

Again, that's Esther 2, beginning at verse 21. We're going to be reading all the way to the end of chapter 3. That's chapter 3, verse 15. Esther 221 through 315. We're gonna be continuing now our series through the book of Esther that we've been doing in the evening.

And thus far, we've met a lot of interesting characters. First, we met Ahasuerus and his court, and we saw how his court is, it's very opulent, it's powerful, but it's also very corrupt. Then we met our two protagonists and kind of got, and found them find themselves in different positions. We met Mordecai, an official in the king's palace. We met Esther, who has become now the queen of Persia. Pretty significant honor.

But every hero is only as good as his villain. Where would John McClane be without Hans Gruber? Die hard. Where would Batman be without the Joker? Where would Santa Claus be without the Grinch? For a good story, you need an antagonist. Now, of course, this is more than a story. This is history.

But in history, God's people have no shortage of antagonists, do they? Satan is always raising up people to oppose the people of God. And that's what we're gonna find in this story. We're gonna see how Satan raises up an adversary for God's people. And yet, just as we've seen in every other chapter of the book of Esther, God is at work behind the scenes. This is ultimately all within God's control. So let's read this text together.

Before we do, let's ask God's help in prayer. Father in heaven, as we open up your word, we pray that you would enlighten our eyes, for without your spirit, these words are nothing. Without your spirit, we cannot hear them, we cannot understand them. Give us grace, Father. In Jesus' name, amen. Esther, chapter two, beginning at verse 21.

In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. But the plot became known to Mordecai, and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows.

And it was written in the book of the Chronicles in the king's presence. After these things, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman. So the king had commanded concerning him.

But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage. When the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, why are you transgressing the king's command? Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand. For he had told them that he was a Jew. When Haman saw Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were. Therefore, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of King Ahasuerus.

In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, That is, the lot was cast before Haman from day to day and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar. Then Haman said to King Hazares, there is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from those of other people. and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's best interest to let them remain. If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the king's business to put into the king's treasuries. Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, the silver is yours and the people also to do with them as you please.

Then the king's scribes were summoned on the 13th day of the first month. And it was written just as Haman commanded the king's satraps to the governors who were over each province to the princes of each people, each province, according to its script, each people, according to its language. being written in the name of King Hazares and sealed with the king's signet ring. And letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder. A copy of the edict was issued as a law in every province, was it was published to all the people so that they should be ready for this day. The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued in Susa, the capital. And while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion. This is the word of the Lord. May he add his blessing to it.

I'm not one who's all the really up for conspiracy theories usually. How many of you all know someone who is really big into conspiracy theories? I think most of us, you know, most of us have at least one uncle who's into conspiracy theories, right? We all know who we're talking about, and if you don't know who in the world to talk about, Yeah, we all know about conspiracy theories, and I just never can really buy them.

Maybe that's my fault, but maybe it's because I'm so dumb, I think no one could actually be that smart. Like, seriously? That's, like, someone that has that much power, that much intellect, they can actually organize all these things and never get caught? Seems a little far-fetched. However, there is one conspiracy theory that I do subscribe to, and it's a big one. I believe that there is a shadow government, someone, one person in particular, who is very well connected and who has his hands, his tendrils really, into every government, every major news site, basically everything. For all intents and purposes, he is the God of this world and he is using every bit of force at his disposal to destroy God's church and to destroy the gospel. And his name is Satan.

This is what the Bible tells us. Psalm 2, why do the nations rage in the people's plot and vein? The kings of the earth take their stand against the Lord and against his anointed. Ephesians chapter two, we once served the prince, the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Paul's letter to the Corinthians say that the God of this world, Satan, has blinded the eyes of the non-believers and that the whole world is in the power of the evil one. And you know what? We don't even need scripture passages necessarily to prove this. We see evidence all around us.

Why is it that almost every government at some point has persecuted God's people? Why is it that ideologies so diverse as communists, as Muslims, as plain old totalitarians, fascists, whatever you want to call them, always persecute God's people. Why is it that it seems as though in the West Christianity is on the decline? Why is it that

there are so many institutions that are hostile to Christians? Why is it that all around us it seems as though the world is against us?

