

Celebration

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[0 : 00] Last week we covered the first sixteen verses of Esther chapter 9.

! If you'll remember when the competing decrees of Haman and Mordecai took effect on the same day,! we saw the Jews triumph over their enemies. Despite that triumph, the Jews refused to take any plunder even though Mordecai's edict allowed it. For some review, let's look at Esther 9 verses 14 through 16.

They say, 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.

Because these verses set the stage for what we'll cover tonight, let's go ahead and read verses 17 through chapter 10, verse 3. Starting with 9.17, it says, It says, 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 of Adar, and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from 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.

[2 : 22] So the Jews accepted what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamaditha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast pure, that is, cast lots, to crush and to destroy them.

But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his son should be hanged on the gallows.

Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term pure. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days, according to what was written, at the appointed time every year. That these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, 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 Abahael, 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 obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fast and their lamenting.

[3 : 57] The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing. Then going into chapter 10, it says, 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 the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people, and spoke peace to all his people.

Coming to this section of Scripture between Thanksgiving and Christmas is appropriate. Before we look at the verses in detail, here are a couple questions to ponder in the back of your mind. The first question is, how did you decide whether your Thanksgiving was a good holiday? The second question is similar, and that is, how will you decide whether your Christmas is a good holiday?

We'll come back to these questions at the end of the lesson, but for now, let's return to tonight's passage. After the successful days that were documented in the first 16 verses of chapter 9, a celebration is the only thing remaining.

[5 : 18] In fact, you could say it's all over but the shouting. That's really a truth there. But the celebration that they come up with is the main focus of tonight's passage, and as you've already seen from the verses, that festival became known as the Festival of Purim.

And to understand how the festival got its name, we need to look all the way back at chapter 3 in Esther, verses 5 through 7, where Haman launched his plan to try to exterminate the Jews.

Esther 3, 5 through 7 say, And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury, but he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone.

So as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast pur, that is, they cast lots, before Haman day after day, and they cast it month after month, till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

So the Jews called the feast Purim to remind them of the lot that had been cast for their destruction, but instead that lot led to their deliverance. They called it, in effect, Lottery Day, because it was the day on which the predictions of the lot were falsified, and their threatened misfortune was actually turned into good fortune.

[6 : 42] The feast of Purim is similar to our Fourth of July, and during the feast of Purim, the book of Esther is read in its entirety, and in this way, the Jews are reminded of the deliverance that they had from those who hated them.

Purim actually is the most festive of Jewish holidays. It's a time of prizes, noisemakers, costumes, and treats, and it happens in the spring, a month before Passover. And for Jews, and especially Jewish children, it's very much a fun day.

The children often dress up as different characters in the story of Esther, and every time Haman's name is mentioned, they do hissing and booing, and they also do stamping of feet and the waving of rattles to drown out his name.

But every mention of Mordecai is greeted with cheering. I thought about having us try that tonight, but without Wes in here, it might be a little hard to do that. The other thing about the festival is that they make pastries called Haman's ears, and they also make pockets which are eaten.

So actually, they eat parts of Haman, in effect, during this. And they also take gifts of food to the elderly. So with that information as background, let's start looking at tonight's text in detail.

[7 : 58] We're going to see four things from the passage tonight, and the first thing that we'll see is a celebration's originations. So a celebration's originations is the first thing to put in there.

We see the originations of the celebration in verses 17 through 19. And they say again, These verses explain why two different dates arose for celebrating the deliverance of the Jews.

Remember that we saw where in rural areas, the fighting was completed on the 13th day of the month of Adar. So they celebrated on the 14th. But in Susa, they got the extra day because of the additional decree that the king made.

And so the fighting did not finish until the 14th. And then they celebrated on the 15th. And they were still doing that when the book of Esther was written. If you notice, there are three characteristics of the celebration that are repeated twice in the verses.

And that's rest, feasting, and gladness. The end of verse 17 says, On the 14th day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. And then verse 18 says, But the Jews who were in Susa rested on the 15th day, making that a day of feasting and gladness.

[9 : 47] So let's consider each of those elements briefly. When we come to a holiday or another time of remembrance, why is resting important? You know, if there's no rest, there can be no stopping and no proper remembrance or meditation upon what's to be remembered.

And without meditation, there's really no real worship that can take place. We also see from these verses that feasting has long been important at holidays or times of remembrance.

