

Esther 6&7 Coincidences or Godincidences? 16th November 2025.

Prayer: Lord lead and guide us this day by your Spirit we pray. Amen.

Don't you hate it when you can't sleep at night?

What do you do to get back to sleep? I might make a warm milk drink and then read a while. And I find it's best to read something boring, not something exciting that you don't want to put down...like this captivating story of Esther. If you are going to pick up the bible, then perhaps a reading from Chronicles will help put you back to sleep.

How about 1 Chronicles chapter 26, *The divisions of the gatekeepers: From the Korahites: Meshelemiah son of Kore, one of the sons of Asaph.*

² Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, ³ Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth and Eliehoenai the seventh.

Mind you, trying to pronounce all the names might wake you up or encourage you to give up and try sleeping again!

Well, it seems reading in the middle of the night when you can't sleep is something people have been practicing for a very long time!

Chapter 6 of Esther begins with the story of King Xerxes not being able to sleep, he doesn't read himself, but he calls one of his attendants to read to him. I don't advise waking up someone in your household to read to you in the middle of the night! What book does he order them to bring and read, the book of chronicles, the record of his reign. Something boring to put him back to sleep...unless he was hoping to hear of the good old days of conquest.

We'll come to what was read in a minute...but firstly a recap. What was the night that the King couldn't sleep?

It was the night after the banquet that Queen Esther had invited him and his key advisor Haman too. Esther had been chosen as Queen after Queen Vashti had refused to come at the Kings' command to be shown off at a banquet he was having. Esther had been chosen out of many young beautiful virgins presented to the King. She was an orphan who had been cared for by her cousin Mordecai. They were both Jews, their families having settled in Persia after the exile to Babylon. Mordecai seemed to work at the palace, he refused to bow to the Kings' noble, the evil Haman, who hated the Jews and had cunningly tricked the King to agree to a decree to kill all the Jews without the King's knowledge. Mordecai had initially told Esther to keep silent about her ethnicity, but now he had asked her to plead mercy from the King to save the Jews from destruction.

Last week we heard how after 3 days of prayer and fasting she went to the King uninvited, but he held out the gold scepter for her to approach. She didn't make known her request then, rather invited the King and Haman to a feast. At the feast, she still didn't plead with him, rather, invited him and Haman to another feast the next day.

It was that night when the King couldn't sleep. Had he eaten too much rich food and drunk too much wine, or was he wondering what on earth Esther might request from him (he had offered up to half of his Kingdom!). We are not told why he couldn't sleep...

From the very beginning of this book we have seen God's unseen providential hand at work, placing people in the right place at the right time for his purposes, even if God has not been mentioned. Irony and coincidences abound in the chapters 6 & 7 we have heard read today.

When I clearly see God's hand at work in a coincidence, I like to call them God-incidences! Someone else describes coincidences as God's purpose being carried out in disguise.

What a coincidence we may say as the attendant picks up to read an event in the chronicles from around 8 years previously, when Mordecai had exposed an assassination plot by two of the King's officers and saved the King's life. This was a little aside story at the end of chapter 2...

Usually someone who saved the King's life would have been richly rewarded and the reward recorded in the book of chronicles. But it seems there is no such recording so rather than falling back to sleep the King is aroused, as it would be shameful for him not to have rewarded Mordecai. So he asks what honour and recognition had been given to Mordecai, and he learns that nothing had been done.

He immediately wants to correct this mistake. A mistake perhaps providentially made under God's ruling, so Mordecai could be honoured for God's purposes at this time many years later.

As we have discovered, Xerxes doesn't like to make decisions on his own, so he seeks advice as to how to best honour Mordecai. And now we see another 'coincidence' 😊

Who is standing in the court in the early hours of the morning, waiting to be the first one to see the King when he wakes up? None other than Haman.

Why does Haman wish to see the King so early? Because as we heard last week, he was very angry with Mordecai for still not bowing to him and his wife and friends had suggested he put up a pole 50 cubits, 23 metres tall and ask the King to impale him on it! The irony and reversal of fortunes continues...

Haman is brought in and the King asks him, *“What should be done for the man the King delights to honour?”*

The King did not mention Mordecai’s name, and so egotistical Haman, who has already been elevated by the King to be his highest noble and advisor, thinks the King is talking about honouring him!!

Haman already has much wealth, and so he suggests this outlandish parade, where he thinks he will be noted as King like himself, wearing one of the King’s own robes and riding one of the King’s horses.

Haman has no idea that the King is not considering honouring him, but we know and can but smile and start to see the undoing of this proud and narcissistic man.

I mentioned a couple of proverbs last week as we compared Esther’s wisdom to Haman’s folly. Proverbs 16:18 comes to mind as we consider Haman’s situation today... *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”*.

Just imagine Haman’s jaw drop when the King commands him to do exactly what he had just suggested for Mordecai the Jew!

Haman may have been able to influence the King in the past but given he had just given the King this advice about honouring someone the King delights, he has no way of back tracking. He has no choice but to obey the King. Immediately!

We hear nothing of what Mordecai thinks of all this, he is passive in this scene. But it seems he accepts the robes and the parade. Previously he had not wanted to change out of his sackcloth when Esther had sent his clothes. Maybe he sees God’s hand in the turning of events. We can only imagine the tension between Haman and Mordecai as he leads him through the city!