The answer is, it kind of is. Satan is not an idol. And a lot of times, it looks like he's winning. A lot of times, it looks like we're losing. That's just the reality. If you haven't felt that, if you haven't felt that way, then you probably don't, you're probably living under a rock. I've felt that way. And so that we ask the question, what happens?

How can we believe that God is truly sovereign, that he's truly in control, that he's truly building his church, when it seems like Satan is winning? When it seems like God's enemies are winning? Sounds a lot like this text, doesn't it? This text shows us that God is ultimately in control and can overrule even the plans of his greatest enemies. That's what we're going to find in this text. Now, as we walk through this, we're going to be looking at it under four major headings.

First, Mordecai saves the king. Second, Mordecai infuriates Haman. Third, Haman manipulates the king. And fourth, God overrules evil. Mordecai saves the king, Mordecai infuriates Haman, Haman manipulates the king, and God overrules evil. So first, Mordecai saves the king. Look with me at verse 21.

In those days, when Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, big, thin, and terrorish, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door became angry and sought to lay hands on King Azaris. Now, when the text begins here, it says that Mordecai was seated at the king's gate.

This isn't saying that Mordecai was sort of loitering around next to one of the entrances to the palace. This is a bit of a technical or a colloquial way of saying Mordecai was in his official capacity. It'd be like if I said, well, Judge Brown was on the bench. It means, well, Judge Brown was judging. In the same way, to say that Mordecai was seated at the king's gate, the king's gate was the place where business was done. Gates in the ancient world were the places where you'd make deals, where politicians would make speeches, where edicts would be published because they were high traffic. So when it says Mordecai seated at the king's gate, he's in his official capacity. And when Mordecai's in his official capacity in the king's court, he hears about a plot. Now we don't know how Mordecai heard about it. Maybe he was eavesdropping, maybe they tried to get him in on it, we don't know. But whatever the case, Mordecai hears about a plot done by two of the king's eunuchs.

These were servants of the king who, according to the text, guarded the king's door, that is the door to his bedchamber. In other words, this is a very credible plot. After all, if the guys that are responsible for watching the king while he sleeps are conspiring against him, He's in a lot of trouble. So Mordecai hears about this plot, and look what he does in verse 22.

But the plot became known to Mordecai, and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. Now, there's something we should latch onto here for a moment. One thing we've been noting from the beginning, Ahasuerus is not the best king. What we, so far, all we've heard about King Isaias from the Book of Esther is how he's incompetent, selfish, and not just, not a good ruler. And yet, yet, when Mordecai hears that this king is in danger, he doesn't hesitate, he immediately displays his loyalty towards the king and makes sure to report on the assassins. This is important for two reasons.

Number one, it's an example for us. Romans 13 tells us that we are to submit to those in authority because no authority exists apart from God's ordinance. Therefore, whoever opposes authority opposes the ordinance of God. Christians, because God is ultimately the one who puts kings in place, who puts presidents in place, who puts congressmen in place, we ultimately do owe them loyalty. Now, of course, there are limits to that. There are exceptions we can talk about, such as when they command something that God forbids or forbid something God commands.

We'll talk a little bit more about that later in this passage. But our default should always be loyalty, as it was with Mordecai. Second, this is important to Mordecai's characterization. Remember, we talk about that. Details like this are not given for no reason. They are telling us things about the characters that'll help explain their actions later.

So a very important point we want to know from Mordecai right here is Mordecai is loyal to King Ahasuerus. Even though King Ahasuerus is a wicked, selfish ruler, Mordecai is loyal to him and worked to protect him. Another thing we notice about Mordecai here is he's very wise. Notice how he gets the word to the king. He doesn't go himself. He probably wouldn't have access. He doesn't go through another official. Why?

Well, that other official might be in on it. So he goes to the one person he knew he could trust, Esther, and has Esther bring the word to the king. So the plot is made known to King Ahasuerus, and then verse 23, now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they, that is, Bigfoot and Teresh, were both hanged on a gallows, and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence. Couple notes on this.

