

# Sleepless in Susa

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Date: 04 November 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, now we turn to our Bibles for our reading this evening. We're back in the book of Esther and beginning to read at chapter 5, verse 1 through to the end of chapter 7 and the very beginning of chapter 8.

It's page 413 if you have one of the church visitors' Bibles. And here we come to, well, really the most extraordinary drama.

Remember we left a story last week with the whole of the Jewish people, the whole of the people of God throughout the whole of the Persian Empire under huge threat of destruction orchestrated by Haman, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, who was so outraged that Mordecai, the elder of the Jew, would not bow down to him and kowtow to him that he managed to get this rule, this law passed that would bring utter destruction to them all.

And Esther, the queen in the king's court, unknown to be one of the people of Israel, is at last called upon by Mordecai, her uncle, to take her stand, to seek to intervene, to go into the king and try and do something about it.

And she had said, remember, no one can just go into the king unless he has asked them. The penalty is death. The only possible hope of survival is if he would hold out his scepter and allow you to approach him.

[ 1 : 34 ] But I've not been in for more than 30 days. But she asked God's people to pray and said that she would go. So here we are in chapter 5, verse 1.

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's quarters while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace.

And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight. And he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.

Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter when the king said to her, What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you, even to the half of my kingdom. And Esther said, If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king.

And the king said, Bring Haman quickly so that we may do as Esther has asked. So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, What is your wish?

[ 2 : 44 ] It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled. Then Esther answered, My wish and my request is, if I find favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has asked.

Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. And he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he advanced them above the officials and the servants of the king.

Then Haman said, Even Queen Esther, let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, and then go joyfully with the king to the

feast.

[ 4 : 13 ] This idea pleased Haman. And he had the gallows made. On that night, the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bignatha and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?

The king's young men who attended him said, Nothing has been done for him. And the king said, Who's in the court? Now, Haman had just entered the outer courts of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he prepared for him.

And the king's young men told him, Haman is there standing in the court. The king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in, and the king said to him, What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?

Haman said to himself, Whom would the king delight to honor more than me? And Haman said to the king, Oh, for the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set.

[ 5 : 35 ] And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

Then the king said to Haman, Hurry, take the robes and the horse as you've said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you've mentioned.

So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city, proclaiming before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

And then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

[ 6 : 53 ] While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman into the feast that Esther had prepared. So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, What is your wish, Queen Esther?

It shall be granted to you. What's your request? Even to the half of my kingdom it shall be fulfilled. Then Queen Esther answered, If I find favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request.

For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, to be annihilated. If we have been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.

Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, Who is he, and where is he who has dared to do this? And Esther said, A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman.

And then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. And the king arose in his wrath from the wine drinking and went into the palace garden. But Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king.

[ 8 : 17 ] And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?

As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, 50 cubits high.

And the king said, Hang him on that. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

And then the wrath of the king abated. On that day, King Hazuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews.

And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai.

[ 9 : 26 ] And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. Amen. May God bless us his word.

Well, does not the Lord move in extraordinary and mysterious ways his wonders to perform? Well, please do turn in your Bibles to Esther, chapter 5, which was read earlier, page 413.

Now, in this section of the book of Esther, we answer the big questions about who is really in charge, who is really in control of human history.

Everything is hanging in the balance. After the end of chapter 4, the tension has mounted to almost unbearable levels. The death sentence of Haman's edict to annihilate the entire Jewish people across the whole empire, that still stands.

But Esther has now resolved to go to the king, as we saw last week. Even though it may lead to her death, she's willing to go and plead the case for her people.

[ 10 : 58 ] She's chosen her side. But what will happen now? How will things pan out? That is the question in our minds as we begin chapter 5.

And by the end of our section this evening, the big question about the fate of the Jewish people, it's still unresolved. But we feel, don't we, much more confident about the outcome, given the dramatic drama we see unfolding in these chapters.

Chapters featuring two banquets and a sleepless night. Chapters marked by a total reversal of fortunes for two characters in particular, for Haman and for Mordecai.

Things totally turn around, don't they? And the sleepless night, which is the real turning point in the whole book, it falls between these two banquets that are thrown by Esther for the king and for Haman.

So let's get straight in. We'll trace the story, which really slows down now as we start chapter 5. The first few chapters of the book, nine years have passed, but chapters 5, 6, and 7, it takes place in just two days.

[ 12 : 15 ] So let's trace the story, and we'll do so by noting what happens to each key character in these sections, to Esther, Haman, and Mordecai. And of course, crucially, the main character, the unwritten, the unseen, but always at work, the Lord God.

