

Esther Chapter 8

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Date: 20 January 2013

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[0 : 00] And it's the Psalm 113. We'll sing the whole of the psalm. The tune is St. Petersburg. O praise you servants of the Lord, sing praises to his holy name. O blessed be the name of God, his praise forevermore proclaim. From east to west the praise of God each day is to be spread abroad. Psalm 113, page 151. We'll sing the whole of the psalm to the tune St. Petersburg.

O praise you servants of the Lord, sing praises to his holy name. O blessed be the name of God, his praise forevermore proclaim. From east to west the praise of God each day is to be spread abroad. The Lord is high above the earth, his glory far above the sky. Who else is like the Lord, our God? The one who sits and groan on high. He is the one who stoops down low to look on heaven and earth below. He raises outcasts from the dust, and from the ash he flips the earth. He is the one who sits and he is the one who sits and he is the one who sits with nobleman. To sit secure. The childless woman, he'll reward with all my children.

Praise the Lord.

We're going to join together in prayer. Let's pray. Our Father, we are here to receive. We are here to be open to your voice. We are here to come and to give thanks for your company with us and for meeting with us this evening.

We are here to praise you, and we are here to declare the worthship of God. And Lord, you are worth everything to us. You have loved us with an everlasting love.

[3 : 24] You have placed your hand upon us who do not deserve your love. You who are high and lifted up in your majesty and your glory, inexplicable to ourselves.

We're incomprehensible. We do not begin to understand you. And even the knowledge that we do have of the universe around us is so incomprehensible, and yet it reflects a God who is even more awesome than we can imagine.

And yet, Lord, you have bowed down your ear to listen to our prayer, and you have come into this world in the person of Jesus Christ to suffer the death of the cross so that we could be reconciled to you and so that we could know you and have fellowship with you, and we could have the forgiveness of sins in which we could be forever with the Lord.

We give thanks for the great promise that you have given to us in your grace, that you are right now preparing a place for us so that where you are there, we may be also.

And we pray, Lord, that you will prepare us in this world and give us to look heavenward for the things of this earth are temporal, but the things of eternity, the things of God are eternal without ending.

[4 : 46] Lord God, we pray that you will give us heavenly minds and pray that we might, with these minds, live in the light of the future.

Bless your word to us now, we pray. We thank you for each one of us who gathers together in evening worship. We thank you for the hunger that you've put in our hearts and our minds that is coupled with our love for you.

We pray for anyone who hasn't yet come to faith. We pray that your word will so speak to them with such great power that they may be brought by the Holy Spirit into relationship with Jesus in which they ask that you will have mercy upon them.

Teach us, O Lord, how much we need you. Teach us that we are sinners and that we are hell-deserving and that the only place where there is forgiveness is Jesus and Him crucified.

So we pray that our hearts may be lifted up this evening and that there may be joy in our hearts as we sing. Which one of us can fail to sing the words that we've been singing without having joy in our hearts?

[5 : 52] When we contemplate the way in which you have raised us up from the ash heap, from being dead in trespasses and sins, and you have created new life within us and raised us from the dead to serve you and to love you and to know you.

And so we pray for what we want for our, what we have ourselves, we want for other people, and we pray for the gospel all over the world. And we thank you, Lord, for the places in the world where we have had an interest and where we continue to have an interest.

We thank you, Lord, of India and the work which is continuing in the schools in Lachnodon and Chapara. We think of the congregations that are associated with our church in Jabalpur and Chapara and Lachnodon.

We give thanks, Lord, for them and for the outreach work that has been taking place recently in the villages around Lachnodon. And, Lord, we rejoice in those who have come to faith in Jesus in what appears to have been a real movement of your Spirit in these areas.

Lord, what a joy it is to know that you are working in these areas where Christ has never been known before and where the gospel is being preached for the first time. And people are coming to hear that there is a God, but that God is not one who is unapproachable, but a God, O Lord, who has come into our world to be one of us and to take our sin upon Himself so that we could be made whole and healed from the guilt and from the darkness of sin.