And of course, we carry on that tradition today with our own holidays, particularly Thanksgiving, Christmas, and often Easter. And gladness is also important.

Like the early Jews that we read about in these verses, we need to express gladness for God's blessings because it's those blessings that make our celebrations possible.

So the second thing we'll see tonight then is the celebration's obligations. We'll see the celebration's obligations as we go through the next section.

[10:56] And we see those obligations in verses 20 through 22. Listen to those verses again. They say, The text doesn't tell us where Mordecai recorded the events.

Perhaps it was in the court annals or in other letters that he sent. But regardless, Mordecai has a key role in founding this festival. His great authority and the efficient postal system really made the communication of the holiday possible.

Notice how Mordecai skillfully averted any conflict between the urban Jews and the rural Jews about the day on which the festival should be celebrated. Instead of picking one day or the other, he said, Let's celebrate both days every year.

That's not a bad way to celebrate a holiday, is it just have two days to go along with it instead of one. We already have mentioned how the celebration includes rest, feasting, and gladness.

In his letters that we read about in these verses, Mordecai adds one more element to the celebration, and that's the element of generosity. He says that people should give gifts of food to one another and should give gifts to the poor.

[12:37] That generosity shown through the gifts of food also has a practical purpose because with the gifts of food, everyone, including the poor, will be able to participate in the feasting.

He also says that the annual celebration is to endure forever, just like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, which were never to pass away. And what the people are to remember is Haman's plot and the king's intervention to deliver them.

And of course, we know actually that the festival of Purim has outlived the laws of the Medes and the Persians. So we've seen the celebration's origins and the celebration's obligations.

The next thing we see is a celebration's implementations. So a celebration's implementations is the third section. That comes in verses 23 through 28 of chapter 9.

And they say, So the Jews accepted what they had started to do and what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamaditha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast pur, that is, cast lots, to crush and to destroy them.

[13:52] But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head and that he and his son should be hanged on the gallows.

Therefore, they called these days Purim after the term pure. Therefore, because of all that is written in this letter and what they had faced in this matter and of all that had happened to them, the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written 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 of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

Verse 27 indicates that the Jewish community accepted Mordecai's letter. We know that Purim is still celebrated by the Jews on the 14th day of the month of Adar and in our calendar that varies from February 25th to March 25th.

Verses 23 through 26 give us a recap of why the festival of Purim is celebrated. They include the summary of Haman's actions that we've already studied. Surprisingly though, notice once again that the verses lack a reference to God's actions.

[15:14] Nowhere in any of these instructions do we find any obvious word about God's people binding themselves to praise God for His deliverance and they don't mention the fact that they should remind themselves and their children of God's faithfulness.

So just like their lamenting and fasting that we saw in chapter 4 the vertical dimension that includes God seems to be absent from their praise. So does that make celebrating the feast of Purim wrong?

Of course the answer to that is almost certainly not. The heart of the feast of Purim as the Bible reports it was exactly right and that's the theme of gaining rest from one enemies and that's a recurring theme in the Old Testament and it was a prerequisite for the building of the temple in Deuteronomy 12.10 and it was a sign of the completion of the conquest under Joshua in Joshua 11.23 and of course these themes came together in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and that's where the Lord established David's kingdom and gave him rest from his enemies and when the king started thinking about building the temple.

We talked about how the people celebrated the festival of Purim without seeing what God had done for them. How do you think the people actually could have celebrated a holiday like that without seeing what God had done for them?

Really before we come down too hard on the people of Esther's day we need to think about our own celebrations that have their roots with God too. The trouble with annual festivals like this one and the ones that we celebrate is that in the midst of all the busyness of organizing the celebration alertness can go out of the window.

[17:00] Think about what happens when December rolls around we hear crowds of people singing songs that declare the message of the incarnation very clearly and they declare it more clearly than Mordecai's letter established the festival of Purim.

We hear people singing joy to the world the Lord has come without ever thinking in the slightest about why the world should rejoice. And we can even send presents to one another and give gifts to the poor through donations to the Salvation Army and other toy drives but we might forget the reason why we are actually doing that.

It's also possible to feast and celebrate year after year without fail and we still forget that God is behind it all and we don't even need to bind ourselves to obey an edict from the community leaders. We have all the advertisers reminding us of the seasonal focus that's far wider and more intensive coverage than Mordecai's messengers could ever have given for the festival of Purim.

But in all of this giving and getting and in light of the eating and feasting we have to ask ourselves where's God in our celebrations and do we remember exactly what we're supposed to be celebrating because in the midst of celebrating the coming of the light into the world to transform our darkness we've completely forgotten sometimes who that light is and how he accomplished the reversal for us.

[18:24] So it can be the same with all of our other celebrations as well. Thanksgiving, Easter, New Year's, and even our birthdays in the midst of all the busyness of celebrating and in the midst of all the feasting and giving we have to ask ourselves are we making time to include God in those celebrations because regardless of what we're celebrating we need to remember that it's God whose love has redeemed us from futility and death and we need to remember to stop and give thanks where thanks are really due and that of course is to our Heavenly Father.

So when we celebrate life's good times the danger is that we can so easily forget the greatest gift of all and that's not just us as we see here it goes all the way back to this holiday in Purim and even before that.

So the remembrance of our indebtedness to the Lord should not be an annual event but it's actually a daily practice. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He likens the Christian life to a continuous festival and these are Paul's words in the last part of 1 Corinthians 5 verse 7 and in all of verse 8.

So 1 Corinthians 5, 7, B and 8 say for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven the leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

So we've got a fourth thing to see as we finish out chapter 9 here and the fourth thing we see from our lesson tonight is a celebration's confirmations. Again that's a celebration's confirmation.

[20:04] Listen to verses 29 through 32 of chapter 9. They say then Queen Esther the daughter of Abahel 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 obligated them and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring with regard to their fast and their lamenting.

The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim and it was recorded in writing. So the purpose of this section is to reinforce the official authority for the institution of the Feast of Purim at

this point in the story all of the conflicts have been resolved and the characters are out of danger so here the meaning of the events is being summarized in a form seen throughout the Bible. All of the events of the story have led up to the point of understanding why Purim is celebrated and why it should be such a joyous occasion. The importance of a written document can't be overlooked.

We no longer have Esther's decree but we have the Bible that records the events and occasions that brought about the decree and in these verses there's emphasis both on written records and on remembering these events for the benefit of future generations.

[21 : 36] So we've seen the celebration's originations, we've seen the celebration's obligations, we've seen the celebration's implementations, and the celebration's confirmations.

The next three verses of chapter 10 at first seem more like an afterthought because they completely change focus. In these verses we're going to see a citizen's commendations.

So a citizen's commendations is the last thing from this passage tonight. Let's read all of chapter 10 again, it's actually only three verses, and it says, As 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 the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

Do these verses seem out of place to you? It's almost like they're just tacked on to the end here, but they're really possibly not as out of place as they seem, because the verses help give us a proper perspective about what has happened during the book of Esther.

[22 : 56] Despite the Jews' success, the verses really show us how much has remained unchanged. The postscript starts out with the notice that King Ahasuerus imposed tribute throughout the empire, and he did it to its most distant shores.

Mordecai and Esther are now the ones writing the edicts in Haman's place, but Ahasuerus was still king, and his own personal interest remained paramount, no matter what the cost was to his loyal subjects.

Some commentators try to put a positive spin on the notice of new taxation by seeing a parallel with the taxes that Joseph imposed on the Egyptian economy when he was raised to power.

For them, the point is that doing the right thing by the Jews is actually good for the royal economy, but they really missed the point, I think, there, because it's one thing to celebrate the taxation of the hated Egyptians, but this is a tax that they imposed on themselves, and I don't know too many people that are happy to celebrate when they get an additional tax imposed on them.

And this is especially true when the money raised won't be spent on education or on you in any way, but instead it's going to be spent on the personal interest and whims of the king.

[24 : 09] So if the king really needed cash, he could have melted down one or two of those gold couches that were in his gardens in Esther chapter 1. So we know he really wasn't in it to benefit his subjects, he was in it to benefit himself.

So the imposition of taxes on the empire is itself another reversal, but this time it's a negative one. Remember last week we talked about all of the reversals in the first part of chapter 9.

If you'll remember way back in chapter 2, verse 18, when Esther was crowned queen, there was a general remission of taxes. And now even though Esther is more queen than ever and more powerful than ever, the earlier blessings were reversed.

And they have the taxes coming back. So the more things change, the more they stay the same as long as King Ahasuerus is in charge. So as we discussed last week, Ahasuerus' focus on his own self-interest points to the need for an even greater deliverer.

And the deliverance of the book of Esther was temporary. The Jews of Esther's day and we need a permanent deliverer. And we know that on the cross Jesus fully bore God's curse upon our sin.