First, what does he mean by a gallows there? We shouldn't picture a gallows as a place where a rope was hung down, a noose, and you put it around the guy's neck. That's not what a gallows was in the Persian Empire. A gallows in the Persian Empire was less about killing the person and more about making an example of them. See, they would execute the person, maybe by a less painful way, perhaps slitting their throat, We won't get into the details.

And then the body was put on a stake, a very high stake, and impaled on it, and put in the public square. And the idea behind that was, hey, this is what happens to people who cross the king. Don't cross the king. So, one thing we need to remember, if you're to display any kind of disloyalty to King Isarius, the stakes are high. See how I did that? Dumb joke. The stakes are high, exactly. This is important. This is important. Disloyalty to King Isaias could get you up on a stake.

Also notice that this fact that Mordecai saves the king is put in the chronicles of the king's records. The record that shows all the stuff that King Isaias has been doing, it's written down specifically that Mordecai saved the king's life. This is gonna be very important later on in the story. Mordecai saves the king's life. Also note, there's no reward. Mordecai saves the king's life and he receives nothing in return. In fact, the very next verse says that when promotions come around, Mordecai doesn't get the promotion, Haman does.

This is also going to be important. This was actually very unusual. Persian kings were known for giving lavish rewards to people who displayed loyalty. Just as the stakes were high when you were disloyal, the stakes were also high if you were loyal, if you chose the right person to support.

For instance, when there were the rebellions in Babylon and Egypt early in the reign of King Ahasuerus, The officials who proved loyal to him got huge land grants, massive amounts of money, high position in his empire, tax exemptions, but Mordecai gets nothing.

This is bad news for now, but in God's providence, it'll be good news for Mordecai later. So Mordecai saves the king, but gets no reward. Instead, Instead, we move to our second point, Mordecai infuriates Haman. Mordecai infuriates Haman. Look with me at chapter three, verse one. After these things, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him. So instead of promoting Mordecai, the king promotes Haman. Now, this promotion already in this first verse is It is an ominous promotion. Why? Why? Well, once again, we're gonna have to do a little bit of explaining here.

This would be very obvious to the original readers, but it's less obvious to us because we're not Jews living in the fourth century B.C. It's noted that Haman is the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, Agagite. If we're gonna understand what it means for Haman to be an Agagite, we need to go all the way back to the Exodus.

All the way back to when the people of Israel first came out of the land of Egypt. When they first left Egypt, they crossed the Red Sea, they're on their way to Mount Sinai, and who was the first enemy that opposed Israel in the wilderness? It was the Amalekites. The Amalekites. And in Deuteronomy 25, Moses talks about the way the Amalekites opposed Israel. The Amalekites came against Israel. They didn't attack Israel's front line.

Rather, they waited in ambush, and Moses says they cut off their tail. What does that mean? Well, if you were a caravan traveling through the desert, it's a long way, long walk, long days, Those who were elderly, those who were young, those who were sick, those who were nursing babes, often would be in the back, partially for protection, and partially because they just couldn't keep up with those in the front. So when it says that the Amalekites cut off their tail, that is they separated husbands from their pregnant wives, people from their grandparents, and tried to destroy the weakest and most vulnerable of the Israelites.

And because of how heinous this sin was, God says in Exodus chapter 17, that I will have eternal war with the Amalekites. I will never forgive them for what they did. I will blot out their memory from the earth. And from that day, if Israel is the people of God, if Israel is God's representatives on earth, the holy nation, the holy priesthood of God, the Amalekites become the people of Satan, the representative of all those who oppose God and his people.

So years go by, and the next big episode in the Israel versus Amalekites shows up in the life of Saul. Those of you who've been coming to the series on 1 and 2 Samuel will remember that Saul is commanded to attack the Amalekites and to wipe them out.