Haman is mortified, he is now the one to cover his head in grief, and this time instead of boasting to his wife and friends he tells them about this disastrous turn of events. It had been their idea to impale Mordecai. This time they have no suggestions for him, aside from somehow recognizing that because Mordecai is a Jew he cannot stand against him. Do they too begin to see God’s hand at work, just like when the Israelites defeated Haman’s ancestors, the Amalekites’ many generations ago.

There is no time for any more discussion before Haman is whisked away by two of the King’s eunuchs to attend the second banquet Esther had prepared. Although he was an invited guest, there is this sense of him being taken, no longer going joyfully as he had hoped. His plan of Mordecai being impaled prior to the banquet being totally undone.

After another sumptuous dinner, while drinking some more wine, the King asks Esther again what is her petition and request of him- repeating his offer of up to half of his Kingdom.

Esther doesn't know about the events of the morning, but in God's impeccable way, it was now just the right time to share her request with the King.

She is respectful and diplomatic in her language and continues to use royal etiquette, *"If it pleases you, grant me my life – this is my petition. And spare my people- this is my request..."*

She uses the words from the edict that Haman had written to annihilate, destroy and kill. She adds that they had been sold, perhaps referring to the bribe that Haman had offered the King when he proposed the edict. Again, she remains restrained and polite when she suggests that she wouldn't have bothered the King if they were just to be sold as slaves.

We can only wonder at what is going through the King's mind as he hears this, he had been foolishly ignorant of Haman's edict, he had not bothered to find out who the people were that Haman wanted to destroy. He had also been ignorant of Esther's nationality. It shows us there was no real relationship here, he had chosen her for her beauty and for his use. We know however that God had indeed chosen her, *for such a time as this*.

The king asks who had dared to do such a thing? Who was going to kill his queen? Who can he put the blame on, given that any such edict would have needed his authority!

Finally we see some of the passion Esther has been restraining, when she sees she has the King's positive attention. She replies vehemently, no doubt pointing the finger... *"An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!"*

Haman would have been listening to all this, knowing full well he was about to be exposed. He's terrified, the King is enraged and I'm sure doesn't quite know what to do so he takes himself off to the garden for a moment, we are told, even leaving his wine behind. I love the detail!

Haman knows what is coming and so pleads with Esther for his life. What a reversal, what irony. Here is Haman who thought he'd cleverly contrived to kill all the Jews, is now falling at the feet of a Jewish woman, begging for his life.

And now comes yet another co, or should I say God-incidence, the perfect timing of the King's return to the room to see Haman falling over Esther! He accuses him of molesting his Queen, a great reason now to get rid of him!

Haman's face is immediately covered like a criminal by one of the King's eunuch's, who doesn't wait for the King to ask him to fetch someone to advise him what to do, rather he offers a perfect solution. A punishment to fit the crime!

This eunuch Harbona tells the King about the pole that Haman had set up to impale Mordecai on, reminding him that Mordecai is the one who spoke up for the King.

The King hears this and for once makes a quick decision and tells them to impale Haman on his own pole. Haman's pride has definitely gone before a mighty fall! And now the King's fury subsides...

Next week we will come to the conclusion of this story. It's not over yet, the edict to kill the Jews on the 12 month still stands and remember the King's decrees cannot be reversed.

What do we learn this week from Esther?

Are we encouraged again to consider how we communicate with wisdom. We certainly see Esther is very shrewd and clever in how she has brought the King to the right place for him to listen to her request. And she has her enemy, Haman, exactly where she needs him to be exposed. God has been at work behind the scenes putting things in place that she doesn't even know about. In a different scenario, Mordecai may have been impaled that very morning, but instead he was honoured by the King.

God has been working his purposes out; we can only conclude that he is sovereign here. God was the one keeping the King awake, he is the one that just happened to prompt the King's attendant to open the book of Chronicles exactly at the record of Mordecai's uncovering of the King's assassination, God was behind all the coincidental timings and so on.

But we also see how God uses his people for his purposes. Esther is courageous and acts in faithfulness for God and for her people as she pleads with the King.

God also uses the ungodly for his purposes. King Xerxes is the one who commands the death of the evil Haman. And it had been his grandfather Cyrus who had issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem many years before.

We need to trust that God is in control but also pray that we will have courage when God chooses us to bring about his purposes and see justice in this world.

As William Carey famously said back in 1792, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God". And look out for God-incidences in your life...next time you can't sleep maybe God will guide you to read something important 😊

As the evil one Haman is impaled on the pole of wood, we remember that Jesus was killed on the wooden cross, taking all the sins of the world on himself that we might be saved.

Let's pray: Lord, help us to see you at work in our lives and in the world, to see you in coincidences when things work out for your purposes. Help us to trust you and be willing to step out in faith like Esther, knowing that you are ultimately in control, even when we

can't see it, or can't understand what is going on. Give us wisdom and lead us by your Holy Spirit.

Thank you for Jesus, dying on a cross for our sin and the sins of the whole world.

In Jesus name. Amen.