

Mordecai

*His Life Was Filled With Many
Challenges*



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Overview

MORDECAI'S LIFE WAS FILLED WITH CHALLENGES

Mordecai's story is told in the book of Esther.

Following Jerusalem's last stand against Nebuchadnezzar, Mordecai's family was deported to the Babylonian empire.

He was probably born in Susa, a city that became one of Persia's capitals after Cyrus conquered Babylon, and inherited an official position among the Jewish captives that kept him around the palace even after the Babylonians were driven out.

At one time, when he overheard plans to assassinate Xerxes, he reported the plot and saved the king's life.

Mordecai's life was filled with challenges that he turned into opportunities. When his aunt and uncle died, he adopted Esther, their daughter and his young cousin, probably because his own parents were dead and he felt responsible for her.

Later, when she was drafted into Xerxes' harem and chosen to be queen, Mordecai continued to advise her. Shortly after this, he found himself in conflict with Xerxes' recently appointed second-in-command, Haman. Although willing to serve the king, Mordecai refused to worship the king's representative.

Haman was furious with Mordecai. So he planned to have Mordecai and all the Jews killed. His plan became a law of the Medes and Persians, and it looked as though the Jews were doomed.

Mordecai, willing to be God's servant wherever he was, responded by contacting Esther and telling her that one reason God had allowed her to be queen might well be to save her people from this threat.

But God had also placed *him* in the right place years earlier. God revealed to the king through his nighttime reading of historical documents that Mordecai had once saved his life, and the king realized he had never thanked Mordecai.

The great honor then given to Mordecai ruined Haman's plan to hang him on the gallows. God had woven an effective counter-strategy against which Haman's plan could not stand.

Later, Mordecai instituted the Jewish feast of Purim. He had a lengthy career of service to the king on behalf of the Jews.

In Mordecai's life, God blended both character and circumstances to accomplish great things. He has not changed the way he works. God is using the situations you face each day to weave a pattern of godliness into your character.

Pause and ask God to help you respond appropriately to the situations you find yourself in today.

A Jewish captive in Persia

Esther 2:5-6

Now at the fortress of Susa there was a certain Jew named Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. His family had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, along with King Jehoiachin of Judah and many others.

Mordecai was a Jew. The Jewish population had increased since their exile over 100 years earlier. They had been given great freedom and were allowed to run their own businesses and hold positions in government (Esther 2:19; Daniel 6:3).

The Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar carried Mordecai into exile from Jerusalem. If this referred to Mordecai himself, he would have been over 100 years old at the time of this story. This difficult phrase can be resolved by understanding that the word “who,” referring to Mordecai, can also mean “whose family.” It is likely that Mordecai’s great-grandparents were carried into captivity rather than Mordecai himself.

Foster father of Esther

Esther 2:7

This man had a beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother had died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter.

Informing Ahasuerus of a conspiracy against his life and is rewarded

Esther 2:21-22

One day as Mordecai was on duty at the palace, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him.

But Mordecai heard about the plot and passed the information on to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report.

The King reads the records of Mordecai saving his life.

Esther 6:1-11

That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the historical records of his kingdom so they could be read to him.

In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate the king.

"What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked.

His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done."

"Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. Now, as it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai from the gallows he had prepared.

So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out there."

"Bring him in," the king ordered. So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?"

So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as the king's own horse with a royal emblem on its head.

Instruct one of the king's most noble princes to dress the man in the king's robe and to lead him through the city square on the king's own horse. Have the prince shout as they go, 'This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!' "

"Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Hurry and get the robe and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Do not fail to carry out everything you have suggested."

So Haman took the robe and put it on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!"

Unable to sleep, the king decided to review the history of his reign, and his servants read to him about Mordecai's good deed. This seems coincidental, but God is *always* at work. God has been working quietly and patiently throughout your life as well. The events that have come together for good are not mere coincidence; they are the result of God's sovereign control over the course of people's lives (Romans 8:28)

Haman had wealth, but he craved something even his money couldn't buy—respect. He could buy the trappings of success and power, but his lust for popularity had become an obsession. Don't let your desire for approval, applause, and popularity drive you to immoral actions.