So let's look then, chapter 5, and we see here the first banquet. And we see here with Esther that her decision to pledge her loyalty to the Lord and to his people, it is followed by faithful planning and courageous action.

Look there at the start, chapter 5, verse 1. On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace.

Remember the great risk she was taking here. For anyone to enter the presence of the king, uninvited, it could and probably would result in certain death.

Can you imagine how she felt walking in? I think I'd be shaking to my core, wouldn't you? And there she stands. What will the king do? Esther's chosen her side, and now she does just what she said she would do.

[ 13 : 33 ] And notice this comes after three days of fasting and prayer. She's had time, hasn't she, to pray and to plan. And she comes dressed in her best.

She's wearing her royal robes. Yes, she is coming to plead for her people, but she does so claiming her full authority as the queen. What will the king do?

Well, look at verse 2. And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hands.

Now, this was a crucial moment. If the king had not extended this mercy, then not only was her fate sealed, but the fate of her whole people would have been taking a decidedly darker turn.

But Esther was granted life instead of death, and so the deliverance that she seeks for her people, this suddenly seems more likely, doesn't it? So the king, he's extended the scepter.

[ 14 : 47 ] And now we expect, don't we, we expect that Esther will now make her request. We expect her to come clean about her real identity as one of God's people and to make the appeal that Mordecai has instructed her to make, to appeal to the king to save her people from Haman's edict.

But she doesn't do that, does she? The king asks her, what is your request, Esther? And instead of launching straight in with her big request, she invites, in verse 4, she invites the king and Haman to a feast that she has prepared for that very day.

And the king is delighted. He demands that Haman be brought straight away to come to the feast that Esther's prepared. And at that feast, the king asks again, what is your wish, Esther? It shall be granted to you. What is your request? Even to half my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled. So will Esther now make her request, her plea?

Well, no. Instead, she invites the king and Haman to another feast the very next day. You feel the tension, don't you? Come on, Esther, get on with it.

[16:05] But no, there's another feast. It's not just good storytelling, is it? Isn't it? It just draws you in. But this is what happens. And Esther, by doing things this way, she's doing everything she can to bring about a favorable response from the king.

With every request the king grants, even if it is just to attend a feast, it makes granting the next request more likely, doesn't it? By the time that Esther gets to a big request there in chapter 7 in the second banquet, the king has by this point made this big statement to Esther that he will grant her her wish, even to half my kingdom.

He's made that statement three times by the end of chapter 7. So the king is almost painting himself into a corner, isn't he? He had better grant that request when it comes, shouldn't he?

Three times he said, I'll grant your request, I'll grant your request, I'll grant your request. It's a clever strategy, isn't it, from Esther. She softened him up with good food and wine.

She doesn't just barge in there and demand deliverance for her people. No, she gives herself the best chance of success with her actions here. The king couldn't, after all these banquets, he couldn't risk face by refusing to grant Esther's request.

[17:26] So in the big picture of the book, there is real courage and faithfulness and wisdom exercised by God's servants here, isn't there?

And not least by Esther. She thinks, she plans, she prays, she gives herself the very best opportunity of success.

And so when the pressure is on for you and I, when the stakes are high, we don't just let go and let God. Yes, he is at work as we'll see, but that doesn't mean his people just sit back.

Rather, we give ourselves the very best chance of success given what we know, given the circumstances. that is what Esther did.

And she did it with no guarantee it would work. There was no guaranteed outcome, but she did the very best. After the banquet, the focus of the camera shifts away from the big picture of the whole covenant people of God.

[18:38] and it zooms in on this ongoing conflict between two men, between Mordecai and Haman. Look there in verse 9. We've gone from the feast, we're expecting Esther to ask for the deliverance of her people.

And verse 9, we zoom in on Haman. And Haman, he feels like he's on top of the world. Can you imagine how he feels? A private banquet with the king and queen, just me.

And there's another one coming the next day. He feels pretty good about things. But then he sees Mordecai as he leaves the palace. And the anger quickly rises again.

And as he gets home, he offloads to his wife and to his family. Look down there at verse 11.

Haman, recounting his greatness, verses 11 and 12.

What a bore. Can you imagine his poor wife having to listen to this every night he comes home?

How great am I? Just listen again, Zeresh. I want to tell you. And then he rants about Mordecai in verse 13.

[19:43] Yet this is all worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. It is, as we saw two weeks ago in chapter 3, it is that ancient hostility, that ancient enmity between Haman and the people of God.

