

07-23-2017

Message: Always Remember the Works of God

Text: Esther 9:20 - 10:3

Introduction

- A. As we come to Esther 9:20, the account of God's hidden, providential hand bringing about great deliverance and reversal of fortunes for his people is completed. What we see in these remaining verses of the book is Mordecai's and Esther's answer to the question, "What are we to do with this knowledge of what God has done for us?" The answer for them is also God's answer for us today - remember, rejoice, remind, respond.
- B. God repeatedly reminds us in His Word to pause to remember His works in creation, His Works in the lives of His people, His works in our own personal lives by His providential hand.

Psalm 111:2 Great are **the works of the LORD**; *They are studied by all who delight in them.*³ Splendid and majestic is His work, and His righteousness endures forever.⁴ **He has made His wonders to be remembered;**

- C. God had His Old Testament people Israel set aside certain days weekly, monthly, annually out of their normal routines to pause, remember, and celebrate what He has done for them.
1. God commanded His people to rest every 7th day of the week, to not only remember His rest from His works of creation, but also to remember His work in giving them rest from their bondage in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 5:15 **'You shall remember** that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; **therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.**

On this side of the cross the weekly gatherings of this and other churches on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, is not random, but a remembrance and celebration of God raising Jesus from the dead on the first day of the week. And our repeated celebration of the Lord's Supper, we do as Jesus commanded - "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

2. Three annual feasts commended by God were Unleavened Bread/Passover (remembering/celebrating God's delivering them from Egypt, Harvest/Weeks/Pentecost (remembering/celebrating God's present provision of firstfruits), and Ingathering/Booths (remembering God's past provision in the wilderness, along with His present provision).

Exodus 23:14 **"Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me.**¹⁵ "You shall observe the **Feast of Unleavened Bread;** for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread,

as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.¹⁶ "Also *you shall observe the **Feast of the Harvest*** of the first fruits of your labors *from* what you sow in the field; also the **Feast of the Ingathering** at the end of the year when you gather in *the fruit of your labors from the field*.

D. In these closing verses of the book of Esther, we see once again God's sovereign hand moving Mordecai and Esther to help God's people remember and rejoice in His work of delivering His people during this decade of the Persian empire. In recording and preserving the book of Esther in the Scriptures, God also wants us to remember and rejoice in His sovereign work of deliverance. But then also God wants us to remind ourselves that His sovereign hand has been working and continues to work in our lives, so that we will respond to Him with a faith in Him that trusts, honors, and obeys His divine Son Jesus as Lord. Remember, rejoice, remind, respond.

I. Remember and Rejoice over God's works of provision and protection.

A. 9:20-22 Mordecai records what God did and instructs the Jews to annually remember and rejoice with one another.

Esther 9:20 Then **Mordecai recorded these events**, and he sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,²¹ **obliging them to celebrate** the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, **annually**,²² because on those days the Jews rid themselves of their enemies, and *it was a month which was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that **they should make them days of feasting and rejoicing** and sending portions of food to one another **and gifts to the poor**.*

1. There were to be 2 annual days of remembrance of God's deliverance, celebrated with one another - not by themselves.
2. When we celebrate God's blessings privately, I rejoice in what God has done for me and mine. But when we celebrate God's blessings collectively, I also rejoice in what God has done for you and yours.

B. 9:23-25 The Jews willingly participated in this annual celebration, because they were thankful at the deliverance God provided them from His/their enemies, turning their wicked plot upon their own heads.

Esther 9:23 Thus the Jews undertook what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them.²⁴ For Haman the son of Hammedatha, **the Agagite, the adversary of all the Jews, had schemed against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to disturb them and destroy them**.²⁵ But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that his wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews, should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

- C. 9:26-27 The Jews established a name and custom to provide for the remembrance and rejoicing that would honor and please the Lord.

Esther 9:26 **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.

1. This annual celebration was not commanded in the Mosaic law, as was the case for other annual feasts. But it was a custom, designed to help God's people remember and rejoice in His works.
2. This appears to legitimize the church's creating customs to help us remember the gracious, saving works of the Lord. E.g., celebrating the birth of Christ on December 25th or January 6th is not a commandment, but is a custom that helps us remember and rejoice in God's coming to earth in the person of Jesus to deliver us from our sins.
3. "Pur" is the Persian word for "lot" or "die." The "im" is a plural ending, like the English "s," so Purim = lots or dice. The name would help the Jews remember that the lot cast by Haman to prosper his plot against the Jews was reversed by the Lord to be a day of destruction of their enemies.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

4. God wants us to remember and rejoice in this truth, and used Mordecai and Esther to help us remember this truth. That God, in keeping His covenant promises, causes all things (including hard, troubling things) to work together for good to those who love Him are "words of peace (shalom) and truth."

