

[Image] Since the Garden of Eden, the enemy has been trying to destroy God's people. Satan, demons, the serpent, sin, evil, wickedness, which ever name you prefer, actively campaigns for death and destruction. They especially work to kill and overthrow those who follow Jesus. It can be hard not just to endure these attacks, but just to watch them take place across the globe. Close to 200 churches have been burned by terrorists in Nigeria in the last two months. As we see the enemy and evil succeed it can make us doubt. It can make us wonder where God is. Why does He allow the enemy to succeed?

This is what Esther has been asking herself as we have gone through the book. As Haman as plotted to kill her, Mordecai, and all of her people. We saw last week that God saved her. This morning we will see how God will save everyone else. And this is not just the story of How God saves His people. As we study these two chapters, we will see a larger picture of how God responds to evil. The way He works in our world. And how He uses evil for good.

Turn with me to Esther 8:1-9:19

I. God reverses the enemies plans (8:1-14).

This has been one of the primary themes of the book.

God takes the plans of Haman and turns them against him.

We saw Haman's plans to honor himself are reversed to honor Mordecai instead.

Haman's plan to kill Mordecai was reversed and he was killed instead.

Now we will see all of Haman's plans to destroy the Jewish people will be reversed.

Our text this morning will remind us not only that this is how God saved Esther's people.

But it will remind us that this is how our God works throughout history.

He takes the plans of the enemy and reverses them.

8:1 **"On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her."**

This is a continuation but a different scene than chapter 7.

Last week, we saw how Haman was defeated.

Esther and Mordecai are saved.

All of Haman's riches and household are turned over to Esther.

Everything he was so proud of and bragged about is hers.

And she is going to give it to Mordecai.

Verse 2, **"And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."**

Now all that Haman had is being transferred to Mordecai.

We have another ritual taking place.

The king takes off the signet ring.

The ring he had given to Haman back in chapter 3.

The ring taken from Haman before his death.

And now the ring goes to Mordecai.

All Haman was proud of.

All Haman had goes to his worst enemy.

His entire house, clan, and family is now Mordecai's.

It is justice, A poetic reversal, and a great moment.

But there is still a problem.

Verse 3, **"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."**

Things have worked out for Esther and Mordecai.

They have both been saved and raised beyond their wildest dreams.

They are fine.

But their people are still in danger.

Their people will still perish.

Again Esther speaks.

Again Esther speaks on behalf of her people.

And I think this time it is still risky.

She could have washed her hands and been thankful God saved her and her family at least.

God always saves a remnant, so maybe they are it.

But she risks all she has once again for her people.

This time she does not do any of the fancy political maneuvering.

No longer does she lead the king on with promises of more feasts.

She does not plot or tip toe around things.

She does not use fancy language about her requests and wishes.

She just falls on her face and weeps.

She pleads and begs.

Haman fell and begged in chapter 7 to save his own life.

Now Esther falls and begs with no regards to her own life to save her people.

And we get the whole name of Haman again.

Because this is not a story about two politicians political fighting.

This is the story of the enemy of God's people trying to destroy the righteous again.

And this is the story of how God reverses those plans.

Verse 4, **"When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king."**

The drama plays itself out again.

The king holds out the golden scepter to accept Esther's request.

She stands because the king promises to hear her petition and begging.

Verse 5, **"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 Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king."

She asks for her people to be saved.

That the enemy of God's people would be stopped.

That the law would be revoked.

That the Jewish people would not be slaughtered.

She appeals based on four things.

If it would please him.

If she has found favor.

If this seems right.

And if she has pleased him.

Please would he undo the law and letters passed by Haman.

Again we get Haman's whole name.

Because this is not just a story about Esther and Haman.

Haman represents all of the ancient enemies of Israel's people.

He is just the latest incarnation of opposition.

This story is not about something that happened back then.

This is a story that plays itself out over and over in history.

God's people are opposed by His enemies.

But God will continue to reverse their plans.