We won't get into the details on how all that went down, the moral implications of that, because we just don't have time. But the main point I want you to get from that is that Saul did not fulfill God's command. He did not destroy all the Amalekites. Instead, he took the king captive for himself, perhaps to negotiate, try to get some long-term peace rather than trusting in God to keep the peace. And you want to know the name of that king that he saved, that he did not kill. Egeg. So for Haman to be an Egegite means he is an Amalekite. Specifically, he is descended from the same line as King Egeg. The king Saul refused to slay. The enemy Saul refused to defeat.

And what did we learn in chapter two about Esther and Mordecai? Who are they descended from? Well, according to chapter 2 verse 5, Mordecai was the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. If you know those names are, I believe that Kish was related directly to the line of Saul. So we have here is an ancient blood feud. Haman, the Agagite. Haman, the descendant of King Agag.

Esther and Mordecai, the descendants of Saul. God's people versus Satan's people. And this enemy of God's people now has been promoted to high position. This is Mordecai's worst fears come to life. Remember how Mordecai, why Mordecai told Esther to hide her lineage? Why Mordecai told Esther, make sure no one knows you're a Jew. Make sure no one knows you're one of God's people.

Why? Because there were enemies in Xerxes' court, in Azarus' court. There were enemies of God's people there. Chief among them, Haman. And now this Haman, this enemy of God's people, the one who wants nothing more than to destroy the Jews, is promoted to the highest position in Ahasuerus' court. This is an ominous promotion. And this ominous promotion leads Haman to a very difficult decision. A difficult decision. Look at me at verse two of chapter three.

And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman. For so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage. Verse three, then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, why are you transgressing the king's command? We might ask Mordecai that ourselves. Why is Mordecai not bowing to Haman? Unfortunately, it's our first inclination to say it's because Haman was demanding worship and Mordecai wants to uphold the first and second commandment, you shall honor the Lord your God in him only, shall you serve.

That's probably not what's going on here. Because Persians were actually unique among all the different empires in that they did not deify their rulers, they did not demand worship from their subjects. Instead, in the Persian court, to bow down to someone was to show your obeisance. to recognize them as a superior and you as an inferior. So that's not quite what's going on.

So what is going on with Mordecai here? Well, the text isn't entirely clear. We know from the explanation Mordecai gives, it's something to do with his being a Jew. And also we know from Mordecai's own character, it's not something trivial. After all, Mordecai is not above bending the rules a little bit to try to save the life of Esther. He also would not want to antagonize this descendant of Agag, because he knows that would be trouble. So what it really comes down to is we have to say it's some kind of issue of conscience. So I'm going to take my best stab at what might have been going on in Mordecai's mind.

Mordecai may have thought, hey, I'm a Jew, therefore I'm a representative of God. I'm one of God's people. Haman is an Agagite. He is a representative of Satan. Therefore, if I, a representative of God, bow down to a representative of Satan, doesn't that not dishonor God? That's my best guess at what was going through his mind. And the text, anyway, appears to commend Mordecai for this.

In verse three, it says this, in verse four, I should say, it says that the people spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them. There's a conscious parallel there with Genesis in describing how Potiphar's wife would come to Joseph day after day asking him to commit adultery, and he wouldn't do it. Same phrase there. So the author is consciously echoing the story of Joseph.

Now, I still struggle a little bit with this. I think, well, aren't we supposed to submit to rulers? This seems like a pretty small excuse. Well, that leads us to a point that I think is important. In issues of conscience like this, we need to make sure we always treat these with some humility, with a bit of humility. What do I mean by that?

Well, I'm not saying God's law is not clear. God's law is crystal clear. I'm saying that the world is complicated. The world is often very complicated. And sometimes when Christians are put into ethical dilemmas like this where they're not entirely sure how to apply God's law, good Bible-believing Christians will come to different conclusions on how best to apply God's law. Let's make this more abstract idea a bit more concrete. Think back to 2020.

