**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 3-3-2024
Jesus and Purim**

Back in 2004, a team won the World Series that hadn’t won one in a very long time. Does anyone remember who won that year? The Boston Red Sox. And does anyone remember when it was that they last won the World Series? It was 1918, after 86 years.

Their long drought was referred to as the curse of the Bambino. The Bambino was a nickname for Babe Ruth. And since the Red Sox traded Babe Ruth to the Yankees, they did not win a World Series for so long that people were saying they were cursed.

But 20 years ago, that all changed. The Red Sox mounted the biggest comeback, the most dramatic turnaround, in perhaps all of sports history. They were down 3-0 to their rival, the Yankees. And then they came back to win 4 in a row to win the American League. And then they went on to win the World Series a week later or so. This surprising turnaround led to great rejoicing and celebration.

Today, as we take a closer look at Jesus and the Jewish calendar, we come to one of the biggest celebrations and certainly one of the biggest turnarounds in all of Scripture. And this turnaround centers on the story of Esther. If you are not familiar with Esther, it is a riveting story involving events that took place in Persia. The Jews had been sent into exile because of their persistent sin. God had raised Esther by the Babylonians to conquer them.

In time, though, the Babylonians themselves were conquered. The Persians had defeated them. And the story of Esther takes place when the Persians were the superpower of the world.

Among the Jews living in exile was a man named Mordecai and his younger cousin, Hadassah. Hadassah’s parents had both died and Mordecai would choose to raise Hadassah. Hadassah was also known as Esther.

And when King Xerxes of Persia wanted to have a new queen for his kingdom, he had several beautiful young women brought into his harem. And whomever he found to be most pleasing to him, this he would name as his wife. Now personally, I would not recommend this as best practice for dating and marriage. But God can and does chose to still work through broken and sinful structures and systems.

But as you may have guessed, Esther was made Queen. But soon after this, there was a very evil man named Haman. Haman was elevated to second to Xerxes in his kingdom. Haman was very prideful and when Mordecai would not bow down to honor and worship Haman, Haman became so angry and he not only wanted to have Mordecai killed, but also all of Mordecai’s people, the Jews, killed as well. And Haman convinced the naïve and persuadable Xerxes that the right thing to do was for the Jews to be killed.

Things were looking very bleak. They appeared to be a cursed nation. Lots were cast on what day that Jews would be legally attacked and killed throughout the empire. This lot was called the pur, which is where we get the word Purim.

But then the turnaround began to happen. Mordecai convince Esther that she needed to go before the King and plead for her people. He tells her, ‘Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?’

And Esther prays and fasts for 3 days. And she tells Mordecai to have the Jewish people pray and fast as well.

And then, on the third day, Esther goes in unannounced to the King. But instead of the king ordering her death for her coming before him in this way, he chooses to extend his golden scepter towards her as a sign of her favor before him. In fact, he is pleased with Esther and is so moved by her boldness that he promises her up to half his kingdom.

The turnaround continues as Haman is directed to honor Mordecai for a plot that Mordecai uncovers to murder the king. And by the end of the story, the Jews are protected and are celebrating, while Haman himself is killed. I would encourage you to read and meditate on this story.

In any case, Purim becomes a time of joy and celebrating. It was a time to celebrate God’s sovereignty in working through faithful people to turn dire circumstances around.

Even though holiday of Purim is not specifically given by God to Moses and Israel, similar to Hanukkah, this became an important part of the Jewish calendar and remains today as a celebration to be observed.

Now as we think of Jesus and Purim, what are some things to consider? First, as a faithful Jew, Jesus observed Purim Himself. He celebrated God’s protecting of the Jews and their deliverance for the plot of an evil man.

But there is far more than this. Both Mordecai and Esther serve as foreshadows of Jesus in some ways.

1st, in considering Mordecai, he refused to bow down and honor and worship evil Haman. Instead of protecting himself, he focused on honoring and worshipping God.

Think about Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry. Jesus refused to bow down and worship Satan. Satan could have made Jesus’ life easy and comfortable. But instead, Jesus chose to worship and serve God only. Neither Mordecai nor Esther were willing to compromise with evil.

2nd, in Mordecai’s words to Esther about her coming to her position **for such a time as this,** it reminds us that Jesus came for such as time as this. Paul writes in Romans 5, “**you see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us**.” Jesus came at just the right time in history to bring about God’s grand plan to rescue humanity. And He delivered humanity from a curse far greater and more real than the curse of the Bambino.

Jesus knew what He came to do and He fulfilled His mission to the tee. His perfect and sinless life, His proclamations of the Kingdom of God, His resurrection and so forth --- mission accomplished. Although as He continues to build His church today, the mission is still ongoing.

**3rd, another parallel between Mordecai and Jesus is that both Mordecai and Jesus were falsely accused by leaders in positions of power**. Haman made false accusations against Mordecai and the Jewish leaders made false accusations against Jesus.

**4th, both Mordecai and Jesus were clothed as royalty**. For Mordecai, after he had discovered a plot to assassinate King Xerxes, he was eventually honored, much to the chagrin of Haman. He was clothed in royal clothes and publicly honored.

For Jesus, He was also clothed in royal clothes and even given a crown to wear. But this was not to honor Him, but as an attempt to mock and ridicule Him. This was a crown of thorns. The Roman soldiers bowed down in mock worship of Jesus. They put a staff in his right hand, as a mock display of His royalty. Pilate had Jesus’ ‘crime’ listed above Him on His cross, “King of the Jews.” Again, this was not done in submission to Him, but as a mockery. But the ironic thing, of course, is that Jesus is the King of the Jews and the Lord of all.