Verse 6, **"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?"**

This part is key.

She is saying she cannot live if this happens.

This is not just her asking for a favor.

She is tying her life to the lives of her people.

Verse 7, **"Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews."**

The king kind of sidesteps her request.
He does answer positively.
He doesn't say no.
But he almost still seems indifferent to her ask.

He feels like he has done enough already.
He already killed Haman for trying to kill the Jews.
He took his house away and gave it to Esther.
It almost reads to me like he thinks she is asking too much.
Yet, he will give in to her request.

Verse 8, **"But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."**

The king's laws cannot be revoked.
He cannot take back the law.
The Jews will still be able to be killed in a few days.
He cannot undo the law, but he can do something.

He gives them the ring.
He gives them the authority
And he tells them to write whatever they please.
They are free to pass whatever law they want to help their people.

The phrase, **"you may write as you please with regard to the Jews"**
This mirrors what the king told Haman in chapter 3.
He told Haman to do whatever seemed good to him.
Now Esther will do the same.

Verse 9, **"The king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day. And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials"**

of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language."

The scribes all come together.

Because they need to problem solve and come up with a solution.

And the new law will need to be written out and passed out to every single province that got the last law.

All in this own languages.

This time they make special care that the Jews receive the new law in their own language.

And we see Mordecai is the one commanding what will happen to the Jews.

Verse 10, **"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,"**

The law goes forth officially in the name of the king.

Using the king's ring.

And the king's horses are sent out to bear the decree.

We saw Mordecai have the royal crown, robes, and ring before, but now he commands the king's horses once again.

Verse 11, **"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,"**

This is all a repetition of what happened before.

Because God is reversing and undoing what the enemy has done.

Its plan to destroy God's people will destroy the enemy instead.

Basically, this says the Jews can defend themselves against their enemies.

The empire was told they could destroy, kill, and annihilate the Jews including women and children.

But now, the Jews will be able to do the same to them.

They have the right to defend themselves against any enemies who try to kill them.

They can defeat anyone who attack's them first.

Verse 12, **"on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar."**

This can happen on the same day of the Jews planned destruction.

Their enemies will not find weak and defenseless people.

Instead, they will find people ready and able to defend themselves.

Verse 13, **"A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel."**

The decree goes out so that they will be ready.

Again this is God reversing the enemies plans.

They wanted to destroy the Jews, but they will be destroyed instead.

Everything the enemy planned to use is being used against them.

And like Haman fell, they will fall.

This is the pattern of what God does.

He takes the plans of the enemy and reverses them.

Like Esther and Mordecai in the beginning, we can wonder why God allows evil.

Why does suffering happen?

Why does God not completely stop the plans of the wicked from happening?

The Scriptures show and promise us that God is in control.

He does protect His people.

He does not always stop evil, but He does reverse it.

What the enemy means for evil, God uses for God.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, but God used it to save him.

Israel walked through the sea on dry land, while Pharaoh and his army perished.

The fire meant to kill shadrach meshach and abednego did not burn them, but killed their guards while Jesus was with them in the flames.

Eve ate the fruit and was cursed with pain in childbirth, while the painful childbirth of Mary the virgin brought salvation.

Adam brought sin into humanity, the second Adam, Christ brought righteousness.

The enemies plan to execute Jesus was used to bring about our salvation.

The main pattern we see over and over again.

God might allow evil.

Evil may even seem to be succeeding in their plans.

But God reverses the plans of the enemy.

And He will do it again and again.

II. God causes his enemies to fear (8:15-9:4).

When God begins to move.

When God reverses the plans of His enemies.

When God starts to show off His power and His might.

It makes His enemies fear him.

God's enemies fear and His people rejoice.

Verse 15, **"Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced."**

God moving miracles leads to celebration.

Mordecai emerges almost as royalty.

He is wearing royal robes.

He has the golden royal crown on his head.

He is wearing royal colors of purple.

And the entire city rejoices to see the righteous elevated.