[7 : 25] And, O Father in heaven, what we pray for there, we pray for other parts of the world, thinking, O Lord, of the places in Africa tonight where there is such trouble.

We think of Mali and Algeria. We think, O Lord, of Somalia and Sudan. We think of these war-torn, violent places where it is dangerous to live.

We pray for peace to be in these places. Lord, we long for peace. We long for peace in our souls and the souls of the people who live there. And we pray that you will take away from them the obsession for other beliefs.

We pray that you will give them to discover what Jesus, the Son of God, did when He came into the world and died on the cross. We pray that they may know the liberating power of the Holy Spirit. We know that you are able to do this for a lost world, a world who God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

[8 : 27] Bless those tonight connected with our own congregation who are ill. We remembered them already today, but we want to remember them again.

We remember, Lord, those who are sad, those who are mourning the loss of loved ones. Lord, we think of those whose hearts are broken this evening. We think of those, O Lord, who are struggling in many ways of life.

We think of those who are struggling spiritually and physically and mentally and financially and struggling with various issues that have arisen in their own homes and their own circumstances. Lord, O God, we pray for everyone who tonight is wrestling and struggling and those who feel that they cannot cope, who feel that they're surrounded by darkness. And we pray that you will enter into that darkness with them and guide them, Lord, as they seek.

We pray that you will draw them to seek you and to seek refuge and comfort and salvation if they still have to come to faith in Jesus. O Lord God, we pray that you will do in us and for us more than we can ask or even think.

[9 : 40] Exceed our asking, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. We're going to read together in Esther chapter 8.

We're going to have two readings this evening and they are rather long, but I do want to read the whole of the book with you. We've read up until this point, read chapter 7, but we're going to read now chapter 8.

Page 495.

On that day, King Ahasuerus 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. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. Then Esther spoke again to the king.

[10 : 44] She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king.

And she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamadeth, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king.

But how can I bear to see the calamity that's coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred? Then King Ahasuerus said to King Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he intended to lay hands on the Jews.

But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews in the name of the king and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked.

The king's scribes were summoned at that time in the third month, which is the month of Shivan, on the 23rd day.

[12:00] And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopian, 127 provinces, to each province in his own script and to each people in his own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language.

And he wrote in the name of king Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods.

On one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar, a copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples.

And the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. So the couriers mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command, and the decree was issued in Susa, the citadel.

Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown, and a robe of fine linen and purple. And the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

[13:25] The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday.

And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them. Well, we'll continue the next chapter after we sing together from Psalm 138.

It's on page 431. Psalm number 138. It's the traditional version of the psalm. We're going to sing from verse 4 down to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 138. All kings upon the earth that are shall give thee praise, O Lord, when as they from thy mouth shall hear thy true and faithful word, yea, in the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing, for grace the glory of the Lord who doth forever reign.

Psalm 138, page 431. The last five stanzas of the psalm, the tune is Free Church, verse 4. All kings upon the earth that are.

[14:34] We'll stand to sing. Amen. Amen. All kings upon the earth that are shall give thee praise, O Lord, when as they from thy mouth shall hear, thy true and faithful word.

In the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing, ingest see me in the artefony of the Lord mio, who doth forever reign.

O God, have ye tilde persevered, All those that believe me.

Where does the crown of day one and the floweth hee?

Though I in mist of troubled war I lie from thee shall die Hence my foes not but sets thine hand My bright heart shall be saved Surely that which concerneth me The Lord will bear back me Lord, still thy mercy lasts Do not thy own hands work for sale

[17:10] Well, we're going to continue the reading. Esther chapter 9, page 496. And we'll just finish the chapter.