Mordecai had exposed a plot to assassinate Xerxes—thus he had saved the king's life (Esther 2:21-23).

Although his good deed was recorded in the history books, Mordecai had gone unrewarded. But God was saving Mordecai's reward for the right time.

Just as Haman was about to hang Mordecai unjustly, the king was ready to give the reward. Although God promises to reward our good deeds, we sometimes feel our "payoff" is too far away. Be patient. God steps in when it will do the most good.

Promoted in Haman's place

Esther 8:1-2

On that same day King Xerxes gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related.

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.

While we should not expect earthly rewards for being faithful to God, they often come. Esther and Mordecai were faithful, even to the point of risking their lives to save others. When they were willing to give up everything, God gave them a reward in proportion to their all-out commitment.

Esther 8:15

Then Mordecai put on the royal robe of blue and white and the great crown of gold, and he wore an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree.

Everyone wants to be a hero and receive praise, honor, and wealth. But few are willing to pay the price. Mordecai served the government faithfully for years, bore Haman's hatred and oppression, and risked his life for his people. The price to be paid by God's heroes is long-term commitment. Are you ready and willing to pay the price?

Esther 10:1-3

King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout his empire, even to the distant coastlands.

His great achievements and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Media and Persia.

Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem, because he worked for the good of his people and was a friend at the royal court for all of them.

Mordecai enjoyed a good reputation among the Jews because he was still their friend when he rose to a place of power.

Corruption and abuse of authority often characterize those in power. But power used to lift the fallen and ease the burden of the oppressed is power used well.

People placed by God in positions of power or political influence must not turn their backs on those in need.

No archaeological records of Mordecai's being second-in-command have been discovered, but during this time there is a strange gap in ancient Persian records.

The records indicate that another man held that position in 465 B.C., about seven years after Mordecai was first appointed. One tablet has been discovered naming Mardukaya as an official in the early years of Xerxes' reign; some believe this was Mordecai.

In the book of Esther, we clearly see God at work in the lives of individuals and in the affairs of a nation.

Even when it looks as if the world is in the hands of evil people, God is still in control, protecting those who are his.

Although we may not understand everything happening around us, we must trust in God's protection and retain our integrity by doing what we know is right.

Esther, who risked her life appearing before the king, became a hero. Mordecai, who was effectively condemned to death, rose to become the second highest-ranking official in the nation. No matter how hopeless our condition, or how much we would

**Intercedes with Ahasuerus for the Jews; establishes the festival of Purim
in commemoration of their deliverance**

Esther 8

What Haman would have done mischief with, Esther will do well with. All the trust the king had reposed in Haman, he now placed in Mordecai: a happy change. See the vanity of laying up treasure upon earth; he that heaps up riches, knoweth not who shall gather them.

With what little pleasure, nay, with what constant vexation, would Haman have looked upon his estate, if he could have foreseen that Mordecai, the man he hated above all men in the world, should have rule over all that wherein he had labored! It is our interest to make sure of those riches which will not be left behind, but which will go with us to another world.

Esther 9

The enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them by the former edict. If they had attempted nothing against the people of God, they would not themselves have suffered. The Jews, acting together, strengthened one another.

Let us learn to stand fast in one spirit, and with one mind, striving together against the enemies of our souls, who endeavor to rob us of our faith, which is more precious than our lives.

The Jews, to the honour of their religion, showed contempt of worldly wealth, that they might make it appear they desired nothing except their own preservation. In every case the people of God should manifest humanity and disinterestedness, frequently refusing advantages which might lawfully be obtained.

The Jews celebrated their festival the day after they had finished their work. When we have received great mercies from God, we ought to be speedy in making thankful returns to him.

Life Application

The opportunities we have are more important than the ones we wish we had.

We can trust God to weave together the events of life for our best, even though we may not be able to see the overall pattern.

The rewards for doing right are sometimes delayed, but they are guaranteed by God himself

Key verse:

“Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews” (Esther 10:3).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary