, but it was exposed to cosmic shame by being hung on the cross. Like Haman and his sons, Jesus' body was hung on a tree and we know that's the ultimate sign of God's judgment curse.

But on the cross, Jesus fully bore God's curse for our sin. And why was that? Well, the answer, of course, we know is that so that we might receive peace through his righteousness and have rest from all our guilt and sin and also access into the life-giving presence of God.

[ 30 : 45 ] So think about what a difference understanding our forgiveness in Christ should make in our lives. Because now we have peace with God and we have a peace that transcends any peace that the world has to offer because it rests not on a Mordecai to plead our case before a king like Ahasuerus, but it rests on Jesus who brings us constantly into the presence of the king of kings.

And we know that Jesus is the one who seeks our good and speaks peace to us as his seed. The writer of Psalm 72 may have been writing about Solomon, but we know a king that is better than Solomon.

We've already read the first seven verses of Psalm 72, but listen to how Psalm 72 goes on to describe the perfect king. And we already know a king who does this.

And these verses are Psalm 72 verses 12 through 14. They say, For he delivers the needy when he calls the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life and precious is their blood in his sight. Thank you.