

Esther 9:1-15

Esther 9:1-15 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. (2) The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. (3) And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. (4) For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. (5) Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. (6) And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. (7) Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, (8) Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, (9) Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha; (10) the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews; they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. (11) On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. (12) And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done." (13) Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." (14) So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons. (15) And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

Questions On The Text

How was the decree executed?

Verses 1-10: On the day of the execution of the two decrees, instead of being overcome by their enemies, the Jews overcame their enemies. Several points should be noted. First, the Jews only killed those "who sought their harm," i.e. those who attacked them first (see 9:2). It was not an indiscriminate massacre.

Second, they were aided by all the officials of the empire motivated by their fear of Mordecai (9:3). As the most powerful man in the kingdom (next to the king), those officials would have needed Mordecai's favour to advance politically.

Third, despite being permitted by the decree to kill men, women and children (see 8:11), only men were killed (9:6). This supports the view that the edict's purpose was not to inspire a massacre of innocents, but to discourage attacks from non-Jews who might think twice if their families were also at risk. The effect would be to reduce deaths.

Fourth, Haman's ten sons were killed (9:7-10). It was common in ancient times to kill the offspring of an enemy to prevent later revenge attacks. However, it is more likely, given the restraint of the Jews, that Haman's sons were simply part of the attacking group. They would have been especially resentful that their father's estate had been confiscated and given to the queen (see 8:1).

How did the Jews deal with the plunder?

Verse 10: Amazingly, the Jews did not touch the plunder in Shushan (9:10,15) or in the provinces (9:16) despite being permitted by decree to do so (see 8:11). This certainly would have gone a long way in convincing the general population that Jewish actions were motivated by self-defence rather than greed or revenge.

However, there is another point worth considering. This whole incident would never have occurred if King Saul had obeyed God hundreds of years earlier. Saul disobeyed God in two important respects. First, he spared King Agag the Amalekite (see 1 Samuel 15:3,8,9).

Second, he kept some of the spoils of war (see 1 Samuel 15:3,9). In a way, these wrongs were now righted. Haman and his ten sons, descendants of Agag, were executed, and whereas in Saul's time the people were not allowed to keep the plunder, but did, this time they were permitted to keep the plunder, but didn't.

What happened in Shushan?

Verses 11-15: As previously mentioned, five hundred men were killed in the royal city, as well as the ten sons of Haman. Having received the report, Ahasuerus asked Esther what else she wanted. Probably feeling more confident of her status in the eyes of the king, and wishing to remove all opposition to the Jews in the capital, Esther requested an extension of Mordecai's decree for the next day.

As a deterrent to anti-Jewish violence, she also requested that the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hanged for all to see. The king assented and an additional three hundred men were killed. Still no one touched the plunder. The intent of the decree was not to gain riches but peace and security.

Further Questions For Discussion:

On the day that Haman's edict was to be executed, the opposite of what they might have expected occurred. How does this fit in with Romans 8:28?

Why did all the officials help the Jews?

How would you explain the justness of so many people being killed?

Why was there need for a further decree for the following day?

Why didn't the Jews touch the plunder?