Esther 9:28 **So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation,** every family, every province and every city; and **these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants.**

Esther 9:29 Then Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.³⁰ He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *namely*, **words of peace and truth,**³¹ to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and just as they had established for themselves and for their descendants with instructions for their times of fasting and their lamentations.³² The command of Esther established these customs for Purim, and it was written in the book.

Jeremiah 33:6 'Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I

will reveal to them an abundance of **peace and truth**.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

5. Therefore, remembering that the Lord both was and is in control of every roll of the dice, of everything that has or will occur in the history of creation ...

II. God wants the remembrance of His works to remind us that He is still working by His sovereign hand in our lives, and will continue to do so.

- A. God wants our seeing His hidden, sovereign hand work for the good of His people in Esther's day to remind us to look for and see with eyes of faith His hidden, sovereign hand working in our own day, in the life of His churches - including our own, and in our own lives.

- B. God wants us to see what unbelief cannot see.

Acts 14:16 "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;¹⁷ and **yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.**"

- C. And so trusting and submitting ourselves to His sovereign control, we can cast all of our anxieties upon Him regarding our present and future circumstances, knowing He Who cares for us is in control of our present and future.

1 Peter 5:5 ... GOD ... GIVES **GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**⁶ **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you at the proper time,⁷ **casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**

Matthew 6:25 "For this reason I say to you, **do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?**²⁶ "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not worth much more than they?**²⁷ "And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?"

III. Let us respond to what we remember about the Lord.

- A. When it looks like life is as it had always been (pagan governments taxing, ruling), know that God is in control.

Esther 10:1 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?

B. The word “remember” in Scripture can often simply mean “recall.” But when the Scriptures speak of God remembering people, or people remembering God, the remember means to both recall and respond to what we recall.

1. When God remembers us, He responds to us

Genesis 8:1 But God **remembered Noah** and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; **and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.**

Genesis 30:22 Then God **remembered Rachel**, and **God gave heed to her and opened her womb.**

Psalms 106:4 **Remember me**, O LORD, in Your favor toward Your people; **Visit me with Your salvation,**

Jeremiah 31:34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for **I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**

2. When we remember the Lord and His people, we respond to Him with faith, obedience, loyalty, and love to Him and His people, committed to further His good intentions for their welfare.

Psalms 103:17 But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children,¹⁸ to those who keep His covenant and **remember His precepts to do them.**

Galatians 2:10 They only asked us to **remember the poor**-- the very thing I also was eager to do.

Hebrews 13:3 **Remember** the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. ... 7 **Remember** those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, **imitate their faith.**

B. Mordecai honored God by replicating the heart of God toward His people, a heart God would display most fully to us in coming to earth as the God-man, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself up for our welfare. The book of Esther closes with God honoring and remembering Mordecai, in order to hold him up as an example of how God wants us to respond to our remembering and rejoice in His works of provision, protection, deliverance. 1 Samuel 2:30 ... **those who honor Me, I will honor ...**

Esther 10:3 For Mordecai the Jew was second *only* to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, **one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.**

John 11:50 nor do you take into account that **it is expedient for you that one man die for the people,** and that the whole nation not perish."⁵¹ Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that **Jesus was going to die for the nation,**

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; **and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

Conclusion

- A. God inspired the book of Esther to be the one book of Scripture where His name is never mentioned, where He is hidden from the natural eye. There is not mention of prayer, Scripture, or worship. There is no prophet or account of God's working those visible miracles that He calls "signs and wonders."
- B. The striking absence of God's name in Esther impresses us as being deliberate, not to make the point that God is inactive in human situations, but on the contrary, that though He is hidden in Esther's period of history, as He is to us in our own, He is nonetheless in complete control, working behind all human and world events to carry out His gracious purposes to glorify Christ and with Christ those who love and trust Him.
- C. What do we do with this record of what God by His providential hand has wonderfully done for His people - then and now, by preserving the lineage of Abraham and David through which God's Christ would be born? Remember and rejoice in His past workings, remind ourselves that He is the same God today, working every bit as much by His sovereign, hidden, providential hand as He has by signs and wonders, and respond by a faith that entrusts ourselves, our families, our present and future lives into the faithful hands of His Son, our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy. 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,