**How about Esther**? How did she serve as a type or foreshadow of Jesus Christ? Esther prayed fervently. I think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying, and calling His closest followers to pray as well. But they would fall asleep.

I think of Jesus, like Esther, being willing to speak with boldness before human leaders. People like Herod and Pontius Pilate. Both Jesus and Esther were willing to put their life in danger to offer the hope of rescue to the Jewish people. In the case of Jesus, in order to offer rescue not only to the Jews, but to all people.

And finally, there is the connection of celebration. Towards the end of the book of Esther, we read these words found in Esther 9:20-28:

**20Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, 21to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar 22as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.**

**23So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. 24For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur* (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. 25But when the plot came to the king’s attention,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther+9%3A20-28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12860a)**] he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be impaled on poles. 26(Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, 27the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. 28These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.**

In these verses, we read of the great turn around. The Jews were on the verge of massive destruction, but God turns things around to bring about a time of celebration and gladness. And God worked through Esther and Mordecai and the prayers of many faithful Jews.

So what are the big takeaways today for Christians today? How are we as Christians to reflect on Purim in light of Jesus?

**Again, it goes without saying that as Christians we are not required to observe Purim**.

This festival was not even mandated upon the Jews by God in the Old Testament, but because a celebration in light of God’s protection of them in the time of Esther.

But that being said, there is definitely much value for Christians to highly value Purim.

**First, this Jewish holiday should remind us that our God was sovereignly working to protect His people from evil schemes and that He loved to work through His people in the process**. The name of God is not actually mentioned in the Book of Esther, but God was clearly at work in raising up Esther to a position of influence and in allowing Mordecai to be a godly influence on Esther.

This should remind us that God is sovereignly working in the details of our lives as well. None of us are aware of all the ways the Lord has been working behind the scenes to bring about His will and purposes in us. And just as God worked through Mordecai and Esther, He wants to work through each of us. As Christians, Jesus calls us the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We are here on earth to make a difference for Him.

All this should cause us to ask God how He is calling us to make a difference in Him in this world. There are a million different ways that this could look. But if God gives us a place of influence, we can know for certain that God wants us to use that place of influence for His purposes. Everything we do, we are to do Christianly. Esther was raised up for such a time as this. Do you know that you were put on earth for such a time as this? You were. And what a privilege it is to a willing vessel in God’s hands, to use as He sees fit.

**Second, reflecting on Purim should remind us of the many parallels between Jesus and Mordecai and Esther**. In some ways, both Mordecai and Esther are foreshadowing Jesus Christ. As Christians, we should not only appreciate the boldness and self-sacrificial actions of Mordecai and Esther, but also be reminded of all that Jesus was willing to do on our behalf. Jesus didn’t need to do what He did for us, but He chose to do it. It wasn’t easy. It was painful. But His love compelled Him to lay down His life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. So may Purim help us reflect not only on the faithfulness of Mordecai and Esther, but also on Jesus Himself.

**And third and finally, appreciating the spirit of the Purim celebration should remind us as Christians that we are to be people of celebration**. Purim is meant to be a time of feasting and celebration, because of the amazing turnaround that God brought about on behalf of the Jewish people.

*Friends, we serve the God of the turnaround! And that is cause for celebration!*

The biggest turn around that can happen in anyone’s life is turning from sin to Christ and from spiritual darkness to light. That is a cause for celebration for all who have said yes to Jesus!

As Christians, we are sometimes called an Easter people. This means that we are to live in light of Jesus’ resurrection.

And this means that we are to be people of joy and celebration. This is to be true even during the season of Lent.

Lent is the 40-day period of prayer and fasting and reflection leading up the Holy Saturday. This is meant to be an important time of intentionally opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit in order to grow in our faith.

But did you know that the Sundays of Lent are considered feast days? This means that if you gave up chocolate for Lent that you are okay to eat chocolate on Sundays.

This is to remind us that as Christians we are to be people of joy and celebration. Even in our broken and fallen world and the sorrows and grief we experience in life, we must remember that in knowing our Savior and in having eternal life in Him, joy and celebration are to be our baseline emotions.

I challenge you to take time to regularly celebrate the victory of Jesus in your life. We know and love and serve the God of the turnaround. He turned us around and He desires to work through us in helping others to turn around.

All that being said, all of us, even as believers, sometimes we need a turnaround too. Sometimes the circumstances of life can weight us down. We still live in a broken world.

God’s Word reminds us in Isaiah that we can all get worn down and weary. But He also tells us that ‘those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.’

Do you need a turnaround today? Do you need a time of renewal and refreshment? The Lord is near and He desires to renew your strength.

May the celebration of Purim remind us that we are to be people who find our joy and strength in God and His work in our lives.

Feel free to Mark your calendars for March 23rd and March 24th – this year’s 2-day Purim festival. It is kind of fitting that Purim this year coincides with Palm Sunday. As we chose to celebrate God and His grace towards us, we cannot help but grow in our walk with Him.

Let’s pray…

Recourses:

<https://en.ohelsarah.org/purim/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAuNGuBhAkEiwAGId4avqjeRAcP-3JUuOAzu020C6-thf5VNZFaOBBfdLyxgONTJkepWI2aBoC6QQQAvD_BwE>

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

# Yeshua Jesus in Purim, The Hope of Salvation | Rabbi Jason Sobel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeHmO1q4pbw&t=277s>