

The Prophetic Significance of This Year's Purim Intercessory Fast

The biblical feast of Purim ("Lots") takes place this year on the evening of March 11-13. The merriest of all Jewish holidays, Purim is based on the book of Esther. As you likely know, the book is an historical account of events that occurred in Persia (modern Iran) approximately 2,500 years ago. At that time, virtually all the Jewish people lived under Persian rule. An unprecedented genocidal death decree was issued against them, which was miraculously overturned.

The story of Esther brims with prophetic meaning and wisdom for today. It contains at least four specific keys to overturning the kingdoms of this world and releasing over them the government of God. These keys are effective at every level of human government, from personal to national and international levels. This Purim season and beyond, God is sharpening and "duplicating" these keys for Purim-like victory in and through His people. He is making them available to "whosoever," or anyone willing to accept them.

Humility

The first key to Purim-like kingdom turnaround is humility. In the book of Esther, two champions arise, Mordecai and Esther. Both are Jews and serve as models of humility. Mordecai is dutifully going about his business when he "just so happens" to save the life of Persian King Xerxes I. For this heroic deed, however, he seeks neither reward nor recognition. Eventually, he is paraded around town in a delayed, and ironic, demonstration of honor. Still, Mordecai takes no glory in the fact his praises are shouted in the streets. Following the hoopla, he immediately resumes his own—and extremely

serious—business. By the end of the book, Mordecai is exalted to second in command of the Persian Empire. But consistently he seeks only the good of His people, not his own (Esth. 10:2)

Likewise, Esther displays no pride in her physical beauty, position as queen or final vindication in overriding the genocidal decree. Time and again, she humbly waits on God before she acts. As a result, she is given divine favor and strategy with which to navigate otherwise fiendishly impossible circumstances. “With the humble is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2). And so Esther receives wisdom to bring down ungodly government authorities and systems, replacing them with the government of God. She gains authority to issue decrees which override the enemy’s plot to destroy her people. She teaches us much about governmental intercession.

God raises up both Mordecai and Esther, in due season, beyond what they could imagine (1 Pet. 5:6; James 4:10). Because He “crowns the humble with victory,” the two come to possess the gates of their enemies (Ps. 149:4). Through them we see how humility—especially as God increases our authority—is prerequisite to honor. We see that humility does not imply lack of boldness or leadership. Rather, the humble of spirit gain honor from God (Prov. 29:23, 15:33).

This Purim and beyond, you can be intentional about humility. Choose to stay low before God and man. Wait on Him to lift you up in due season. Then, however high He takes you, go low again. In this manner, you will be positioned to receive endless grace (Prov. 3:34; James 4:6).

Hiddenness

The second key to Purim victory is embracing hiddenness—when God brings hiddenness into our lives. Any believer I’ve known who has walked with the Lord more than a few years has said they’ve experienced a time when He seems to have hidden from them His manifest presence. At other times,

God may choose not to hide Himself from us, but to (somewhat) hide us from others. Either experience is normally hard to embrace.

Perhaps no story in Scripture highlights the embrace of hiddenness like that of Esther. All but one of the main characters in the story are strategically hidden for a period of time: Esther, Mordecai, Vashti and even Haman in the sense that his evil schemes are concealed from the king. God Himself is hidden throughout this intriguing tale in that His name is nowhere mentioned. Esther is the only book in the Bible with no direct reference to YHVH.

Some rabbinic scholars say God's absence in Esther comprises the core message of the book, that of *hester panim*. *Hester panim* refers to the concealed face of God and is based on Deuteronomy 31:18. That verse reads, "And I [God] will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil things which they [Israel] shall have done, in that they turned to other gods." The rabbis point out the name "Esther" is actually found in that sentence. In biblical Hebrew, the phrase "surely hide My face" is pronounced "hester ahster panai." If you speak it aloud, you will hear the words sounding almost identical to "Esther, Esther."

As Deuteronomy 31:18 foretells, the Jews of Persia had sadly forsaken the ways and the Word of God. As a result, in love and holiness, He had to hide His face from them for a season. But during that time, God never truly absented Himself from His people. Although it appears He has left the scene, He remains actively engaged behind the scenes. All the while, He very actively works on His people's behalf.

Today, when believers experience periods of God's seeming hiddenness, sometimes that is the result of unrepentant sin. But always it is because God is a good, loving Father. Like any good father, our heavenly Abba disciplines the children He loves. "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor

be weary of His correction [discipline] ... for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Prov. 3:11-12).

Some Bible translations substitute the word "discipline" for "correct" in the verse above. That is a fair translation because the meaning of "discipline" is related to that of "disciple." Discipline does not mean punishment. Rather, it suggests discipleship, or dedicated training and instruction. In the Scriptures, God disciplined/discipled His beloved Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David and others. He even disciplined/discipled Yeshua, who learned obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8). Should we be dismayed or offended when He treats us similarly?