I'll read it reasonably quickly. Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar On the thirteenth day of the same When the king's command and edict were about to be carried out On the very day

when the enemies of the Jews Hoped to gain mastery over them The reverse occurred The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them The Jews gathered in their cities Throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus To lay hands on those who sought their harm And no one could stand against them For the fear of them had fallen on all peoples All the officials of the provinces And the satraps and the governor And the royal agents who helped the Jews For also helped the Jews For fear of Mordecai had fallen on them For Mordecai was great in the king's house And his fame spread throughout all the provinces For the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful The Jews struck all their enemies with a sword Killing and destroying them As did and did as they pleased to those who hated them

In Susa, the citadel itself The Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men And also killed Parshandatha and Dalfon and Aspatha And Poratha and Adaliah And Aradatha and Parmashtha And Arasai and Aradai And Vizatha The ten sons of Haman The sons of Amidatha The enemy of the Jews But they laid no hand on the plunder That very day the number of those killed in Susa The citadel was reported to the king And the king said to Queen Esther And Susa the citadel The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men And also the ten sons of Haman What then have they done In the rest of the king's provinces Now what is your wish It shall be granted you And what further is your request It shall be fulfilled And Esther said If it please the king Let the Jews who are in Susa Be allowed tomorrow also To do according to this day's edict And let the ten sons of Haman Be hanged on the gallows

So the king commanded this to be done A decree was issued in Susa And the ten sons of Haman were hanged The Jews who were in Susa Gathered also On the fourteenth day of the month of Adar And they killed three hundred men in Susa But they laid no hands on the plunder Now the rest of the Jews Who were in the king's provinces Also gathered to defend their lives And got relief from their enemies And killed seventy-five thousand Of those who hated them But they laid no hands on the plunder This was on the thirteenth day Of the month of Adar And on the fourteenth day They rested And made a day Made that a day Of feasting and gladness But the Jews who were in Susa Gathered on the thirteenth day And on the fourteenth And rested on the fifteenth day Making that a day Of feasting and gladness Therefore the Jews of the villages Who live in the rural towns Hold the fourteenth day Of the month of Adar As a day for gladness And feasting As a holiday And as a day On which they sent gifts Of food to one another And Mordecai recorded these things And sent letters to all the Jews Who were in all the provinces Of King Ahasuerus Both near and far Obliging them to keep The fourteenth day Of the month Adar And also the fifteenth day Of the same year Year by year As the days on which The Jews got relief From their enemies And as the month That had been turned from them For sorrow into gladness And from mourning into a holiday That they should make them Days of feasting and gladness Days for sending gifts Of food to one another And gifts to the poor So the Jews accepted What they had started to do And what Mordecai Had written to them For Haman the Agagite The son of Hamadatha The enemy of all the Jews Had plotted against the Jews To destroy them And had cast power That is cast lots To crush and destroy them But when he came Before the king He gave orders in writing That this evil plan Which he had devised Against the Jews Should return on his own head And that he and his sons Should be hanged On the gallows Therefore they call These days Purim

[21 : 27] After the term power Therefore because of all That was written in this letter And all that What they had faced In this matter And of what had happened To them The Jews firmly bound Themselves in their offspring And all who joined them That without fail They would keep these two days According to what was written And at the time Appointed every year That these days Should be remembered And kept throughout Every generation In every clan Province and city And that these days And that these days Of Purim Should never fall Into disuse Among the Jews Nor should the commemoration Of these days Cease among their descendants Then Queen Esther The daughter of Abihal And Mordecai the Jew Gave full written authority Confirming this second letter About Purim Letters were sent To all the Jews To the 127 provinces Of the kingdom of Ahasuerus In words of peace And truth That these days Of Purim Should be observed At their appointed seasons As Mordecai the Jew And Queen Esther Bound them And as they had bound Themselves in their offspring With regard to their fasts