An enmity that has bubbled away for generations as promised by Moses in Exodus 17. It is an enmity that we saw is a visible example on the stage of human history of a far greater cosmic battle that has raised since Genesis chapter 3.

And Haman, seething, he can't stand the sight of Mordecai. And it's not enough, is it, for Haman to know that Mordecai's fate is sealed with the date for the destruction of the Jews settled.

That edict has gone out. Haman knows that in 10 months' time, Mordecai will be no longer. But it's not enough for Haman.

And so he leaps at the suggestion from his wife that Mordecai be hanged, be impaled on an enormous set of gallows the very next day.

[ 21 : 10 ] And so here at the end of chapter 5, the fate of the Jewish people as a whole, that seems very much in the balance, doesn't it?

Esther is yet to make her big request. But Mordecai's fate at the end of chapter 5, well it seems sealed, doesn't it? He will meet his end the very next day on Haman's gallows.

Nobody could have seen what was coming the next day. Let's look on to chapter 6, the sleepless night. And this is an absolutely extraordinary chapter.

One commentator suggests that this is arguably one of the most ironically comic scenes in the whole Bible. And it is great stuff, isn't it, if you're one of God's people?

But notice that on a human level, Esther is entirely absent from proceedings in chapter 6. What we do see is Haman plotting Mordecai's outrageous death while at the same time the king plans to honor Mordecai's faithful service.

[ 22 : 24 ] That's what's happening on a human level, but there is a far more significant yet invisible character at work through this chapter as we'll see. So Haman, he's planned and built these gallows, he's gone to sleep, he's woken up in the morning and he swaggers into the palace unsuspecting.

And as he does so, he wonderfully trips over his own pride, saying to himself in verse 6, who would the king delight to honor more than me? This must be the definition of pride coming before a fall.

But it is a fall that really is beyond the control of any human agency. that is so clear from what unfolds in the events here. Esther is totally unaware of Haman's plan, as is Mordecai.

There was nothing they could do to stop what he was intending. And given Haman's position, his power, Mordecai seems destined for those gallows. But what a staggering reversal of fortunes for Haman and for Mordecai we see unfolding in this chapter.

Just look at the astonishing words uttered by Haman's own wife, Zeresh. The one who, just a few verses earlier, just a few hours earlier, had suggested the plan to hang Mordecai.

[ 23 : 53 ] Look at what she says at the end of chapter 6. Down there in verse 13. If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

Now that is an absolutely staggering confession, isn't it? Staggering to hear that from a pagan unbeliever who only the day before was confidently plotting Mordecai's assassination.

Something has happened such that she now realizes that what she perhaps already suspected about God's covenant people was true. She seems, doesn't she, to be vocalizing the same truth that Mordecai spoke of in chapter 4, verse 14, where he confidently speaks of relief and deliverance that will rise for the Jews, even if Hester doesn't take her stand.

Mordecai knows that God's people will know deliverance. Mordecai knew that God's covenant promises to protect his people, to ensure their survival, he knew that was still operable, even though they were living in exile in the Persian Empire, God would keep his promises.

And Zeresh, she seems to come to the same conclusion, doesn't she? She has come to realize that the God of the Jews, he was not a God to be treated with contempt.

[ 25 : 31 ] She knew, given the events of chapter 6, that Haman was on the losing side. The writing was on the wall. She knew that the things do not go well for the enemies of God's people.

It reminds us of another confession uttered by the lips of a pagan woman in Joshua chapter 2.

There, you can read about Rahab, a pagan prostitute living in Jericho.

The armies of God's people lined up on the other side of the Jordan. And her confession back then, it spoke of the reality that God is with his people and that his enemies don't stand a chance.

Rahab had heard news of God's mighty acts and how he had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. And her heart melted. She knew the writing was on the wall and so she says, I know that the Lord has given you the land.

And she goes on to confess, given all she's heard and seen, the Lord, your God, he is the God in heaven above and on the earth beneath.

[ 26 : 46 ] That was Rahab's confession, a pagan unbeliever. And it's the same here in Esther. Zeresh. She's perhaps heard of the events Rahab spoke of.

She knows of the ancient hostility between her husband, the Agagite, and God's people. But now, seeing the events of chapter 6 unfold, she now knows that what she once feared to be true is true.

The Lord, the God of the Jews, he is the God in heavens above and on the earth beneath. And that is a realization that all of God's enemies must come to sooner or later.