When your heavenly Father disciplines you, be encouraged that He is preparing you for kingdom victory. In the recent movie *God's Not Dead 2*, a Christian school teacher faces the hardest trial of her life. A deeply committed believer, she is greatly troubled because during the ordeal God has hidden Himself from her. She does not sense His presence or hear His voice. Then she is wisely counseled, "As a teacher, you of all people should know that when you give your children a test, you don't engage them or give them the answers" (my paraphrase).

When God disciplines you as His child, He is testing you to prove and promote you to the next level. When it appears He has left the scene, He is lovingly working behind the scenes on your behalf. He is preparing you for face to face fellowship with Him throughout all eternity.

Sometimes, rather than hide His manifest presence from you, God may call you to a season of hiddenness—not from Him, but from others. This was the case for Esther, both before and after her appointment as queen. The call, "Come away, My beloved" (Song 2:8) takes you intimate places in God that you can only go alone. The call may last weeks, months or even years. You may feel lonely and misunderstood. But as it was

for Esther, hiddenness is intended to transform you. Esther emerged from it matured and emboldened to exercise new levels of governmental authority. God gave her the keys with which to overturn a worldly kingdom to the kingdom of heaven. So it can be for you.

Joy

A third key to kingdom turnaround is joy. The story of Esther contains, from beginning to end, many expressions and lessons on joy.

Ten different banquets or feasts take place in Esther. Half are given by worldly Persian rulers and half are given by Jews. (Esth. 1:2, 5, 9; 2:18; 3:15; 5:5, 8; 8:15-17; 9:18-23) The worldly banquets are characterized by pride, self-indulgence and over-feeding sensual appetites. The Jewish feasts take place in the opposite spirit as God's people rejoice in His glory and victory. They do not overly self-indulge but share their bounty with the poor. According to the Hebrew text, their joy became key to the fact many, many Persians turned to YHVH. (Esth. 8:17) For the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10), and Purim is the most joyful of all the biblical feasts. It is God's appointed time to renew our spiritual, mental and physical strength. This does not mean we muster up our own happiness; instead, we engage intimately with the joy that is in God's own heart. He imparts His personal joy to us. While we can access the joy of His heart any day of the year, I believe He releases unique grace at Purim to celebrate with Him. It is an appointed time to celebrate His victory in your own life, seen and not yet seen, as well as in Esther's.

Rejoicing on Purim can serve as a prophetic intercessory act for the battles ahead. According to Esther 9:22, Purim is remembered as the time the Jews got "relief" or "rest" from

their enemies, and their sorrow was turned to joy. Their enemies (Haman and company) were the descendants of Amalek, with whom God said He would wage war from generation to generation (Ex. 17:16). Any reprieve from that war, therefore, is temporary. Rejoicing in the Lord when you experience relief from your enemies renews your strength for battles ahead. As those battles intensify in coming years, His joy will prove increasingly important. Cherish joy!

Prayer and Fasting

A fourth key to Purim victory is that of prayer and fasting. A satanic stronghold was overturned at Purim not only through Esther and Mordecai, but because the Jews turned to YHWH. Recall that in that day, virtually all the Jewish people lived within the vast Persian Empire. Therefore, had Haman's decree been executed as planned, and God not spared His people, the Messiah would not have been born. The Jews were facing off against the spirit of the Antichrist, not just anti-Semitism. Such a battle had to be fought and won in the spirit realm.

As a result, kingdom intercession broke out even before Esther called for her three day fast. When the genocidal decree was issued, Jews across the kingdom turned with desperation to God: "When Mordecai learned of all that had been sent out into the city, wailing loudly and every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. ... Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai." (Esth. 4:1-4) Only then did she learn what had taken place. Not until verses 15 and 16 did Esther call for a three-day fast.

Perhaps the Jews (or Jewish remnant) who cried out to God before Esther's fast are unsung heroes in the story. Their repentant and desperate prayers for deliverance may have turned circumstances around as much as Esther's personal appeal to the king.

As in Esther, war wages today in and over the governments of men. This is taking place on a global level as never before. You may not be an Esther or Mordecai in the sense of holding high office in the natural realm. But in the Kingdom of God, you have already been called, authorized and strategically placed into office. You are positioned even now to mediate or intercede between heaven and earth.

Intercessory prayer and fasting is part of every believer's lifestyle, to varying degrees and expressions. For whatever your gifting or destiny may be, you stand in the gap between heaven and earth. Therefore, you are positioned to mediate heaven to earth.

Revivalist Lou Engle writes: "Esther is a prototype of history's hinge: a courageous [individual] who humbly and artfully spoke truth to power. Facing witchcraft and dark conspiracies in Persia's power base, Queen Esther risked her life, armed with nothing but an undying love for her people, a providential position of authority, her own dignity and the secret arsenal of corporate prayer and fasting. Through her, a nation was spared annihilation." So it can be with you! (See Lou's important message [here](#).)

I believe intercessory prayer and fasting serves as the master key to the kingdom of God overtaking the kingdoms of this earth. So this Purim season and beyond, as God's people, let's humble ourselves before Him, embrace hiddenness when He strategically wills it, and stay intentional about rejoicing in Him. Let's turn the master key to His kingdom. Then let's join in the chorus, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev. 11:15). Chag Purim Sameach (Happy Purim)! {eoa}

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