And their lamenting The command of Queen Esther Confirmed these practices Of Purim And it was recorded In writing King Ahasuerus Imposed tax on the land And on the coastlands Of the sea And all the acts Of his power and might And the full account Of the high honor Of Mordecai To which the

king Advanced him Are they not written In the book Of the chronicles Of the kings Of Media and Persia For Mordecai the Jew Was second in rank To King Ahasuerus And he was great Among the Jews And popular With a multitude Of his brothers For he sought The welfare of his people And spoke peace To all his people May God bless That reading of his word We'll return to it In a few moments After we sing together In Psalm number 30 On page 35 Page number 35 And Psalm 30 That's the new Psalms Version of Psalm 30 We're going to sing 9 to 12 Last four verses Of Psalm 30 The tune is St. Minver What gain Will my destruction Bring If I descend To death Will thus Proclaim your faithfulness Or praise you With its breath And verse 12 Therefore my heart Will sing to you And never cease To praise To your great name O Lord my God I will give thanks Always All the Psalms We're singing Tonight Are Psalms Of deliverance In which the writer By his own experience Has enjoyed The God The power of God Lifting him From a place Of desperation A place of sadness To a place of joy And that's what We're going to be Reading about This evening And that's how Esther of course Ends Psalm 30 Verse 9 To the end of the Psalm And we're going to Stand once again To sing The pain Will my destruction Bring If I descend To death Will not away Will faithfulness Or praise you With his breath Give us my drive O Lord my God And listen to my plea Come to my aid And my distress Have mercy Have mercy Lord on me You turned my willing Into hands No longer was I sad My sack My sack Lord God You gave me Close Of joy And I was Thine Therefore My heart Will sing To you And never cease To praise To you To you O Lord My God I will give Thanks always To you I'm going to start

[26 : 37] This evening With a question And the question Is this Do you know What the longest Verse in the Bible Is Do you know Where the longest Verse in the Bible Is I have to confess Up until yesterday If you had asked me That question I would not have been Able To tell you The longest Verse in the Bible Is in Esther Chapter 8 And verse 9 So now you know Verse 9 Chapter 8 Of Esther The king's scribes Were summoned At that time In the third month Which is the month Of Sivan On the 23rd day And an edict Was written According to all That Mordecai Commanded Concerning the Jews To the satraps And the governors And the officials Of the provinces From India To Ethiopia 127 provinces

To each province In its own script And to each people In his own language And also to the Jews In their script And their language The longest verse In the Bible Well we've come to the end Of our I guess Reasonably short Study Of the book Of Esther I know that it Is Certainly was something New for me To do this And I hope That you have Enjoyed it But more importantly That you've Benefited from it And more importantly That you have been Challenged and encouraged By the story The great story Of how God's people Were delivered From the condemnation And the certain Destruction Which Haman's Law Would have Meant For them We read last time Of course Of how Esther Had organized A feast A dinner Given to the king

And to Haman And we saw last time Of how Queen Esther With her characteristic Wisdom And meekness And humility Had used that occasion To plead with the king To save her people Israel She had come out As an Israelite She had confessed That these were her people Ahasuerus We guess Had never known this And that was the first time As far as we know That she had She had acknowledged That she was A Jewish person And we saw how important It was We wondered We've wondered all along How right it was For Esther To have kept quiet About this Such important Piece of information That central Piece of information About who she Identified with Who are you Tonight Who am I You're a Christian If you belong to And if you follow

The Lord Jesus Christ You're a First and foremost You're a Christian You belong to Jesus And so do I And one of the Interesting things As the story Begins to end This is the beginning Of the end The story's not Finished yet One of the Interesting things Is that as Haman is taken away Having been exposed For his wickedness His murderous plot Against the Jewish people And having been Taken away By the servants Of Ahasuerus And hanged On his own gallows What we discover After that Is something Really interesting That Esther Gains the respect And the sympathy Of Ahasuerus He doesn't banish Her as a queen Because she has Confessed to being A Jew Quite the reverse He is sympathetic To the fact That she is a Jew He doesn't hold It against her And one has to Wonder What would the

