



# Purim

Joy in the Midst of Struggle

## I. OVERVIEW

Date	Description of Events
3 <sup>rd</sup> year of Xerxes' Reign	Queen Vashti deposed
Imprecise date	Year-long Pageant begun to find replacement Queen
7 <sup>th</sup> year of Xerxes' Reign	Esther wins pageant and installed as Queen
Imprecise date	Mordecai exposes coup attempt against Xerxes; recorded in Records
Imprecise date	Haman promoted to Prime Minister
	Haman develops animosity against Mordecai
12 <sup>th</sup> year Xerxes' Reign	Nisan-Haman chooses Adar 13 by lot for destruction of Jews
-Nisan 13	Proclamation of destruction made;
	Mordecai asks Esther to take action against destruction;
	Esther asks Mordecai to announce 3 day prayerful food/water fast
-Nisan 14	Day 1 of fast
-Nisan 15	Day 2 of fast (Passover)
-Nisan 16	Day 3 of fast. Esther approaches Xerxes uninvited;
	Esther accepted, invites Xerxes and Haman to banquet
	Haman erects gallows for execution of Mordecai
	Esther has 1 <sup>st</sup> banquet; requests another for the next day.
-Nisan 17	Sleepless Xerxes reads of Mordecai's earlier good deed; decides to honor Mordecai
	Mordecai elevated to Prime Minister and honored
	Esther exposes Haman; Haman executed on gallows erected for Mordecai
≈2 month interval	Esther pleads for revocation of destruction order
-Sivan 23	Mordecai issues new decree allowing Jews to defend/fight against destruction
≈9 month interval	Many conversions of population to Judaism
-Adar 13	Destruction fails; Jews kill 500 in Susa, 75,000 in provinces; no plunder taken
	Haman's 10 sons executed
-Adar 14	Jews reassemble; kill 300 more men in Susa
-Adar 15	Day of feasting/rejoicing
<b>13-14 years</b>	<b>Time from deposition of Vashti to Day of Feasting</b>

## II. INTRODUCTION

### A. Esther is written about the period after the return of the Jews from Babylonian Captivity.

1. Purim is not a mandated convocation, but it is a Biblical Festival with Biblical themes.
2. Many of the Jews have elected not to return to their homeland.
  - a. The Jews were enjoying economic and social freedom after having been freed by the Persian conquest of Babylon.
  - b. Some had risen to prominence in the King's court.

3. This is the general period of time when Nehemiah and Ezra record the rebuilding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple.
4. Only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned.
5. Only book in the Bible whose central character is a woman.

### III. BASICS OF THE STORYLINE

#### A. The Book of Esther is somewhat of an enigma:

1. God is never mentioned, yet is clearly seen;
2. Deception and deceit are prevalent in the book, yet God is Master of it all;
3. The main character of the book, Esther, is not fully revealing of herself, yet the Kingdom is served.
  - a. Mordecai has fully revealed himself to be a Jew.
  - b. Esther has not.
    - 1) She hides her real name Hadassah.
    - 2) Hides her Jewish heritage.
    - 3) Pretends to be a good Persian girl.

#### B. The basics of the storyline.

1. After having been in exile for 70 years in Babylon, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem by a decree of Cyrus the Great in 538 BC.
2. Mordecai and Esther chose to remain in the Persian Empire.
3. Persian King Xerxes was a tainted, vacillating, and at times foolish leader.
4. Xerxes' wife Vashti is deposed as Queen and Esther is elevated as her replacement (Esth. 1:10-2:18).
5. Mordecai uncovers a plot to assassinate Xerxes and protects the King (Esth. 2: 19-23).
6. Xerxes does not honor Mordecai, but honors Haman, a descendent of Agag, the first king of the Amalekites. The Amalekites were the first nation to attempt to wipe out the Jews on their way to the Promised Land, and it was they about whom God told Moses they would be at war with for generations (Exod. 17:6-16). Also, it was the Amalekites whom God had commanded King Saul to destroy. Saul failed to do so (1Sam. 15:1-3), and because he failed to do so Haman has a generational hatred of the Jews.
7. Haman conspires to kill all of the Jews because of Mordecai's refusal to honor Haman. Dice (Pur) are rolled and the date is set the date some 11 months later (Esth. 3:1-17).
8. Esther intervenes by inviting, at her own personal risk, the King and Haman to two banquets to be held one day apart (Esth. 4:1-5:14).
9. During the intervening night Xerxes can't sleep and discovers that Mordecai has never been honored for saving the King's life years earlier (Esth. 6:1-14).
10. Esther pleads for the safety of her people, Haman is discovered and executed (Esth. 7:1-10).
11. Xerxes agrees and allows to Jews to rise up and defend themselves on the very day that Haman's dice had indicated they were to be slaughtered (Esth. 8:1-9:32).

