

Learning from the Life of Esther #5
“Purim—Festival of God’s Protection and the People’s Revival”
Message Notes July 31, 2022

My Reflections on Esther

- Remembrances from childhood
- Compositional structure of the book (review)

Tables Turned (Chapter 8)

- (2) The king took off his signet ring—which he had taken back from Haman—and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman’s property.
- (3) Once more Esther went before the king...⁷ Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “I have given Esther the property of Haman, and he has been impaled on a pole because he tried to destroy the Jews.⁸ Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the king’s name, telling them whatever you want, and seal it with the king’s signet ring. But remember that whatever has already been written in the king’s name and sealed with his signet ring can never be revoked.”
- Mordecai’s decree:¹¹ gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives. They were allowed to kill, slaughter, and annihilate anyone of any nationality or province who might attack them or their children and wives, and to take the property of their enemies.¹² The day chosen for this event throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was March 7 of the next year.
- The reversal of Mordecai’s position and the Jews status:¹⁵ Then Mordecai left the king’s presence, wearing the royal robe of blue and white, the great crown of gold, and an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree.¹⁶ The Jews were filled with joy and gladness and were honored everywhere.¹⁷ In every province and city, wherever the king’s decree arrived, the Jews rejoiced and had a great celebration and declared a public festival and holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews themselves, for they feared what the Jews might do to them.

The Time Between—What did the Jews Do? Revival through Repentance, Fasting, and Prayer

The Jewish Victory (Chapter 9)

- The momentum had changed:¹ So on March 7 the two decrees of the king were put into effect. On that day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but quite the opposite happened. It was the Jews who overpowered their enemies.² The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the king’s provinces to attack anyone who tried to harm them. But no one could make a stand against them, for everyone was afraid of them.³ And all the nobles of the provinces, the highest officers, the governors, and the royal officials helped the Jews for fear of Mordecai.⁴ For Mordecai had been promoted in the king’s palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as he became more and more powerful.
- The Jewish posture of self-defense:⁵ So the Jews went ahead on the appointed day and struck down their enemies with the sword. They killed and annihilated their enemies and did as they pleased with those who hated them... But they did not take any plunder...¹⁶ Meanwhile, the other Jews throughout the king’s provinces had gathered together to defend their lives. They gained relief from all their enemies, killing 75,000 of those who hated them. But they did not take any plunder.
- The Festival of Purim:²⁰ Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to the Jews near and far, throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes,²¹ calling on them to celebrate an annual festival on these two days.²² He told them to celebrate these

days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts of food to each other and presents to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy.²³ So the Jews accepted Mordecai's proposal and adopted this annual custom.

- Mordecai, Esther, and the Jewish people all established the festival of Purim together (vv.23-32)

Just as He had in Moses' day, God worked in Esther's day to save His people in their troubles

Purim Today

- Read the book of Esther aloud
- Give money gifts to at least two poor people
- Send gifts of two kinds of food to at least one person
- Hold a festive Purim feast, often including wine or other alcohol
- There is a spirit of liveliness and fun on Purim that is unparalleled on the Jewish calendar. If there were ever a day to "let loose" and just be Jewish, this is it!
- It is also customary for children (and adults, if they desire) to dress up in costumes.
- A traditional Purim food is *hamantaschen* (or *oznay Haman*), three-cornered pastries bursting with poppy seeds or another sweet filling.
- On the day before Purim (or on the Thursday before, when Purim is on Sunday), it is customary to fast, commemorating Esther's fasting and praying to God that He save His people.

Conclusion:

- Recognize that God is at work in our lives today, guiding and protecting us. Just as the Jews did, admit our shortcomings and anticipate that God will bring about revival.
- As we realize God moving in our lives, celebrate with joy and gratitude.
- Generously support the poor and the weak.