

The last time we were together Esther had revealed the man who was responsible for crafting the edict that would have destroyed the Jews throughout the land of Babylon, placing the king in a very precarious position since he signed the edict into law.

This edict would have necessarily placed his queen in jeopardy of losing her life. But upon learning who the man was the king had Haman put to death on the same gallows that were constructed by Haman for Mordecai.

The queen was now satisfied with the death of Haman but there still was this lingering problem which was the law that could not be revoked, the law that placed every Jew under a death sentence.

And so, the only solution was to enact a second law that would essentially cover the first law and that was the law of life whereby each Jew was given the right to defend himself from any enemy who would come against them.

When the Jews heard of this new law they all celebrated from one end of the kingdom to the other.

Esther 8:13-16 ¹³ A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴ The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa. ¹⁵ Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ For the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor.

This is a message of life for the Jews and it was a message that gave hope and in which they celebrated.

But you'll notice something interesting in the last verse of this chapter that we weren't able to touch on last week.

Esther 8:17 ¹⁷ In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

Does anyone see anything out of the ordinary here?

Many of the peoples of the land became Jews.

Now there's an obvious implication here and that is that because the peoples of the land who were not Jews feared that they now might be on the receiving end of the Jew's wrath they pretended to be Jews. In fact, one bible translation uses this very language.

^{NET} **Esther 8:17** Throughout every province and throughout every city where the king's edict and his law arrived, the Jews experienced happiness and joy, banquets and holidays. *Many of the resident peoples pretended to be Jews*, because the fear of the Jews had overcome them.

And of course one can understand why some of these people would pretend to become Jews. But it raises another question.

Is it possible for a foreign person to the Jewish nation to actually become a Jew and if so what does it really mean to be a Jew if nationality is not the issue?

Can anyone think of an example in the O.T where a Gentile became a Jew?

Joshua 6:23-25 ²³ So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

There are two phrases here that are instructive. In verse 23 we are told that until the city of Jericho was completely destroyed and under the control of Israel, Rahab and her family were placed outside the camp of Israel.

This is a phrase that is used throughout the O.T. in reference to the way in which God is dealing with His people. For example, when a sin offering was to be sacrificed for the people there were times in which it was executed outside the camp of Israel.

In regards to the ordination of the priesthood of Israel we read this.

Exodus 29:9-14 ⁹ "You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. ¹⁰
"Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. ¹¹
"You shall slaughter the bull before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ¹² "You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. ¹³ "You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and offer them up in smoke on the altar. ¹⁴ "But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

And so, the implication is that inside the camp is offered up the burnt offering as a soothing aroma to the Lord, but outside the camp is where sin is dealt with. This does not mean that there weren't ceremonially clean places outside the camp, but in the case of the sin offering it was to take place outside the camp.

The point is that outside the camp was meant to show a real separation of evil from righteousness. And in different instances we see this in the way that God made this clear distinction.

Deuteronomy 23:9-14 ⁹ "When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. ¹⁰ "If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp. ¹¹ "But it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp. ¹²
"You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, ¹³ and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement. ¹⁴ "Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

And so, there is this clear distinction of that which is holy being inside the camp and that which is defiled being outside the camp.

So, let's go back to Rahab.

Joshua 6:23 ²³ So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.

At this point what is the status of Rahab and her family as it relates to her association with Israel?

She and her family are considered unclean until the dust settles and the Jews can then determine what to do with them.

Joshua 6:25 ²⁵ However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

So, what is the status of Rahab and her family at this point?

They are considered clean and able to live among the Jews as Jews. In fact, we know that Rahab married a Jew and became the mother in a long line of descendants that led up to the birth of the Messiah.

Matthew 1:5-6 ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.

To be a Jew in an associative sense did not necessarily mean that you were a Jew by birth, but you could be associated with the Jewish nation simply by faith in the God of the Jews.

We see this even in the N.T.

Acts 10:22 ²² They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a message from you."

Cornelius would have been a Roman, but here he is described as God-fearing and well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews. It is inferred that he associated himself with the God of the Jews and likely was part of a local synagogue where he attended regularly.

Acts 13:43 ⁴³ Now when *the meeting of* the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes

followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

Notice that there are two groups of people who are associated with being of the same group. You have the Jews and you have the God-fearing proselytes.

By the way, what is a proselyte?

It is someone who has chosen to be part of one group who was not formerly of that group and it's usually associated with a faith based group.

And so, you can have a person who was once associated with a Christian group now becoming a proselyte to Buddhism. Of course that person could not have been a true Christian in the first place but you get the point.

