

Kings, Queens and God

Esther 1-2

“God’s Sovereignty in Everything”

Tonight we are beginning a study in a very interesting yet unique book of the Bible.

ESTHER

A)The setting of the story is Persia: The events of the book take place between **Chapters 6-7 of the book of Ezra**

B)Recall – people of Israel brought into Captivity in Babylon for 70 years - OVER A MILLION PEOPLE

C)Although MAJORITY of people would stay much longer

After 70yrs Babylon is over thrown by Persian King Cyrus –

A)Cyrus gives a decree – Gives permission to the Jews to go back to build their temple.

B)Zerubbabel leads a small group of about 50,000 back

1)Temple gets rebuilt – Focus of Ezra Ch. 1-6

C)Then we noted there was **a 60 year gap between Ch. 6-7 of the book of Ezra** –

1)Ch. 7 Ezra the priest leads another group – help institute temple worship- get people on track

D)Well the story of Esther takes place during that 60 year gap between Ch. 6-7 of Esther.

1)Ezra/ Nehemiah focus on what is happening Jerusalem.

Esther gives us insight into what is happening back in Persia with the Jewish people who are still there – close to a million of them.

A)The story of Esther takes place in the time between chapter 6-7 of Ezra and it comprises about a 12yr time frame.

Aa)**Uniqueness of the book is this: The name of God is not mentioned in this book at all.**

B)There are **no prayers- fasting – no worship - no sacrifices – no offerings** –

C)Despite all of that the hand of God is at work all the way through the book.

1)“**I am God, I am here. I am working things out.**”

C)The Story stands as a wonderful reminder of how God is often at work behind the scenes working in unseen ways in the events of our lives as well.

D)And as God works in our lives, sometimes the things that God is doing today are not really for today:

1)They're for five years, or twelve years down the road before we really see what God had in mind.

5 Major Characters

King Ahasuerus - also Known as Xerxes – He reigned in Persia 21 years

A)He is the grandson of Cyrus the Persian king who conquered Babylon

B)He is the son of Darius I who followed Cyrus

1)He is the father of Artaxerxes who will be in Power in the book of Nehemiah.

C)Prideful – arrogant man – Ego maniac -

Archaeologist excavating Shushan have found inscriptions in which this king refers to himself as the great king, The king of kings. The king of the lands occupied by many races. “**The king of this great earth.**”

D)He has a temper: On one occasion, Ahasuerus executed the builders of a bridge because an ocean storm destroyed it;

1)Then he commanded that the water and waves be whipped and chained to punish the sea.

E)**You thought your boss was CRAZY!**

Queen Vashti – Ahasuerus or Xerxes wife - Strong minded woman makes a huge stand.

Haman – He is the Villain in the Story we meet next week in Ch. 3

➤ Wicked man who tries to annihilate the Jews – Haman is a type of the Antichrist

Mordecai – An older wise Jewish man – Uncle.....

Esther: A young Jewish orphan

Divided Chapter 1 into two sections

Ch. 1:1-9 The glory of the King

“The proud and arrogant man—“Mocker” is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.

Proverbs 21:24”

“If you've ever attended a play you know that there comes that moment when the lights dim, the chatter dies, and the curtain opens.

A)A world that once was hidden is carefully revealed.

B)Each prop has its place and purpose; each light focuses upon a determined point;

1)The colors and shadows interplay with designed calculation.

C)Everything converges so that the audience understands the mood, setting, characters, and plot.

In the same way, the Book of Esther begins with the drawing of a curtain.

A)Each detail rendered and each omission allowed by the writer serves a purpose and drives the plot.

B)The reader enters the world of Persian opulence and excess.”

C)The book opens by plunging the reader into the lavish and petty world of the Persian court.

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and **twenty-seven provinces**, from India to Ethiopia),

Pic of Persian Empire - Green

2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, now, Shushan was the winter palace for the Persian king.

Different palaces for different times of the year – Maximize the Climates – (Snow birds head to Florida and Palm Springs in the winter)

3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants — the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the

provinces being before him 4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, **one hundred and eighty days in all.**

SO WE ARE TALKING A 6 MTH PARTY!

A)Persian Kings were known for their lavish feasts where there would be 10-15,000 people

B)One Persian King – Feast served 69,000 guests

C)**Ahasuerus** decides to make his mark by not just the number of guests – 10's of thousands

1)The Number of Days – 180 or 6 months

There were 127 provinces in his kingdom, and out of each of these he brought a delegation

A)Talking Thousands of people – Massive consumption of food and drink.

B)This was an over the top display of the greatness of Xerxes!