[25 : 23] And why was that? Well, we know it was so that we might receive peace through his righteousness and have rest from all our guilt and sin and access to the life-giving presence of God.

And of course, we see that the book ends with the fine tribute to Mordecai. Scripture states that the person who humbles himself will be exalted. And we see that in one of those places in Matthew 23, 12.

Mordecai certainly shows that because he had sat contentedly at the king's gate, but he was ultimately raised to a position where he was second only to the king. And he acted uniformly on the great principles of truth and righteousness, and all the people prospered as long as he was the second in command.

So do you think the leaders and politicians of today could learn from how Mordecai governed? It's an example that can still hold true. We also see that the providence of God is plainly traceable in all the steps that led to Mordecai's unexpected advancement.

And though we saw no extraordinary manifestation of God's power, the outcome perhaps is even more admirable than if the same end had been accomplished by means that were truly miraculous. [26 : 36] To learn something about what happened to the main characters of the book after the Bible's account ends, we've got to go to other historical records. Most people think that Mordecai likely was the power behind Ahasuerus, who was also known as Xerxes, of course, until the king's reign ended.

Xerxes was murdered in 465 BC, and he was murdered because of a conspiracy hatched by the son of his deposed wife. So the sons of his deposed wife, which is Vashti, who we remember from the beginning of the book, they got together and they assassinated their father.

And Xerxes' son, Artaxerxes, who reigned from 465 to 424 BC, was placed on the throne by his older brother. Do you remember where we've heard of Artaxerxes before?

Artaxerxes was the king who granted Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem to lead the rebuilding effort. So Esther was Artaxerxes' stepmother. Thinking about how the now deposed king Ahasuerus lived, secular historians completely align with how he appears in the Bible.

And here's a quote from the Oxford historian. George Rawlinson says that the character of Xerxes fails below that of any preceding monarch, accepting that he was not wholly devoid of a certain magnanimity, which made him listen patiently to those who opposed his views or gave him unpalatable advice and prevented him from exacting vengeance on some occasions.

[28 : 08] Overall, he scarcely had a trait whereon the mind can rest with any satisfaction, weak and easily led, immature in his gust of passion and his complete abandonment of himself to them.

He was selfish, fickle, boastful, cruel, superstitious, and licentious. He exhibits to us the oriental despot in the most contemptible of all aspects in whom the moral and intellectual qualities are equally defective.

That's quite a tribute, isn't it? To have your moral and intellectual qualities equally defective? Seen in its entirety, Xerxes' career was one of unvarying device, or vice, excuse me, and folly.

That's a description most people wouldn't want to be remembered by. And we don't know when Esther finished her earthly pilgrimage.

If she outlived Xerxes, she would have been given a place in the harem of the new king. And the fact that the new king was the son of Vashti and that Esther had replaced the new king's mother, some people think that the new king may have been less than gracious to her.

[29 : 17] But on the other hand, the passing of time coupled with Esther's quiet, winsome ways might actually have secured her a place in the palace of Artaxerxes. And some commentators take the opposite view, and they think that maybe Esther is the one who influenced her stepson to respond favorably to Nehemiah's request.

Unfortunately, we have nothing to tell us one way or the other. But what do you think we should take from the passage that we studied tonight? You know, for us, life often looks like it did in the days of Mordecai and Esther, and we can be tempted to respond in the same way that the Jews of their generation did without referring to God.

And at times, we appear to be in the midst of the tossing sea and in danger of being overwhelmed by the mire and the mud. Sometimes it seems like a Haman type is in control of our personal destiny, so we weep and wail as we're going through that.

And then things may turn around for us, and a Mordecai or an Esther appears for us, and life becomes better for a while. And all of a sudden, we're feasting and celebrating, and we say to one another, life doesn't get any better than this.

But studying our patterns of feasting and fasting may reveal where our priorities and hopes lie, the eye of faith is constantly looking beyond the visible circumstances of this world to the unseen heavenly reality where even now Christ is enthroned for us.

[30 : 42] And that should give us hope regardless of our present circumstances. And remember the questions I asked you at the beginning of the lesson. Those questions were, how did you decide

whether your Thanksgiving was a good holiday?

holiday? And how will you decide whether your Christmas is a good holiday? Because one of its secondary messages is that the book of Esther calls us to analyze our feasting and our fasting to help us diagnose our hearts.