Because of the pandemic, a lot of churches were told you cannot gather for corporate worship, it is illegal, because you'll spread the virus. Now some churches respond to that by saying, hey, we need to love our neighbor as ourselves, we need to obey government, and so we're not gonna have worship services at least for a while, just to make sure we aren't spreading the virus. Other churches said, no, God's word commands us to never forsake the meeting together, never forsake public worship. Therefore, we need to defy this law and we need to continue to meet. And many Christians, especially in places like Canada, suffered for that.

Now, I don't wanna open that can of worms as far as debate goes, but I think all of us can acknowledge there's something to be said for both sides there. And it is a difficult decision to make. I know this church struggled as far as what decision exactly to make in that regard. It can be difficult. And when it comes to issues like that, where the world gets complicated, Yes, we need to study God's word. Yes, we need to pray and meditate and come to a decision on what we believe God's word tells us to do.

But at the same time, we need to be humble enough to say, just to be able to say, hey, that Christian church over there, they made a different decision. And you know, I respect them for that. I respect their conscience in that. I disagree, but I can respect them for trying to follow their conscience. Hope that makes sense. This is something we can learn from the story of Mordecai. So if your immediate thought is to either condemn or immediately exonerate Mordecai, you might want to think about that a little bit. We need to make sure we have some humility.

So Mordecai makes this very difficult decision to not bow down to Haman, and you can see He noticed the way that he goes about this in verse four. Now, when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand, for he had told them he was a Jew. Mordecai's trying to keep it quiet. When they ask him, he gives them really short, quiet answers, doesn't want to really answer

them. When they press him really hard, he says, it's because I'm a Jew, okay? The idea is, I think, Haman, Mordecai is trying not to make a scene. trying to obey his conscience while not stirring up trouble.

Unfortunately, trouble comes and finds him. Look at verse five. When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage. This is the first thing we learn about Haman. Haman has a very large but glass ego. By that I mean, he thinks extremely highly of himself. He's a bobblehead, walking around with a huge head, thinking he's the greatest thing since sliced bread. But as soon as one person refuses to bow to him, he's filled with rage.

But when he hears Mordecai's reason, look at verse six, but he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were. That old Amalekite in him, that desire, that old feud, that old antipathy, that enmity towards God's people suddenly wakes up in Haman. He decides this is the occasion, this is the time to destroy God's people. Look at the rest of verse six. Therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who throughout the whole kingdom of King Hazares. There's a bit of irony here. Saul had refused to destroy the Amalekites.

Haman would not make the same mistake. Now Haman had the power. Now Haman had the resources. He was gonna make this happen. However, there was a problem. There's something standing in between Haman and the annihilation of the Jews. And that person is Ahasuerus. Haman does not have the authority in and of himself to do this decree. He needs to run it by the king.

Now, Now if you've been following this series so far and you're thinking about what Ahasuerus has done this far, you're starting to bite your nails. Because what's one thing we know about Ahasuerus? He is putty in his advisor's hands. He has not made one decision throughout this entire book that has not been influenced by his advisors. Or practically given to him by his advisors.

So we're biting our nails and we're thinking, what is Ahasuerus gonna say? Can he stop him? Surely, Azeris, yeah, he's not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but surely he's not gonna give the rubber stamp to annihilate an entire people, right? Well, that leads us to our third major point.

Haman manipulates the king. Look at verse seven. In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the 12th year of King Azeris, Per, that is lot, was cast before Haman from day to day and from month to month until the twelfth month, that is the month of Adar. What's Haman doing here? Well, we're beginning to see Haman's strategy.

His strategy begins by trying to find the luckiest day he can find. This was common practice at this time in the Persian Empire. He would cast lots, something kind of like dice, to try to determine by blind chance what the best day to do something would be. And so he rolls the dice and the lot falls on the 12th month in the Persian calendar. And so he decides, that's the day I'm going to propose for the killing of the Jews. His strategy continues in verse 8.

Then Haman said to the king Ahasuerus, there is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king's laws. So it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.

Notice Haman's strategy here, it's very cunning. It reminds me of the serpent in Genesis 3. It's cunning, it's crafty. He starts by telling a truth. There is a people scattered all throughout the Persian Empire. That's true, and then he moves to a half-truth.