Purpose: To reveal the wealth luxury and power of the Persian Empire. Xerxes had his sights set on Greece:

A) His father Darius had lost a battle to Greece – and Xerxes wanted to avenge that Defeat.

B)He wanted to launch a military campaign against the Grecian empire and he knew he would need the support of all 127 provinces to win.

C)That was his ulterior motive for this Shindig

5 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

A) Xerxes brought the banquet to a climax in the last seven days.

B)Apparently he brought in a tremendous population of people for the final seven days in the court of the garden.

C)V.6-8 gives us some insight into the extravagance of the Persian empire under Xerxes

6 There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods

and marble pillars; and the **couches were of gold and silver (Living Spaces Display)** on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. 7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. 8 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

A) In most cases of these type of Parties, each guest was obliged to have a drink with the current round, or else leave the party.

B) At this second feast, the king command that each man could drink as much or as little as he pleased.

9 Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

C) Xerxes was selling a war; so Vashti entertained the wives and women at another banquet.

D) Xerxes – Plan was working – Impressive

E) Next we see the Folly of the King

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, **seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus**, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.

People under the influence of Alcohol do stupid things.

A) Xerxes was doing a stupid thing. – Parade his wife
Make a fool of his wife. – Never a good thing!

B) There is a debate concerning the phrase she was to be brought **wearing her crown**

C) Some think the king was asking Vashti to come in wearing her crown **with her face uncovered** –

1) Which in that culture would have been scandalous

D) Others think he was asking her to come **wearing only her crown** which would have been really scandalous

1) Absolutely degrading

Point was they had seen all the beauty of his Kingdom and now He wanted everyone to see Vashti, his treasure, his crown jewel, as it were.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

I cannot help but admire her, can you? **This was a risky move – No one defied Xerxes**

A) She sacrificed all the glamour and all the wealth and all the stuff, for the sake of personal dignity.

B) She would not be shown off as a piece of property, to be leered at by drunken men.

C) She was willing to sacrifice her crown, for the sake of her character.

D) How many women in America tonight are in a bar somewhere – **Sacrificing their Character.**

Picture this scene:

A) The king said to his guests, **"I have a real surprise for you. I want you to see my queen.**

B) She is going to stand before you with the crown royal upon her head. She is very beautiful."

C) In a few minutes one of the chamberlains whispered in the king's ear, **"She won't come."**

D) NO DOUBT XERXES WAS EMBARRASSED! Pride was wounded
His whole plan of gaining their military support was in Jeopardy

A)How can He command an army – if he can't command his woman!

13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice,..... Names

B)So the King calls an Emergency meeting: Top Advisers who understood the law and the times The King asked the question:

15 "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?"

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. 17 For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' 18 This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath.

C)Memucan's Point. This is not just a problem for you – but this is a Problem for all the men in the Kingdom.

A)This could launch a women's lib movement – Women's equality movement – we can't have that!

B)Memucan's proposal.

19 If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. [*who is more worthy than she*] 20 When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."

21 And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of

Memucan. 22 Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

C)Men are boss – men call the shots – put women in their place.

Ch. 2 After these things – what things? Chapter 2:16 indicates that there was a 4year span between chapters 1-2

A)During that time Ahasuerus made his great invasion of Greece.

B)But like his father before him – his invasion was also unsuccessful and he came home a defeated man.

C)It was an unfortunate defeat for Xerxes, but God was overruling.

1)The power was about to pass from Persia to Greece. Daniel had prophesied – years before!

After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

D)After his defeat he returned in deep dejection to his palace.

1)Added to his misery was the absence of his queen and the fact that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered—even by the king himself.

Vashti could never again be his queen.

So the Servants are watching the king – They know his state of mind,. something must be done.

2 Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; 3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. 4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

Idea the first ever Miss Persia Pageant – The king is the soul Judge

A)Sort of a Miss Persia meets the Bachelor

This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

B) Now we are going to meet the Beauty of the Pageant

V. 5 In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. 6 Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

So Mordecai is this Jewish man living in Persia – His great grandfather Kish was one of the people taken in the first Babylonian invasion – 130 years earlier

A) So Mordecai has been born in a pagan land – but he is a godly man.

B) I love this about him and Esther – both were born in a pagan ungodly place – but they were godly people

C) I hear Christians today – making excuses – so hard to live for Jesus – **in this culture. NOT TRUE.**

1) People like Daniel – Mordecai – Esther – great examples of people living a culture way more ungodly than ours – **living Pure holy – consecrated lives**

7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother.