### IV. COMMON THEMES

#### A. Overriding justice in human affairs.

1. Haman can be seen as one directly opposing God's ways and representative of an atheistic or superstitious pagan worldview.
2. His comeuppance is a living reminder that God provides justice for His children.
3. Rom. 8:38-39 <sup>38</sup>*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, k neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

#### B. Divine providence.

1. Haman is self-absorbed (6:6) and self-indulgent (3:5-6), and depends a great deal upon chance.

*Haines' Purim: Joy in the Midst of Persecution (20-0229)*

- a. Shown to be subject to the will of God in spite of personal paganism.
- b. God clearly has human events firmly under his control.
2. Surprising number of coincidences point to transcendence of God.
  - a. Nonetheless, humans have a choice to work through God’s plan or not.
3. Prov. 16:33 *<sup>33</sup>The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

**C. God exalts the humble and brings low the prideful.**

1. Both Joseph (Genesis 37-45) and Esther are exalted to high positions to bring salvation to God’s people.
2. Ultimate reversal of fortune: salvation in Christ.
  - a. 2Cor. 8:9 *<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*
  - b. Phil. 2:5b-11 *<sup>5</sup>have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

**D. Worldwide mission to be a light to the nations even in the capitals of paganism.**

1. Although scattered in their captivity, the Jews saw an ongoing purpose for living in a pagan world.
2. Isa. 2:1-5 *<sup>1</sup>This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: <sup>2</sup>In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. <sup>3</sup>Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. <sup>5</sup>Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.*
3. Jer. 23:7-8 *<sup>7</sup>“So then, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ <sup>8</sup>but they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’*

**E. Folly can endanger and Godly wisdom can produce a just and peaceful society.**

1. Haman had contempt for moral and legal restraint; a type of modern totalitarianism.
2. Mordecai and Esther show moderation based in faith, but do not force their faith on others.
3. Matt. 11:28-29<sup>28</sup> *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

**V. PERSECUTION OF GOD’S PEOPLE CONTINUES TODAY**

**A. Although not mentioned in Leviticus 23, Purim can be a godly festival and very relevant today.**

1. The Kingdom is being attacked on all sides by world’s values and agendas.
2. Much of the traditional Church has incorporated these values into their belief system.
3. Our responsibility is to stand fast against such opposition.

**B. Preservation of God’s people against persecution can be a joyous event.**

1. Haman hated the Jews and persecuted them.
2. Esther stood firm in her faith and opposed the persecution.

3. End result: Haman lost everything; the Jews triumphed and had a party.

**C. God's people still experience persecution today.**

1. Minor persecution in the form of trials.
  - a. Hardly different from that common to all mankind.
  - b. Diseases, struggles are common to humanity because of our fallen condition.
2. Major persecutions all over world.
  - a. A woman in India sees her sister dragged off by Hindu nationalists; doesn't know if she is alive or dead.
  - b. A woman in Nigeria escapes from Boko Haram who have kidnapped her. She is pregnant, and when she returns home her community will reject her and her baby.
  - c. On Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka a group of children are returning to their Church sanctuary after having a meal together. They are killed by a bomb blast.
  - d. All are believers.
  - e. World statistics from 2019:
    - 1) 245 million believers are in areas experiencing high levels of persecution.
    - 2) 4305 believers were killed for their faith.
    - 3) 1847 Churches or church were building attacked.
    - 4) 3150 believers were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.
3. National instances of opposition to the Gospel.
  - a. A state agricultural department official in Florida told a Christian ministry to the poor they would not be allowed to receive USDA food unless they removed portraits of Christ, the Ten Commandments, a banner that read 'Jesus is Lord' and stopped giving Bibles to the needy.
  - b. Passed on Apr. 24, 2018, a California law, AB 2943, outlaws any literature opposing the LGBTQ agenda. That would include the Bible.
  - c. Recently a woman in Houston was ordered by local police to stop handing out gospel tracts to children who knocked on her door on Halloween.
  - d. In Madison, Wisconsin, the *Freedom From Religion Foundation* distributed anti-Christian pamphlets to public school children titled, "We Can Be Good Without God."