Result Of course we never Know this and that's Not the way the Story unfolds But you have to Wonder if she had Come clean From the very Beginning How different Things could Have been We don't know Perhaps she was Afraid There's every Appearance from Mordecai earlier On in the book

That he didn't Want her to Disclose who she Was because They were afraid Of repercussions That there would Be hostility against Them But there might Not have been In fact there's Every indication From Ahasuerus That quite the Reverse He wasn't Hostile towards The Jewish People And he would Not have been Hostile and how Much different Well we don't Know do we Because that's Not we can't Turn back The hands of Time the story Happened as it Happened and the Thing about God Is this this is The wonderful Wonderful truth Of God That God is Able to take Our wrongdoing And transform

[31 : 42] Them into His glory And I say That not to Give us an Excuse to Do the wrong Thing You never Have an Excuse to Do the wrong Thing Don't mistake Me in any Way But I say That to Encourage you In case you've Given up On yourself Because of Some wrongdoing That you have Done in the Past God is able To take What we Have done Our Shortcomings Our wrongdoings Our mistakes The times That we Have failed Him And we Can look Back to Events Things that Happened in Our lives When we Know we Should have Spoken And we Never Spoke To things That we Have said That we Shouldn't Have said To things That we Have done Wrong And we Knew we Were doing It at The time And we Still did It And we Have come To regret It And we Have come To that Place where We are so Sorry before

The Lord Especially when We see the Repercussions of Our actions And yet God Is able Somehow or Other To make Good What does He say In Joel I will Repay The years That the Locusts Have eaten And that's a Great encouragement To all of us Tonight who Serve and Who know The Lord Because we Know that Our service Could have Been better And we've Been silent When we Should have Been vocal And we Have wronged The Lord And yet we Can come to Him tonight And not only Ask for His forgiveness As we Turn away From that Wrongdoing And we Know that He is able To repay The years That the Locusts Have eaten Well the Story isn't Finished Because of This one Awful truth That the Edict The decree Which Haman Originated Stamped by The king Has gone Out And the Decree said That not only Mordecai was To be killed But all the Jews throughout Persia were To be put To death Now you Would imagine Wouldn't you That the King With the Authority of The king Would be Able to At that Point say Call a Halt to It Stop it Right now Send Messengers And say The decree Is null And void But he Wasn't able To do That Because this Is Persia And according To the laws Of the Medes And the Persians No law Can be Revoked Isn't that Astonishing Isn't it That here Is the Most powerful King in the World At that Time And there Was no Democracy Like there Is in Some super Powers He's not Answerable To the Kingdom But he

Is a Persian And apparently It just Wasn't heard Of for a Persian king To reverse What he Has decreed It wasn't Possible For an Edict Verse 8 Written in The name Of the King And sealed With the King's Ring Cannot Be Revoked So plan B was That there Would be Another decree And this Is after Esther fell Down before The king Pleading with Him in Chapter 8 For her People The only Thing that The king Could do After of Course promoting Haman To a Place of Great Importance And honour And majesty He was made King in fact He was made Now that doesn't Mean of course That he was Equal with Ahasuerus But he was Just about There Pretty much Prime minister Something like What Daniel Was promoted To But that

Still didn't Solve the Problem Esther Still had To fall In front Of the King And plead With him To save Her people And so The only Thing that Ahasuerus Could do Was to Issue Another decree Once again Signed by The king's Signet ring Giving The Jews Official Sanction To defend Themselves So that When the House of Haman And anyone Who cared To join Them Rose up To destroy The Jews As per The first Decree As per The second Decree The Jews Were given Permission To gather Together Into groups And armies And to Defend Themselves On this Thirteenth Day Of the Month Of Adar That was The only Thing They were As bound By legislation

