



This guide is provided to help facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truth to our lives as individuals and as a group. Therefore, spend at least half your time discussing questions that are application focused. While the guide has been bulked up, you still need to prepare by praying through the passage, reviewing the guide on your own, and thinking about how your group might answer questions and follow-up questions.

Summary of Esther

The book of Esther is set in Susa, Persia, 100 years after Israel's exile. Whilst some Jews had returned to Jerusalem, others chose to remain in Susa; of which Esther and Mordecai, the protagonists of the story, were amongst. Within this story, God seems completely absent - there is no mention of him, and no overt demonstration of his miraculous power. Further, Esther and Mordecai, are unlikely protagonists with their moral ambiguity representative of a people that have compromised their lives, and have abandoned God's law. Yet, in the midst of this seeming hopelessness, God is amazingly at work to fulfil his covenant promise. In an ironic reversal, God uses imperfect people, returning to faith in the midst of cultural oppression and persecution, to see his purposes fulfilled and his Kingdom come.

Introduction

This week's passage brings to a close the book of Esther, resolving the narrative tensions that had reached a climax in the prior week's text - the redemption of God's people, the judgement and destruction of their enemies, the celebration of these accounts, and the exaltation of Mordecai. In the book of Esther, God sovereignly works to ensure the safety of his people, and conversely the judgement and destruction of their enemies. This is cause for celebration and rejoicing by his people - inaugurated through a feast to remember in the times to come, their deliverance through the faithfulness of God.

Structure of passage

Esther 9:1-16: The preservation of the Jewish people, and the destruction of their enemies

9:17-32: The Feast of Purim inaugurated

10:1-3: Mordecai exalted to the right hand of the king

Big idea of the text

God is sovereign to foil human plans and to protect his people. God preserves his people to ultimately bring to pass his redemptive plan in Christ.

Getting to Christ

God, in his sovereignty, delivers his people through judgement. The judgement that was due for his people, was borne by Christ on the cross. This redemptive work and act of grace, is the reason why his people can celebrate and rejoice in their salvation now and into eternity.

What your CG must take away

For you group to trust in God to deliver his people, even whilst we live in this hostile world, and to celebrate our deliverance with and through Christ.

Read Esther 9:1-16

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

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." 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. 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.

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.

1. What has taken place so far, that led to the reversal - the “Jews gaining mastery over their enemies”? (v1)

2. In verse 2, why had fear fallen upon “all peoples”? What was the source of it? (v2-5)

3a. How does knowing that *God is sovereign over your current circumstances* allow you to stand strong even in the midst of adversity?

3b. How does knowing that *your ultimate deliverance will come through Christ*, allow you to stand strong even in the midst of adversity?

4. In verses 5 to 16, we read of the destruction of the Jew’s enemies and Haman’s household.

A. Why do you think the Jews did not lay hands on the plunder? (v10, 15, 16)

B. Why do you think Esther sought an additional day for the Jewish people in Susa to “defend” themselves? (v13)

5. How do you make sense of the difficult reality that many people were killed as a result of these battles? How does this impact your view of God’s righteousness and justice?

6. How does knowing that Jesus died on the cross for sinners highlight not only the righteousness and justice of God, but also his grace and mercy?

7. We are not called to fight the same way certain people were at certain times in the Old Testament. In light of the cross, how are we called to do battle as Christians today? What is our enemy?

8. How does understanding Jesus’ finished work at the cross give you confidence to fight against your sin today?

Read Esther 9:17 - 10:3

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. 20 And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews accepted what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. 24 For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. 25 But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, 27 the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, 28 that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. 30 Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, 31 that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. 32 The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

Esther 10

1 King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. 2 And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor 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 in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

9a. How did the people (v17-19), Mordecai (v20-22) and Esther (v29), respond to their victory over their enemies?

9b. What do the days of Purim represent?

10. Why should Christians be people who celebrate? What are you thankful for?

Apply Practically

Encourage and pray for one another, reminding yourselves of the faithfulness of God, the joy of his salvation, the hope that is found through him and his ultimate deliverance of his people.