

Remember the Day When ...

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Holidays typically refer to special days recalling significant events of the past that influence the present. While they may include remembrance of negative circumstances, the emphasis is on the events leading to the overcoming of those circumstances and the joy and celebration of the positive outcome.

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is can be seen in the 1996 science fiction action film *Independence Day*. It depicts the arrival of aliens to Earth, the aftermath of their global attack, and how a disparate group of people converging at a surviving U.S. Air Force base in the Nevada desert, in conjunction with people around the world, launch a last-ditch counterattack on July 4 – the Independence Day holiday of the United States.

On July 2, a massive extraterrestrial ship about 342 miles in

diameter appeared unexpectedly from behind the moon and entered Earth orbit. Multiple smaller ships about 15 miles in diameter, shaped like saucers, detached from the mothership and were deployed over major cities around the world, including Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C. President Thomas Whitmore ordered immediate large-scale evacuations of these cities, but to no avail. The alien ships shortly after fired energy beams on the cities, incinerating them and instantly killing millions. President Whitmore barely escaped destruction aboard Air Force One as it flew out of Andrews Air Force Base to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

On July 3, military forces around the world attempted a counterattack but were rebuffed by the alien warships' force fields. Even the detonation of a nuclear warhead against one of these ships did not incur any damage to them. Swarms of similarly shielded fighter craft launched from them also decimated human fighter squadrons and military bases around the world.

On July 4, a plan was devised to use a captured alien craft to infiltrate the mothership in orbit, transmit a computer virus to take down the alien shield network protecting their warships, and deploy a nuclear device. Using Morse code, the U.S. military at Nellis Air Force Base contacted remaining air forces around the world to coordinate a united counteroffensive. With pilots in short supply, efforts were made to quickly enlist volunteers with flight experience. President Whitmore, a veteran fighter pilot from the Gulf War, volunteered to lead the air attack on an alien warship approaching to destroy the base. He gathered the pilots and support staff to motivate them for the battle ahead:

"Good morning! In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join others from around the world, and you will be launching the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind. Mankind – that word should have new meaning for all of us today. We can't be consumed by our petty differences anymore. We will be

united in our common interest. Perhaps it's fate that today is the 4th of July, and you will once again be fighting for our freedom. Not from tyranny, oppression, or persecution, but from annihilation. We're fighting for our right to live – to exist. And should we win the day, the 4th of July will no longer be known as an American holiday but as the day when the world declared in one voice, 'We will not go quietly into the night. We will not vanish without a fight. We're going to live on. We're going to survive.' Today, we celebrate our Independence Day!"

The computer virus and nuclear device were successfully deployed on the alien mothership, causing its destruction. With their shields down, the remaining air forces around the world destroyed the alien warships and their fighters. There was great rejoicing and celebration around the world over the defeat of the aliens and salvation from annihilation, and the 4th of July went on to become a global holiday.

King Ahasuerus (518-465 BC) of the Persian Empire, also known as Xerxes the Great, promoted Haman the Agagite as his viceroy (Esther 3:1). Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites, who were the sworn enemies of Israel for many generations (Exodus 17:14-16). All of the king's servants would bow and pay homage to Haman as he walked through the royal court, except for one man: Mordecai.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow or pay him homage, he was filled with wrath. But when he was informed that he was a Jew, he refrained from killing him at that time. He instead devised a plan to kill not only Mordecai but also all of the Jewish people in the empire. It was the first month of the year, and Haman had the Pur cast, like dice, to determine the date to carry out his plan, and it fell on the 13th day of the 12th month, Adar.

Haman misled King Ahasuerus into permitting him to enact a decree to annihilate all the Jews – men, women, and children –

on the day determined by the cast of the Pur (Esther 3:12-15). However, God arranged through a series of circumstances for Mordecai's cousin, Esther, to be chosen by the king to be his new queen, though the king did not know at the time that she was Jewish. When she was made aware of Haman's plot, at risk to her own life, she petitioned the king to spare her life and the lives of her people.

When King Ahasuerus realized Haman's deception and evil plot, he had him hanged on the gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai. Mordecai was made viceroy in his place. According to the law, an edict written in the king's name and sealed with his signet ring could not be revoked, so another decree was written permitting the Jews throughout the empire to gather together and defend themselves against anyone who would come against them on the 13th of Adar (Esther 8:7-14).

On Adar 13, the enemies of the Jews sought to follow the first edict written and sealed in the king's name and annihilate them, but the King of kings and Lord of lords was with the Jews who had gathered to defend themselves, and they overpowered and destroyed their enemies.

On Adar 14, the Jews, having achieved victory over their enemies who sought their destruction, rested from their labors and made it a day of celebration, feasting, and sending presents to one another. Mordecai, wanting this great victory and salvation from annihilation to be remembered, instituted the Feast of Purim to be celebrated annually (Esther 9:20-32).

To this day, Jews around the world celebrate the Feast of Purim every year by reading the Megillah (Book of Esther), where they boo and hiss at the mention of the name of Haman, the enemy of the Jewish people, but they cheer whenever the names of Esther and Mordecai are mentioned. They also wear costumes related to the characters in the story, send gifts of food to friends, give charity to the poor, and enjoy a festive meal. It is a jubilant celebration commemorating God's

deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation.

While you may not have been confronted with an alien invasion threatening the existence of humanity or a powerful government leader seeking to exterminate your particular people group, in your past you may have experienced a terrible and potentially catastrophic crisis – one that threatened your life in some way. It may have caused your days to be overshadowed with apprehension and darkened your nights with terror and weariness. You may have even been tempted to think that God had withdrawn His lovingkindness and compassion and had gone far away from you, as expressed by Asaph in Psalm 77:1-10.

But then, the Lord Jesus intervened in the situation in a dramatic way and delivered you from the catastrophe attempting to engulf and destroy you. You realized that God never abandoned you or ceased His love, mercy, grace, and compassion toward you. And like Asaph, exclaim with great joy:

“I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; I will certainly remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate on all Your work, and on Your deeds with thanksgiving. Your way, God, is holy. What god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders. You have made known Your strength among the peoples. You have by Your power redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.” (Psalm 77:11-15)

You can create your own holidays to remember the times in your life when God saved you from a dire situation.

“Remember the day when God in Christ Jesus, with an outstretched arm and a mighty hand, delivered me from overpowering enemies and my life from the pit.”

In the years that follow, you will look back and give praise and thanks to the Lord for His goodness to you. And when troubling times inevitably come again in the future, your witness to God’s faithfulness in your life will help you to trust in Him more and weather the storm.

Even more, remember the day when, on a Friday afternoon nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus shed His blood on the cross to endure the wrath of God in the place of sinners and died to fully pay for their sins. Remember that He was buried in a tomb but utterly defeated death and rose again on the third day from the grave that glorious Sunday morning. All who trust solely in Jesus are saved from the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). It is for this reason that followers of Jesus around the world celebrate the Lord's Supper throughout the year and Resurrection Sunday annually (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Remember the day when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, secured forgiveness for all of your sins and reconciled you to God by faith, and sealed you as a member of His eternal kingdom by the Holy Spirit when you believed the gospel message (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14).

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

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