[36 : 45] As sometimes We are In our Modern World The king Was bound By the Laws of The Medes And the Persians And so The only Option was To issue A law That gave The green Light To the House of Israel To the Tribe of Israel To rise up And to Defend Themselves And of Course That law Once it Was given And copied And written And it Was sent Out by The fastest Means of Communication There was Nothing There wasn't Telephone There was No Internet There was No email There was No texting There was Nothing like That in Those days If you Wanted to Get A message From one End of Persia To the Other It would Take Weeks And Nowadays It takes Less than A tenth Of a Second In those Days You had To send And that's Why we Read there In chapter Eight That the Very best Horses Were used Because time Was limited If they Did not Get this

Out across The kingdom The empire Of Persia To all the Jews who Were living There Then the Month The day Of the Month Would Arrive And the Jews would Be put To death Without Being able To defend Themselves Now I Guess we Should stop At this Point And just Give a Word of Explanation About the Wording of The second Decree Verse 11 Saying that The king Allowed the Jews who Were in Every city To gather And defend Their lives To destroy To kill And to Annihilate Any armed Force of Any people Or province That might Attack them Children And women Included And to Plunder Their goods On one Day Throughout All the Provinces Of king Ahasuerus On the Thirteenth Day Of the Twelfth Month Which Was the Month Of Adar And then Of course What happens Is there's An account In chapter Nine Of exactly What did Happen On that Particular Day The Thirteenth Day Of the Month Of Adar The Jews Did defend Themselves One Who Particular And in To Full Know Particular Any – is this not just repaying violence with violence?

And after all, in the New Testament, there is nothing of this kind of action that takes place, and Christians are never, ever, ever commanded to be violent to anyone, to kill anyone, to engage in any kind of holy war.

Holy war is what we read about in the newspapers that takes place in Islamic countries. It does not take place within Christian communities. And so it's particularly uncomfortable for us to read an account like this, which gives leave to the Jewish people to kill, and it appears here that not only were they allowed to kill men, but they were allowed to kill women and children, to plunder their goods on this one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

[39 : 50] Now, I want to say two things about that. First of all, that they were to defend themselves. It's quite clear from this chapter that they were not allowed to simply, this did not give them a green light to kill anyone they wanted, or indeed anyone who wasn't a Jew.

They were simply, they were given leave to defend themselves, so that if someone tried to kill them, they were allowed.

In other words, what was happening here was a war. There was a kind of civil war taking place in Persia between one ethnic group and the other. Remember that the house, the family of Haman, they were sworn enemies of Israel, and to them the decree of Haman was the green light to do what they always wanted to do, and their forefathers wanted to do before them.

This was the chance that they wanted. They were brought up to hate the Jewish people, to hate God's people. And you remember, of course, that behind this hatred lay a spiritual enemy.

All the way through the Old Testament, we saw this in chapter 3, I think, that behind the Agagites, the evil one was winding them up, continuously trying to bring down the people of God, because the devil himself wanted, as he continues to try to destroy all the plans and the purposes of God, this was one of the ways he did it in the Old Testament.

[41 : 30] He has chosen other ways to do it in the New Testament, but the war continues. And so that's what happened here. We must remember that the Jewish people were only given leave to defend themselves.

And, of course, in a war, this was a real war situation. There is nothing pleasant about war at any time. There was nothing pleasant about this war. No one was taking delight.

How the family of Haman, they tried their best to meet out their hatred against the Jewish people. But the Jewish people, of course, they were filled with encouragement because they were now given this leave.

They were given this permission to defend themselves. And so they were encouraged by that. And so they rose up, I guess, as any one of us would do. I certainly don't want to, this evening, go into the rights and the wrongs of war, but just to say that when it comes to a choice of either being killed or killed, that was the choice that they had.

And it would have been wrong of them, in the eyes of God, not to defend their wives and their people from the aggressors that took up the sword against them.

[42 : 42] But, of course, the second thing is that this, of course, opens up a wider question in the Old Testament as to why it was that there were many people of the Old Testament that were destroyed by the Israelites.

