

## **Purim**

Esther 9 – 10

by Don Falkos

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The fateful day arrived when the contradictory decrees of Xerxes went into effect. The first decree called for the extermination of the Jews. The second gave Jews the right to kill any who attacked them. People all across the Persian Empire, joined by a large number of nobles and officials, stood side by side with their Jewish friends and neighbors, assisting in their defense.

When all was said and done thousands of the enemies of the Jews had lost their lives. Among the dead were the ten sons of Haman, a descendant of the Amalekites, enemy of the Jews, and instigator of this dreadful day of death. The bodies of Haman's sons were impaled and left on public display as a reminder of their father's heinous deeds.

The king's decree had called for the Jews to take the property of those they killed. But five hundred years earlier, when Saul had attempted to annihilate the Amalekites, the taking of plunder had ultimately cost him his kingship. So the Jews, all too willing to avenge themselves upon their ancient enemies, nevertheless wished to avoid Saul's fate and so refused to take any plunder whatsoever.

Haman had begun his plot by casting lots, called purim. So Mordecai and Esther, both highly esteemed by the Jewish people, instituted a new feast day called the Festival of Purim. This would be an annual commemoration of the time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into celebration.