**VI. JOY IS DIFFERENT THAN HAPPINESS**

- A.** Happiness is an emotion in which we experience feelings ranging from contentment and satisfaction to bliss and intense pleasure, whereas joy is a stronger, less common feeling.
1. Happiness is a result of something that is outside of you, and gained by observing or doing that particular thing. Happiness spreads through relationships like friends, siblings, partners, neighbors etc.
  2. We can feel happy as the result of doing things which are not wrong morally.
  3. Happiness is not necessarily bad, but, as a feeling, is not predicated on something necessarily being good for us. Emotionally acceptable is not necessarily morally good.
- B.** We experience joy when we achieve selflessness to the point of personal sacrifice.
1. Joy is grounded in the idea that something is good for someone else.
  2. Joy comes from the inner-self of a person, and is connected with the source of life within you. It is caused by something really exceptional and satisfying. The source of joy is something or someone greatly appreciated or valued, and it is not only about oneself, but also about the contentment of those people whom you value the most.
  3. Have joy when -- even in the midst of our own suffering -- we are acting toward someone else's well-being.

- a. Heb. 12:1b-2 <sup>1</sup>*And let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

**C. Summary of the differences:**

1. Happiness is caused by luck, good fortune and other worldly pleasures, whereas joy is caused by overall happiness and soul satisfying incidents.
2. Happiness is more momentary, as it is a result of short-term contentment, while joy is long lasting.
3. Happiness merely pleases a person, while joy warms the person's heart.
4. Happiness mostly comes from outside things, as it is gained by observing or doing a particular thing. On the other hand, joy lies within a person.

**D. We experience joy when we are spiritually connected to God or people.**

**E. There are plenty of things in this world we can do that allow us to feel bliss or pleasure, but ultimately leave us feeling empty.**

1. Gal. 5:19-21 <sup>19</sup>*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

**F. But God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us walk in the ways of God which includes joy.**

1. Gal. 5: 22-26 <sup>22</sup>*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

## VII. APPLICATION

**A. What counts is how we respond to struggle and persecution.**

1. Nobody likes the pain of struggle or persecution.
  - a. If left to our normal life-responses, we will do everything possible to remove the discomfort.
    - 1) Avoid the situation.
    - 2) Go along to get along.
    - 3) Moan and complain about the situation to any who will listen.
  - b. Have to deliberately choose to respond differently.
2. How do we respond to struggle and persecution?
  - a. We have to expect struggle.
    - 1) John 15:20 <sup>18</sup>*“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’*
    - 2) 1Pet. 4:4 <sup>4</sup>*(Those of the world) are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. <sup>5</sup>But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*
  - b. Our motive has to be right.
    - 1) Being joyful in the face of persecution is not being joyful **in spite** of the persecution; it is being joyful **because** of the persecution.
      - a) It means the world recognizes Yeshua in us and hates us for it.
      - b) It means we are still in covenant with Yeshua.

- 1] Matt. 16:24-25                    <sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.
- c) It is a confirmation of our ultimate salvation on the final day.  
d) Just as grace abounded to Christ in his suffering, so it will to us.
- 2) 1Pet. 3:15-17    <sup>15</sup>But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup>For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.
- 3) Phil. 3:8-9        <sup>8</sup>What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.
- c. We can experience joy in the face of persecution because we know our cause is just.
- 1) Matt. 5:10-12    <sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
- 2) Rev. 7:15-17.    <sup>15</sup>Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. <sup>16</sup>Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup>For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.’ ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’ ”
- 3) James 1:2-4      <sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

## VIII. REFERENCES

- A. Benet, C. (2014). God Can Be Found In The Difference Between Happiness And Joy. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/a/amp.islandpacket.com/living/religion/article33609807.html>
- B. Hawkins, J. (2013). 7 Examples of discrimination against Christians in America. Retrieved from <https://townhall.com/columnists/johnhawkins/2013/09/17/7-examples-of-discrimination-against-christians-in-america-n1701966>
- C. Julita. (2010). Difference Between Joy and Happiness. Retrieved from <http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/difference-between-joy-and-happiness/>
- D. Keys, G. (2000). Esther. In T. D. Alexander & B. S. Rosner (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Electronic ed. p198). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- E. Noll, S. F. (1995). Esther. In *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Vol. 3, p326). Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Book House.
- F. Strite, J. (2018). The Joy of Persecution. Retrieved from <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-joy-of-persecution-jeff-strite-sermon-on-persecution-230931?page=1&wc=800>
- G. Unknown author. (2020). Christian Persecution. Retrieved from <https://www.opendoorusa.org>