She knew that if Mordecai was a Jew, she knew that Haman would not overcome him, but would surely fall before him. And that is a realization that all of God's enemies must come to sooner or later.

If those who live in opposition to the Lord and his people don't repent and turn to him, then they will have to acknowledge him in the end at that great and final judgment day.

[ 28 : 10 ] But by then, it will be too late for their opposition will be called to account. And although that is a sober reality, it is a great comfort to you, to us, as God's people today.

There are real spiritual enemies of the Lord and his people, but they will have to reckon with the reality that the Lord is God. he wins.

They lose. That is the testimony of Esther. That is the testimony of the whole Bible. So there is an extraordinary reversal of fortunes here in this chapter.

Haman's humiliation begins. Mordecai's honoring is a total reversal of what we expect. we expect him to be impaled on the gallows, not honored in the city.

But how has this all come about? How has Zeresh gone from what she says in chapter 5 to what she confesses here in chapter 6? What has happened?

[ 29 : 23 ] Well, the turning point is there at the very start of chapter 6. The king is sleepless in Susa. That is the thing that sets in motion a very unlikely series of events.

A series of seeming coincidences. The mighty Haman is rendered powerless by this chance event when the king just happens to have a sleepless night.

He just happens to have the chronicles brought and read to him. It just happens to be the page that is turned to that records Mordecai's discovering of the plot to kill the king.

You read about that back in chapter 2. It just so happens that Haman walks into the palace at the very moment when the king is wondering about how best to honor Mordecai.

it seems such an insignificant thing, doesn't it? A sleepless night. We all have them.

[ 30 : 28 ] Seems such an insignificant thing. But as one commentator put it, by making the turning point of the whole story an insignificant event rather than the point of highest tension, the author is taking the focus away from human action.

The characters of the story are not responsible for this reversal in fortunes, but rather there is an unseen power at work and controlling this remarkable reversal of destiny.

The writer is making it plain, isn't he, that beneath the surface of human decision, there is an unseen and uncontrollable power at work.

It's clear as we step back and see the whole story, it is clear that God is at work and ruling history according to, as perhaps Zeresh now realized, according to the ancient covenant promises he made with his people all those years ago and specifically that the Agagites would be destroyed. And it is ironic, isn't it? It is ironic that it is at this moment when the Agagites seem strongest that the Lord brings about their downfall.

[ 31 : 57 ] Haman seems unstoppable, doesn't he? He's got the king to sign up that edict to destroy a whole peoples. He's just had that banquet with the queen and the king, just him.

He seemed most powerful but at that very moment the Lord is bringing about his downfall and he did it not through spectacular signs and wonders but through the seemingly ordinary a sleepless night, the reading of the chronicles.

God, who is Esther's God and Mordecai's God, he remains at work behind the scenes and in the ordinary everyday things of life.

He is at work at this very moment directing all things in order to fulfill his promises. Jesus, he worked through the ordinary birth of a child in an ordinary town called Bethlehem.

A child who grew to be a man, a carpenter, who would then die on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem. But these seemingly unspectacular events, they were the way in which God brought about the greatest reversal, the greatest deliverance known to man.

[ 33 : 26 ] That is how God works. And so God's enemies, the enemies of God's people today, powerful as they may seem, they are only a sleepless night away from downfall.

I was chatting with an older saint just this week about the downfall of the fiercely anti-Christian empire of communism. Something that at one point seemed almost unimaginable, that that should fall apart.

Yet, with remarkable speed, it all came crashing down. The empires of this world, the empire of the enemy, is not as strong as it seems.

So, by the end of chapter 6, things have quite apart from any human initiative. They've really started to turn around. Mordecai, we would expect to be on the gallows, but he isn't.

Haman, who once looked so powerful, is clearly on his way down. even his own wife sees it. But there is still a lot to be resolved.

[ 34 : 45 ] How will Esther's request go? Will Mordecai end up on the gallows anyway? Well, let's look on then to the final scene and to the second banquet in chapter 7.

Things move very quickly in this chapter. The tension, the irony, the drama, all come thick and fast. And the king, for the third time, verse 2, he asked Queen Esther, what is your wish?

It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled. And then it comes. This is it.

Esther is now going to risk all. If I found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleased the king, let my life be granted for me, for my wish, and my people, for my request.

Notice how carefully Esther goes about it. She pleads for her own life and for her people, but she doesn't yet disclose who her people are.

[ 35 : 56 ] She goes on and pulls the king in. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, to be annihilated.

And notice that Esther unashamedly ties herself to her people. She truly has thrown her lot in. Her loyalty is clear, her side is chosen.

