



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 9–10

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 9

The book of Esther closes with the deliverance and victory of her people. It's a classic happy ending. Sinister plots have been thwarted. Vile enemies have been defeated. Strength of character shines forth. True loyalty has been rewarded. Unwavering courage has saved the day. As the curtain goes down we expect to find Queen Esther in royal splendor, a magnificent spray of roses in her arms, taking a final bow before a standing ovation. But Mordecai has been placed on center stage. Esther plays a supporting role and slips away before the final scene.

This brings home a significant point. This has not been a story about Queen Esther. The star of this story is Esther's sovereign, providential Creator who chose to work His plan through a lovely Jewish orphan. Though God's name has been silent, His overshadowing presence speaks loudly through every twist of fate. Nothing has been left to chance. God is in control and all is well. Rest in that as you read these final chapters.

Background: Purim is one of the most celebrated and joyous holidays on the Jewish calendar. The Book of Esther (commonly known as Megillah) is read in the synagogue on the eve of Purim and again on the morning of Purim. It's a tradition when the Book of Esther is read to drown out the name of Haman by stomping feet, hissing and loud noisemaking.



Feasting and drinking is encouraged because Jewish tradition holds that both played a key role in Esther becoming queen (Vashti's removal came during a feast) and the downfall of Haman.

During Purim, it is also required to give gifts to the needy and send gifts of food to friends. A popular food gift is Hamantaschen (also called Haman's hats). This sweet pastry is shaped into a triangle that represents Haman's falling hat.



Another custom is for children to dress up and disguise themselves, since the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural events.



Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month on the Jewish calendar. This usually falls in March. A fast called the Fast of Esther may also be observed from dawn until sundown on the day before Purim.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 9–10 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 9–10

New International Version (NIV)

1 On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.

2 The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those seeking their destruction. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them.

3 And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. 4 Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.

5 The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. 6 In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. 7 They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, 10 the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

11 The number of those slain in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day. 12 The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted."

13 "If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on gallows." 14 So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman. 15 The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

16 Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder. 17 This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.

18 The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. 19 That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.

20 Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, 21 to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar 22 as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. 24 For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur* (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. 25 But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, 27 the Jews took it upon themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. 28 These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants.

Purim usually falls in the month of March. In the year 2005, Purim will be celebrated on March 25.

To commemorate the prayer and fasting of Esther, Jews may fast the day before Purim. The fast begins an hour before sunrise and ends 40 minutes after sunset.

29 So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim.

30 And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes—words of goodwill and assurance—31 to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. 32 Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.

Chapter 10

1 King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire to its distant shores. 2 And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.



Esther 9:11–19

Bible Facts and Information:

[illegible]

Esther 9:20–32

[illegible]

My Research and Observations:

[illegible]

Esther 9:20–32 (cont.)

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:

Esther 10:1–3



INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 9:1–10

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 9:11–19

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 9:20–32

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 10:1–3

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

**“The Jews...gathered together and protected their lives,
...but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.”**

Esther 9:16 NKJ

Esther's people were singled out for destruction. Haman had declared war—and though he didn't live to see the battle, there were still men waiting for the opportunity to attack, destroy and plunder. But the tables were turned. The king gave the Jews permission to *defend* themselves against attack. By the wording of this second edict, we understand the Jews were free to strike back at their enemies by doing exactly what was intended against them. Instead, we read that they protected their lives but didn't lay a hand on the plunder. They held back rather than lash out in revenge. *Wait a minute*, you may say, *look at all the people they killed*. Bear in mind that they were defending themselves against attackers—they didn't *become* the attackers.

While there are many lessons to be drawn from these last chapters, let's take a closer look at a subject every believer must learn to address in their own life. Self-control. More to the point, self-control when angry retaliation would be so much easier.

Restraint or Retaliation?

What does godly restraint look like? We see it in David's behavior toward King Saul. Jealous Saul did everything in his power to ruin David's life. He forced David away from his wife and his home. He repeatedly tried to kill David, threatened his family and punished anyone who befriended him.

One night, in a cave in the wilderness, the tables were turned. How did David respond? Read 1 Samuel 24:1–22 and briefly share your answer.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. As a teen, he was torn from his family, his home, even his country. He endured years of menial servitude and false imprisonment. The course of his life seemed to be one major setback after another. Humanly speaking, he could have traced all his woes back to heartless brothers who cast him away.

One day, in Joseph's own house, the tables were turned. How did Joseph respond? Read Genesis 45:1–14 and briefly share your answer.

We've all heard the world's advice in that catchy little phrase *don't get mad—get even*. The natural human response is to lash out when we've been hurt or wronged in some way. But Christians are called to live by a higher rule of conduct.

Read and reflect on what the following verses say about retaliation. Briefly explain the instructions given here by God.

Leviticus 19:18 _____

Proverbs 20:22 _____

Proverbs 24:29 _____

Matthew 5:39 _____

Romans 12:17–21 _____

Now read and reflect on what the following verses say about mercy. Briefly explain the instructions, warnings and promises given here by God.

Proverbs 3:3–8 _____

Hosea 12:6 _____

Micah 6:8 _____

Matthew 5:7 & Luke 6:36 _____

There's no getting around it. Unjust treatment is painfully hard to bear. Esther's people did nothing to deserve Haman's hateful vendetta against them. Did God care that they were reviled, rejected and marked for death? Why shouldn't they retaliate? For the next few minutes, lay your pencil down and just read Isaiah 53:3–6. Let the truth and meaning of the words sink in . . .

. . . then go on to the next page.

Will you do some prayerful self-examination? Permit the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where resentment or anger has a grip on your heart. Lay those thoughts and attitudes out and ask the Lord to pour the words you've just read in Isaiah 53:3–6 over them. What has God's mercy done for you? What does God's mercy show you to do? Write your answer in the form of a prayer. (This does not need to be shared during group discussion.)



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.
But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus
have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:15–16, 24–25