And you can't help feeling, but this is the outworking of something that goes back over many, many centuries because God had said in Exodus chapter 17, when originally the Amalekites, who were the ancestors of the Agagites, they had come to attack Israel and try to destroy them in Exodus chapter 17, God promised from that day onwards that the memory of Amalek would be destroyed.

And this is the fulfillment of that promise. I'm not saying every single one of them were destroyed. We have no evidence of that. But what we do know is that their memory, their lasting legacy, was blotted out exactly as God had commanded.

And so chapter 9 goes on to tell us of not only how the decree of Mordecai was fulfilled, but it tells us also of how that it came to be a day of celebration for the people of Israel.

Parim. If I was really clever in doing this, I would have waited before looking at this final part of Esther. I would have timed this a little bit different so as to conclude the study of Esther on the Sunday after our Communion, the fourth Sunday in February, because that to this day is the festival of Parim.

[44 : 25] Even to this day, the Jewish people look back on this marvelous deliverance on how God had in His mercy, and of course they write, we'll go into this in a few moments' time, how they had been delivered from destruction to a place of safety.

That was what Parim is all about. But tonight, we're also able to look at this book in the light of the New Testament, because all the way through the Bible, God has acted on behalf of His people, not only to make sure that His promises are fulfilled, but as they looked forward to the great deliverance, to the day when people would be saved from condemnation and brought to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And if ever there was an example of something that pointed, an event that pointed forward, not only pointed upwards, but it pointed forward to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

What's happened to us? We saw this. We saw a little bit of that last week. Every one of us this evening has been born in sin. The Bible tells us that we are condemned from the very beginning. The moment we come into this world, that we're condemned by God because we are sinners. And there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. In many respects, we are like the Jewish people, God's people, as they waited for their destruction.

[46 : 05] There was a decree from a king that was issued against them to their condemnation and destruction. And you can't help thinking that it kind of reflects the world in which we live, a world that is condemned and cursed and separated from God.

And yet God, in his mercy, has reached down and rescued that world by sending Jesus Christ into that world.

And he has lifted us up and created within us a new heart and a new beginning and a new person. He has saved us and delivered us.

And that theme of deliverance is found all the way through the Bible. A God who is holy and a God who must punish sin.

And yet, at the same time, that God is merciful and long-suffering and slow to die. Let me just give you some examples of places in the Bible where there are these songs of how God delivers his people.

[47 : 12] You remember Hannah, 1 Samuel 1, when she went into the temple and prayed for a son. And the Lord gave her a son. And she went and she prayed this, The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

He brings low and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap. He makes them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.

And then, all the way through the Bible and to where the angel appeared to Mary, telling her that she was going to have a son and she must call his name Jesus.

She prayed too, just like Hannah. And her prayer was very similar to Hannah. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. And similarly, in Luke chapter 2, Simeon, who was one of the first to see the baby Jesus, he blessed them and he said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and the rising of many in Israel for a sign that is opposed.

[48 : 24] All of these prayers say the same thing. They recognize a God who delivers and saves and rescues. A God for whom the world is divided into two.

Those who are proud and conceited and opposed to God and those who are God's people and who are persecuted often to the point of death and destruction and humility and poverty.

But God reverses that and he brings down all those who are his enemies and will one day and he will raise those who wait for him and worship him in spirit and in truth even if they are in the minority

and if they are in an oppressed minority.

The book of Esther is a massive encouragement to every Christian living in a hostile world. We do not know what a day or an hour may bring.

We are living in an uncertain world in which who knows what will happen next year and who knows what kind of opposition there may be and even persecution there may be against Christians.

[49 : 41] We turn to the story of Esther and we discover that God may be silent but he is present and he is working in and through his people to bring about a reversal of what we see and we experience around us.

We might never see that reversal. We might never see it but God will do it sooner or later. The world the history of the world is full of times of prosperity for God's people.