And she uses that to her advantage, doesn't she? Someone wants her, somebody wants her, the queen, the one who the king has some considerable affection for, the one who has just thrown two banquets in two days, someone wants her dead.

The king is enraged. Even though he signed off the edict, he doesn't realize that yet, but he is apoplectic. Look at verse 5. Who is he?

Where is he? Who dared do this? Then the big reveal. Esther has the king right where she wants him.

[ 37 : 06 ] A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman. Zeresh was right, wasn't she? The game is up for Haman and he's terrified.

The king flies out in a rage and Haman turns to the queen for mercy. Big mistake. The king returns to find Haman falling on the couch where Esther was.

Haman's fate is sealed. The king interprets Haman's actions as an assault. And as the readers, as those who know Haman for what he truly is, who he truly is, we're cheering at this point, aren't we? The one who has plotted the destruction of the Jews, the one who had just that very morning erected a huge gallows in his garden for Mordecai, we rejoice to see the downfall of this evil man, of this enemy of God's people.

people. We can't help but enjoy the little aside from Harbono, the eunuch. Just for your information, your majesty, you may just want to take a look out the east window.

[ 38 : 28 ] You'll see a gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai. It's 50 cubits high, it's massive, you can just see it over the rooftops, just to point that out to you. Hang him on that, says the king.

Haman hung by his own hubris, a complete reversal of fortunes for Haman and for Mordecai. And we see there in the first couple of verses of chapter 8 that at the very heart of the Persian Empire there's been a complete turning of the tables.

The great enemy of God's covenant people has been removed and one of the key figures amongst God's people has been promoted and given the house of Haman.

It's delicious irony. But all is not resolved, is it? The edict that Haman issues still remains.

The fate of God's people across the entire Persian Empire still hangs in the balance. And we'll see the conclusion next week. But isn't it just a wonderful indication of God's grace to individuals that he saves Mordecai in this way.

[ 39 : 50 ] There's a whole empire of Jews whose lives hang in the balance but we also see the Lord at work to save just one man. Our God is so huge and powerful and capable.

He can focus on individuals and bring about great reverse in the lives whilst at the same time bringing about salvation to a whole people. he can do that. Mordecai was just one man amongst many but the Lord broke in and brought him salvation.

But before we finish let's not miss the big lesson of these extraordinary and dramatic chapters. at the outset of chapter 5 all seemed to be with Haman and against God's people.

But what a staggering reversal there is. Yes, God's people were acting faithfully here. Esther and Mordecai, they take action. But the key action, the key turning point was down to the Lord alone operating in the seemingly normal.

evil. And through it all, the seemingly powerful Haman, the enemy of the Jews, he was brought crashing down. And we see here in these chapters that the kingdom of evil which often looks massive and monolithic in its opposition to the gospel and the will of God has in fact within itself the seeds of its own disintegration and destruction.

[ 41 : 31 ] destruction. We learn from Revelation 17 that the kingdom of evil is permitted by God and forged by him for his own purposes and exists only so long as he allows it to.

So yes, we do live as God's people. We do live in a war zone. There is a real enemy. But it is a war zone where God is at work.

The enemy, no matter how desperate things might sometimes look, the enemy never has the upper hand. God is ultimately in control.

And the enemy in these chapters look to have an unassailable upper hand, didn't he? Haman looked unimpeachable. And yet within a day he was down. God is ultimately in control.

And that ought to bring you and I great encouragement today. For we do see, don't we? We do see the efforts of the ultimate enemy in the world today.

[ 42 : 42 ] We do feel the pressure of a rapidly secularizing world. There are enemies of the gospel, of the church, and the evil one will use all sorts of people and institutions to further his own ends.

But the enemy won't win. And you, you and I, because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can know that truth, that he won't win.

You and I can know that with far more certainty than Jerush knew. God's will be so take heart and put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil, knowing that he is a defeated devil and that God is at work behind the scenes.

He is at work, even in the seemingly normal. he is at work and he will, he will keep his promises.

Well, let's pray, shall we? our Father God, help us to see beyond the visible worlds.

[ 44 : 12 ] Help us to see beyond the visible empires of this world. Help us to see beyond the real hostility to your church from the evil one.

Help us to not live by sight, but rather live by faith, knowing that the enemy is a defeated enemy, to know that you are sovereign and at work behind the scenes bringing about your promises to your people.

they are unshakable. Help us to believe. Help us to be a people together and as individuals that walk by faith and not by sight.

Help us for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.