The same was true of proselytes in the first century in Roman controlled regions like Jerusalem as in the case of Cornelius and these other God-fearing people who are now associated with the God of the Jews.

Acts 17:2-4 ² And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

And so, here again we see that there were God-fearing Greeks who were part of a local synagogue who would have been considered Jews from a faith stand-point even though they are identified as not being of Jewish descent.

Now, I know that this is a long way around the barn, but as we come back to our text there were many who pretended to be Jews when the edict went out in all the kingdom of Babylon so that they would escape the death sentence, but it is certainly inferred that some of those who feared that same death sentence may have actually sought out the Jews and the God of the Jews to come to their side to find refuge.

The point is that there is a death sentence and that the only way to escape it is to come to the God who has established the only way

of escape. Will there be frauds among the true believers? Absolutely. There will always be tares or weeds among the wheat, or wolves among the lambs, but there can only be safety in the good news of the Messiah who takes us from death to life.

This is what we see in this decree initiated by God as He uses these different people to provide for His people. By the way, this event is still celebrated among Jews today. It's known as the feast of Purim which on the Jewish calendar is celebrated in the month Adar which is our Feb/Mar., and it is always celebrated a month before the Passover and is known as one of the happiest times of the year for the Jews.

This feast was established by the Jews and Esther, at that time, which was to be celebrated annually.

Esther 9:26-27 ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews established and made a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation and according to their appointed time annually.

By the way, the traditional observances of Purim include public readings of the Book of Esther, feasting, gifts of charity to the poor, and gifts of food among friends. It is also unique among Jewish holidays in that adults are encouraged to drink until they can't tell the difference between the phrases, "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai."

Other popular activities include staging comedic plays, expounding on the [Torah](#) in humorous ways, dressing up in costumes, holding beauty contests, and marching in parades.

As with many holidays, Purim has a food of its own: hamantaschen. Literally "Haman's pockets," these triangular cookies are said to resemble Haman's three-cornered hat. These traditionally contain poppy-seed or prune fillings, but other fruit fillings are also popular. (I'm a fan of cherry, myself.)

Purim is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, commemorating the three-day fast that preceded the miracle of Haman's downfall. This is normally observed from dawn to sundown immediately before Purim. However, when this would

conflict with Sabbath observance, it is moved to the preceding Thursday.

Unfortunately, some Jews today simply see Purim and the deliverance by God of His people as time to revel, but for those who have eyes to see, it was a time in which God Himself was showing His people, both Jew and Gentile, that He and He alone is Savior and that no man can thwart His ways and will, not even a king of a nation like Babylon.

Of course what is always missing from the celebration of Purim today around the world are the thousands of people who were killed at that time by the Jews as a result of the law being put into effect by the king.

But this is the other side of the story. There is no good news without the truth of the bad news. For those pagans who pretended to become Jews and for the few who actually joined the Jews by trusting in the God of the Jews they were spared. But those who rose up against the Jews they were destroyed. And the entire 9th chapter deals with this.

Esther 9:4-6 ⁴ Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater. ⁵ Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. ⁶ At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men,

Esther 9:13-14 ¹³ Then said Esther, "If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict of today; and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." ¹⁴ So the king commanded that it should be done so; and an edict was issued in Susa, and Haman's ten sons were hanged.

Esther 9:16-18 ¹⁶ Now the rest of the Jews who *were* in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. ¹⁷ *This was done* on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. ¹⁸ But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth of the same month, and they rested on the fifteenth day and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

The wrath of God is real and being enemy of God will bring wrath upon all who choose to remain an enemy. And unfortunately, left to ourselves, we delight to be an enemy of God even as we are told in John.

John 3:19-20 ¹⁹ "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ " For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

All of us come under the edict that was handed down by Ahasuerus if you will, because all of us hated the things of God and left to ourselves would be destroyed.

Ephesians 2:3-7 ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

This is the life we have in Christ as He sought us out and gave us resurrection life as He took us from darkness and brought us into His light making us lovers of light and haters of darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:6-18 ⁶ For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸ *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death works in us, but life in you. ¹³ But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. ¹⁵ For all things *are*

for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ 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.

Esther 10:1-3 ^{NAU} Now King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. ² And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? ³ For Mordecai the Jew was second *only* to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, ^bone who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.

Similar to Joseph with Pharaoh God placed Mordecai in a position of authority to aid his countrymen and protect them. God knows where we are and what our needs are and if He needs to move people or nations, or mountains to accomplish His will in our lives He can and will do it.