Their laws are different from those of any other people. I mean, that's sort of true, yeah, the Israelites had specific laws that made them a holy people that were different from everyone else, but there's an undertone here, an idea that the laws are somehow contrary to Persian laws, that they're troublemaking laws.

And that suspicion inherent here is confirmed in the lie Haman tells. They do not obey the king's laws. Or have we seen that? I mean, yes, Mordecai refuses to obey one edict of the king, but throughout everything else, Esther and Mordecai have been obeying the king's laws. The Jewish people were known as very loyal to the Persian Empire at this point.

This is a bald-faced lie. And based on this cunning deception, he tells the king, it is not in his best interest to let this people remain. Notice he keeps saying this people, a certain people. He doesn't even tell the king what people he's talking about. He's keeping it vague.

Here comes the kicker in verse nine. If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who carry out the king's business to put in the king's treasury. After laying out this deception, sort of giving a kind of justification, Haman just comes out with a bribe and says, hey, I'll pay you 10,000 talents of silver if you let me get this done. Now how much was 10,000 talents of silver? Well, think a little bit forward to the parable Jesus told of the unforgiving slave, where the slave owes his master 10,000 talents.

What does that mean in that parable? It means an incalculable sum. It'd be the same as us saying Haman offered to pay the king a gazillion dollars. It's meant to be so huge that it's almost impossible. The idea is that what the writer's trying to communicate is Haman offered to pay the king a huge sum of money. 10,000 talents of silver was equivalent to more than the entire annual budget of the Persian Empire. It's an insane sum. And so this was Haman's strategy. And Haman's strategy meets with abundant success. Look at verse 10.

Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. For a king to take off his signet ring and give it to someone is essentially giving that person a blank check. Someone could take that ring and seal any law they wanted and it had the king's authority.

So in other words, the king is giving Haman a blank check, do whatever you want, and that's basically what he tells him in verse 11. And the king said to Haman, the silver is yours and the people also, do with them as you please.

The king is essentially saying, it's your silver, it's your people, do whatever you want, don't talk to me about it. He doesn't even ask what people Haman's even talking about.

He doesn't care. which would be completely unbelievable to us if we hadn't just read two chapters of King Ahasuerus basically just doing the same, doing that same thing on two different occasions. This is classic King Ahasuerus. And so Haman, Haman is successful and he makes great use of the success in his decree. Look with me at verse 12.

Then the king's scribes were seven on the 13th day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors, who over each province and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Hazares and sealed with the king's signet ring. And the letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children in one day, the 13th day of the month, which is the month of Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder. Notice first the date of this extermination, the date of it. When Haman goes to meet with the king and signs this law into effect, it's the first month. When does the creed go into effect? The 12th month.

Why all that time wasted? After all, the Persian Empire was very efficient. It could get the word out to all the different provinces within a few weeks. Why so long? Well, there was nowhere the Israelites could go to escape. The Persian Empire encompassed the entire known world.

In other words, Haman wants to make them sweat, wants to make them sit and do nothing but contemplate their own destruction. Dread. Also notice the extent of the slaughter. It's men, women, and children. This is not a military campaign. This is an extermination. This is a genocide that Haman is commanding. Also notice the means Haman employs. It's clinically cruel.

Rather than expending Persian resources by having the armies do it, he employs crowdfunding, essentially, and says, Anyone out there that doesn't like the Jews, this is a blank check. You can go and do whatever you want. You can kill them and you can take their stuff. The idea was the Jews had a lot of stuff and so people will take the government up on this offer and go and kill them for them.

This is not unheard of even today in some countries. Something similar actually is happening in Nigeria right now. And so the decree is made. And it's posted all over the empire in every language. No one will escape reading and knowing this edict. And then verse 15, this contains one of my favorite lines in the whole book of Esther. Not because I like it, but because it's just really good style.

Verse 15, the couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was being issued in Susa, the capital. So the horsemen are riding out of the city, while the decree is being nailed up all over Susa. Susa gets to hear about it first. And while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.