We need to think about what things cast us down to the depths of despair and what things lift us up to the heights of exultation. Even the way we celebrate our own festivals of our religious calendar such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter can be a powerful diagnostic tool for us.

Think about what we have to have to make those celebrations right, however we define what right is, and what things cause us stress and anxiety every year because we're nervous that they won't get done in time.

You know, are we dependent upon a large pile of presents at Christmas or do we have to have certain foods just cooked exactly right at Thanksgiving? And do we have to have certain family members around the table or maybe certain family members not around the table before we consider that to be a good holiday?

[32 : 06] And of course, many people are inordinately stressed out each year because they feel that everything has to be exactly right and they put pressure on themselves because of that.

So really, the festivals itself expose our idolatries and even our seasonal feelings of happiness and satisfaction may expose our hearts.

The real question we need to be asking is, do we include God in our celebrations or is our definition of the best holiday ever really so horizontal that it holds no need for God in the celebration that we have?

Sometimes our hearts are condemned by what we rejoice in as well as what we worry about. So listen to that last sentence again. Our hearts are sometimes condemned by what we rejoice in as well as what we worry about.

So if the reversal of the festival of Purim was worth celebrating annually as a reminder of God's intervention in history, how much more should those Christians among us who understand the greatest reversal of all celebrate with each other?

[33 : 10] How much more should we as those Christians find ourselves on our knees with thankfulness to God? Not simply that life has gone well for us this year, if it has, but because we know that death has been transformed into life for us in Christ.

And with the birth of Christ, light has come into the world and that's a light that can never be extinguished. We saw that the things here in Esther were temporary, but we know that Christ is permanent.

So through the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, peace has definitely been given to us. And that's a peace that no circumstance can ever add to or take away.

In Christ, we have rest from all of our efforts to win God's favor in our own strength. And that's a resting in Christ's righteousness given to us as a free gift. So as you celebrate the holidays, don't forget the real significance of the feast in the midst of the seasonal busyness that's going on. But we also need to remember to feast as well because we do have something to celebrate.

There's nothing wrong with exchanging gifts and hanging seasonal decorations at Christmas.

[34 : 20] And there's nothing wrong with enjoying turkeys and pies or whatever meal you want to celebrate with at Thanksgiving. And there's even nothing wrong with decorating eggs and eating lamb at Easter as long as we keep in mind the real reason for those holidays.

We should celebrate God's goodness to us as God's people have always done with good food and good fellowship. And in the midst of that fellowship, we also need to remember those who are poor, both those who are poor in things and those who are poor before God.

So our times of feasting should also be times for sharing with the less fortunate. And we also should be looking out for the lonely and for welcoming outcasts and strangers into our families.

And of course, above all, these are special times for communicating the gospel to people who have never heard it, rich or poor, so that they too can receive God's peace.

These are great times for pointing everyone to Christ, the true light of the world and the true Prince of Peace, because the celebration of his birth was the opening move and the greatest reversal of all.

[35 : 24] And that's something that will never pass away until his kingdom comes in all its fullness. So the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the climax of God's plan of salvation, is

something that Christians will never tire of observing until he returns in glory.

The other thing we need to keep in mind is we don't have to wait until Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter to celebrate what God has done for us. We have smaller celebrations every week as we get together to study God's word.

The Puritans refused to celebrate Christmas and Easter because they weren't against the celebrations themselves. They wanted to stress the fact instead that we celebrate the great reversal every Lord's Day.

In other words, they wanted to make sure they kept the focus on how they worshipped every week. For them, every Sunday was Christmas in effect, and every Sunday was Easter, and every Sunday was Thanksgiving.

And, of course, we can learn something from that because there should be a note of celebration every time we get together to worship because we should always remember the death from which we've been spared. Here on earth, we know that we're constantly involved in a life and death struggle with the forces of evil, but it won't always be so.

[36 : 40] We know that the day's coming when our king will return to reclaim his throne and the days of the evil empire are going to end. The day is coming when angels are going to cry out that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

And, of course, that is Revelation 11, 15. On that day, we, like the elders in heaven, will fall on our faces and cry out, Worthy is God, the Father and the Lamb that was slain, by whose blood we have been redeemed for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And that comes from Revelation 5, 9. And, of course, all creation will simply add amen to that. But until then, we should celebrate with the words of the angel in Luke 2, 10 and 11, where the angel said, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Thank you.