Verse 16, **"The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. 17 And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday."**

The people celebrate and are thrilled.

They are so happy they will be delivered that they throw a party.

They have to feast.

They invite the neighbors over to eat and drink and be merry.

It is like Christmas morning.

Picture a disaster movie where evil is defeated and everyone is saved.

All over the empire there is joy among God's people.

But while God's people are filled with joy.

God's enemies are filled with fear.

"And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them."

What is going on here?

The people are filled with the fear of the Jews.

It is not quite being filled with the true fear of God that is the beginning of wisdom.

But they are filled with fear of the people of God.

So much so, that it appears people are declaring themselves Jews.

No longer are they on team "kill the Jews."

Now they want to be Jews themselves.

It is a little unclear what it means that some people are calling themselves Jewish.

Because there is a process for gentiles to convert and join the people of God.

There are probably many who are doing that.

Who have been truly converted in this ordeal.

But it is likely there are others who are just going through the motions.

Or they are just telling people they are Jewish.

Like how we often talk about our ancestry.

I can just imagine nobles and common people saying, "You know I am actually a quarter Jewish."

But the remarkable fact is the reversal of their fortunes.

How God has made their enemies so afraid of them that now it is popular to pretend to be one of God's people.

9:1 "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 the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them."

The day comes when the enemies of God's people hoped to destroy them.

But instead of killing them, they are themselves defeated.

The reverse occurs.

Because we serve the God of reversals.

And part of the reason they are unsuccessful is because the fear of the Jews is spreading widely.

9:2 "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."

The Jews gather together.

This means they get together in groups and armies to protect one another.

They move their children and women somewhere safe.

But the miraculous thing is that no one can stand against them.

This doesn't mean that no one tries.

It does mean that no one succeeds.

They all fall apart.

The armies of the enemy lose moral out of fear.

Many who would have been happy to go and kill the Jews for riches and fun now cower in their homes out of fear.

9:3 "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. 4 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 fear of the Jews does not just spread to the common people.

It goes to the highest levels of government as well.

All of the most important people in the Persian Empire are eager to please Mordecai.

They are eager to help and aid the Jews.

We don't know exactly what kind of help they provided.

Maybe they provided weapons and armor.

Maybe they provided troops.

Maybe they provided fortresses and safe places to stay.

Whatever it is they did, they used their power and influence to help God's people.

And all of this happens because of God's influence.

God does not just deliver them from death.

He does not just save His people.

He makes their enemies afraid.

And God does this with the hope they will be ultimately filled not just the fear of the Jews, but with the fear of God.

And that they will not just be called Jews.

But that they would join God's family and be called sons and daughters.

III. God brings true justice to his enemies (9:5-19).

This is the part of the story that can make people squeamish.

Because the enemies of God's people are going to be violently killed.

And these parts of the Bible make people uncomfortable.

It causes some to believe the Bible is not true and that God is cruel.
It makes others want to apologize for God.
Or some want to explain away why this is all just a story and not true.
I am not going to do any of that.
What I want you to understand.
Is that what we see unfold in these chapters is God's work of justice.
It is not vengeance or cruelty.
It is just and right.

9:5 **"The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them."**

All those who come against God's people are killed.
They are destroyed and defeated.
The ending part about doing what they pleased.
It means that they won.
They did not have any difficulty defeating those who hate them.
Those who were wicked.

9:6 **"In Susa the citadel itself the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men, ⁷ and also killed Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha ⁸ and Poratha and Adalia and Aridatha ⁹ and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vaizatha, ¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they laid no hand on the plunder."**

In the capital city over 500 men and all of the sons of Haman are killed.
Now, they had the ability to kill not just the men, but also the women and the children of any who opposed them.
But it seems like they do not do that.
They only do what is just.
They only kill the men who try to kill them first.
And all ten sons of Haman are killed.
It doesn't seem like they hunt down Haman's sons.
Haman's sons appear to be the leaders of this group of 500.
Like their father, they tried to destroy the Jews.
And like their father they are defeated.