This is what happens when Satan and his representatives oppose God's church. When they stand up, when Satan rules the world, chaos ensues. Why do you think there's so much chaos in our world today? It's because Satan is the god of this world because he is at work. And wherever Satan is at work, chaos follows.

And we read this text and we think, what's the point of this? This is a dark place in the story. Why stop here? Well, because frequently our stories stop here. Frequently, we look at the world today and it looks like chaos wins. It looks like Satan wins. Many Christians who are persecuted die for it, and they never get to see the end of the story. This is where their story ends, at least from their perspective.

And we ask, how can God be on the throne? How can God be sovereign as even as God's enemies plot his people's destruction? Well, the answer is that God overrules evil, or for a fourth major point. God overrules evil. See, this story's not over, is it? Even though many Christians don't get to see the end of the story, there is an end to the story. And it ends with God's victory, just as it does here.

This decree that Haman puts out to destroy God's people, he thinks that the 13th day of the month of Adar is gonna be the day of his victory over God's people. Satan thinks, this is the day where I will finally crush the seed of the woman. I will finally destroy This people of God that have been a thorn in my side from the beginning, the line through which Messiah is to come, I will destroy this line and Messiah will never come. Jesus will never be born. I will win. And yet what happens on the 13th day of the month of Adar?

Well, what Haman didn't know is that God had a man on the inside, or rather a woman on the inside, a woman who would go to the king, plead the case for the Jews, and cause another decree to be made. A decree that would give the Jews the power to destroy their enemies. And so God would give the Jews victory. The day that Haman planned to be destruction for God's people became a day when God's people destroyed their enemies. A day that was meant to be Satan's greatest victory was a day of great defeat.

And you know what? This isn't the last time God will turn the tables on Satan. Think of the cross. Satan enters into Judas and has Judas pay. Has Judas get pay, I should say. But to betray Jesus. Just as Haman paid the King Ahasuerus a sum of silver to hand over God's people to destruction, so Judas was handed over 40 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. And just as Haman manipulated King Ahasuerus into decreeing the extermination of the Jews, so Caiaphas manipulated the crowds into calling, crucify him, crucify him, so that Pilate would wash his hands and send Jesus to the cross.

And all the while, Satan is laughing, thinking, yes, finally, I have destroyed this Messiah. I have removed this obstacle to my power. I have defeated God. Yet, that moment that was meant to be Satan's greatest victory was his greatest defeat. God turned the tables, because in that moment, God laid on Jesus the sin of us all, the sin of every person who would believe in Jesus. so that in that moment, God's wrath was turned away from his people. And when Jesus rose again from the dead, he defeated death itself, giving his people eternal life, destroying the work of Satan, dethroning him. The moment that was meant to be Satan's greatest victory became his greatest defeat. Why? Because God overrules evil. Yes, people of God, oftentimes it looks like Satan is winning. Often it looks like the God of this world is gonna beat the church. Remember the promise of Jesus.

On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell itself will not prevail over it. Satan's kingdom is a dying kingdom. It is a kingdom, in the words of Paul, that is passing away. Well, God's kingdom will stand forever. Remember the vision of Daniel. All these kingdoms on a great statue, the golden head, the silver arms, the bronze, the bronze and clay, all of them destroyed by a great stone, the eternal stone that became a mountain that encompassed the whole earth. That's Jesus and his kingdom.

Trust God. And while Satan's kingdom yields a feast of chaos, just as we see in verse 15, Jesus' kingdom yields a spiritual feast, a much better feast, a feast before the lamb, a feast where we feed on Christ, on his body and blood, not in a physical carnal sense, but in a real spiritual sense. And that feast we get to taste today. As we come to the Lord's Supper, as we partake of Christ, we get to experience the benefits of this great kingdom. Please join me in prayer. Father in heaven, thank you that you win, that your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, that while Satan should buffet, though trial should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ hath regarded our helpless estate and hath shed his own blood for our souls. Lord, you are good. Help us to trust you. In Jesus' name, amen.