There are times of revival. You read about them in the books. Times when God's spirit moves in incredible extraordinary power as he has done in this country and in this island.

But there are also times of bitter opposition. Times of not only indifference but enmity in which the enemies of God appear to have the upper hand.

But these times are in the Bible as well. And as God's people wait for him and worship him and continue to serve him simply in obedience and in faith, God will honor that one day.

[50 : 59] you might see it but you might not. Sometimes God honors the faithfulness of his people by their death.

You think today of those who are facing death because they are Christians. God will honor that and God will use that to bring about his own glory in the world.

And ultimately God will do it as he brings the world to a close. One day this whole world that is under condemnation will be destroyed and where everyone will gather together and we must stand in front of the judgment seat of God.

That will be God's finality in which either we will have been in Christ and will be saved or whether we will not and be lost. That's the promise that God gives us.

So there's a great reversal in this story. A wonderful paradox in which God takes those who think the world of themselves and bring them down to the ground and those who are persecuted and those who are condemned by the evil one up and he makes them kings.

[52 : 20] He exalts them and gives them to rejoice in their salvation. I'm sure you've been wondering why is it that there's no mention of God in Esther?

After all it's a book in the Bible and a book that is a fascinating book. It's a book about God's people the Jewish people it's about their deliverance as they lived in Persia and yet the name of God does not appear once in that book.

I would suggest to you that perhaps the reason for that is that the writer is simply writing an account of what he or she sees taking place in Susa in Persia it's simply a story a true story I have no doubt whatsoever but that all the events in that story are absolutely true.

He's simply saying as it happens he's not interpreting it he's not exegeting it he's not preaching it he's not seeing what lies beyond he just tells it as it is but that doesn't mean that God doesn't appear in Esther anyone who's reading this story with the eye of faith with the mind of faith who knows their Bible and who knows the nature of God you can see it's as clear as night and day how God is present there's a voice within this book saying I am with you I will be with you never to leave you and never to forsake you God was amongst his people all the time even although we never read his name like I said before the encouraging fact is that that's the same place as we are very often in our Christian lives where we say where we ask ourselves where is God in my life why does God not do what I would expect him and would hope that he would do right now why is he not answering my prayer the prayer that I have been praying for weeks months years why is the very opposite happening to what I am praying for and hoping for and it appears to us that God is silent God is silent sometimes but faith means that we interpret that silence by his word the word by which he promises that he is pledged to his people that he will walk with them that he is united to his people going with them where they go holding them by the hand leading and guiding his people through every step of the way whether we can hear him or see him or not faith is what goes back to the Bible and rests in the knowledge that he has given us of his own faithfulness which cannot be reversed where is

[55 : 49] God in Esther everywhere working through every single event bringing about his plans if you think you can stand against God tonight you cannot is it not best tonight to be with God and his people to be identified with him and to come to know him and to come to serve him as our own Lord

and Savior this book begins with the sea it's like the sea I guess in many ways as you remember how we went through Revelation quite recently and we saw how the sea in Revelation it represented the uncertainty of this world sometimes the sea is calm but at any given moment the sea could rise up in storm and could work against us the waves could come into our boat and could swamp us and threaten our lives that's the way the world is that's the way that life is at any moment at any given moment there is uncertainty and throughout this book we're given a glimpse of the uncertainty of a hostile world who knows what King

Ahasuerus will do who knows when another King will come who knows what laws and who's influencing the King on one side or the other and yet we know that whatever the sea does that God rides on the top of the waves and one day he will turn the storm into a calm and bring about the new heaven and the new earth where there will be no sea and where God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of his people and cause them to rejoice not just on the thirteenth day of Adar or the fourteenth day but forever and ever let's pray father in heaven once again we rejoice in the Lord we are told we're commanded to rejoice in the Lord and we want to rejoice in you tonight when we see the evidence of your hand father a man e him a sovereign and e a one a an one to have other