9:11 **"That very day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was reported to the king. ¹² And the king said to Queen Esther, "In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men and also the ten sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled."**

The king wants to know if Esther is satisfied.

If everything has now been accomplished and she is pleased.

After all, it seems her enemies have been destroyed and dealt with.

But Esther is not done.

9:13 **"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 ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows."¹⁴ So the king commanded this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged."**

She wants one more day for them to be allowed to defend themselves.

And she wants Haman's ten sons hung as a warning against those who would try to destroy God's people.

And the king says yes and does so.

Verse 15, **"The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they killed 300 men in Susa, but they laid no hands on the plunder."**

She was not blood thirsty.

It seems like she knew that there were still close to 300 men who hated the Jews.

300 men that were still planning on attacking the people of God.

And it appears they planned to attack the day after the edict ran out.

When the Jews least expected it.

Yet, because of Esther's wisdom and request the Jews were able to defeat their enemies.

9:16 **"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."**

The number might seem high.

Remember what the decree said.

The Jews were not free to go and slaughter all of their enemies as they wanted.

But they could kill whoever came against them.

So this number of people, are the people who actively tried to kill the Jews first.

They came to slaughter and defeat God's covenant people.

But instead they themselves were killed.

The number could also be referring to 75 families or clans.

Like all of Haman's family and clan would be 1.

Either way, plenty of God's enemies came and tried to kill innocent women and children.

Instead, they themselves were defeated and killed.

The most important phrase you need to see is the one that is repeated.

Three different times we see **"They laid no hands on the plunder."**

They defeated their enemies.

They killed all who came against them.

But they did not do it to enrich themselves.

This is meant to show this is an act of justice not vengeance.

It is also a call back to the Amalekites.

Saul was commanded to destroy them all and their plunder.

But instead, King Saul killed them.

He let the kings and nobles go free.

And Saul took the plunder for himself.

That failure led to Saul losing his throne to David.

And it led to Haman and for the Amalekites to try and destroy Israel once again.

But this time it is done.

This time Israel does it right.

They undo what Saul did.

They do not kill these people to enrich themselves.

They do not kill them out of revenge or anger.

They do so in self defense and in justice.

17, "This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. 18 But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the rural towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and as a day on which they send gifts of food to one another."

Afterwards, they celebrate God's justice.

And Jews celebrated on different days in the future.

Because some were in the capital where they needed more time and days.

Others in rural regions just celebrated one day.

But all of them celebrated God's justice and deliverance from their enemies.

What we need to understand is that everything God does is just.

The punishments handed out are acts of justice.

And what happens in Esther, is the wicked are destroyed.

Those who want to kill thousands of innocent men and women for financial gain are themselves killed.

They try to kill others, and are themselves killed.

Every time you see God act in the Bible.

Every single time, it is an act of justice and grace.
God never goes too far.
God never loses His cool or overreacts.
And when God's justice comes, sometimes it might seem extreme to us.
But it is exactly what is just and right.

Hell is one of the things people struggle with the most.
How can God be just and send people to a place of eternal torment?
Remember this story.
It is an act of justice.
Hell is just.
And there is not one second of pain and suffering more than is deserved.
Whatever hell looks like and however it works.
There is not a single moment that is over the top.
God is not out to plunder.
He does what is right.

The best example of justice and grace is the cross of Christ.
Justice demands that sin be dealt with.
We have wronged God and it must be made right.
The penalty of even one sin is death.
But in God's justice and grace, Jesus dies in our place.
He dies the death we should have died that we might live.
We get to choose.
Do we want the justice Christ offers in the cross?
Or do we want the justice Christ will bring when He returns?

CONCLUSION:

1. God reverses the enemy's plan, causes them to fear, and brings justice.
2. We serve a God who is in control and who is just. Whoever you see the plans of the enemy, know that God is working on reversing them and bringing about fear and justice. Come Lord Jesus!