(Esther was an orphan – Mordecai was her cousin – committed to take care of her)

The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

Now the Jewish historian Josephus writes that legend has it – that Mordecai tried to hide Esther – from this Beauty pageant

A) But her beauty was so well known that She couldn't be hidden.

B) Hadassah is a Hebrew name that means myrtle – Myrtle bush- myrtle = fragrance –

1) Myrtle branches are still carried during the Feast of Tabernacles Signifying Peace and thanksgiving

D) The Persian name she is given is Esther which means Star –

1) Ray Stedman points to one Hebrew Scholar who translates Esther to mean to hide or hidden

I like the combo of those two definitions because up to this point – God had indeed hidden a Star in Persia for his People.

A) God had his hand on this little forgotten orphan and was going to do something huge thru her life.

B) When Esther lost her mom and dad at a young age she might have thought her life was over.

1) In reality it had just begun

C) God would bring this godly relative into her life to love her and care for her

1) To raise her in the ways of the Lord

D) God had something great in Store – Mordecai had no idea – { **Never know the impact**

1) Time invested in one life – one person – one young Teenager –

E) **Letter from Jeanna Aronson** – Keep loving Jesus

8 So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.

Taken – against her will – **Don't romanticize this** – not a Cinderella thing – longing to go to the Ball.

So beautiful girls are gathered from all 127 provinces to the Palace – Josephus – tells us 400 girls

V.9 Now the young woman (Esther) pleased him, (Hegai) and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. (**God's hand at work**)

10 Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.

11 And every day Mordecai paced in front of the

court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

Precious – Uncle – worried

12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, (Thought your wife took long to get ready) twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

One Whole year of nothing but Beautifying and Spa treatments {Wow! – sounds awesome right?

Not really: The King was going to pick one woman out of the 400 to be his queen.

A)What happened to the 399 girls who didn't get the rose so to speak?

B) They didn't just go back to their lives. They were banished to the Kings Harem

1)Where they would live – never able to Marry

C)Unless the King called upon them for sexual purposes – they lived like widows

1)So there is a lot at Stake here. – Lots of Pressure

13 So each young woman prepared, to see the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

14 In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

So Esther catches the eye of Hegai – something about her that he really likes

A)Notice that phrase again in V.9 she obtained his favor

B)The literal translation of the original language is pregnant with meaning

1)It says She lifted up grace before his face.

C)That is an awesome expression – one worthy of taking note of.

1)Her countenance was grace magnified -

Here she is taken against her will – thrust into this pageant– all these other girls – the competition and atmosphere had to be intense – cut throat

A)In the midst of all that Esther did not display a Sour attitude.

B)She didn't display a “it is all about me attitude”

C)Instead she chose to model grace before this influential servant of the king

Great trait - What do you Model in difficulty?

A)Grouchy – complaining – negative – down cast - woe is me my life is so hard– all about you – mentality ?

Esther Modeled grace – God blesses her for it Hegai starts to give her some special attention.

A)Obvious – God is working here – Given Esther favor in the eyes of the Custodian of these girls

B) He is giving her extra spa treatments – extra maidens to help her – not just extra but CHOICE

1)Best of the Best – trainers – beauticians

C)And he moves her to the Best place in the house!

Now I can't help but see some spiritual symbolism here for us in this point of the story

A)These girls would spend a year getting ready to see the King –

B)THEIR PREPERATION involved Purification and Beautification.

C)We living here are supposed to be getting ready to see our King!

1)Promise that one day – He is coming

D)Bridegroom for his Bride – Custom - Surprise coming – 10 virgins - She had to be ready.

1)Oil in lamp

How are we to Prepare? – Purification

A)John in his epistle speaking of that day –

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like

Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

B) In other words we are to be living our lives in preparation of seeing our King Jesus.

1) Part of our preparation is Purification – Purify our hearts – junk – carnality

C) **David – Search me – oh God** – see any wicked way – Carnality –

1) Not a time to be playing around with sin

Esther’s Preparation would involve – Purification

A) But another part was **Beautification** – She would soak every day 6 months in these baths - oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes

B) We too are to be those in our preparation that we are to be soaking in some things.

C) **Soaking in the Word** – Beholding Him – being transformed

1) Not conformed but transformed – renewing of your mind. – Soak in the word

D) What are you soaking in?

Soaking in His presence in Worship: God has a great sense of smell

A) Throughout the scriptures He speaks of the sweet Sacrifice of praise.

B) 2 Corinthians 2 – Paul talked about his life – Fragrance of Christ.

1) How does that happen? – Soaking in the word – Seeing Jesus

C) **Soaking in His presence in Worship**

1) Mary – Broke a vessel – poured it over Jesus – wiped with her hair

D) The fragrance filled the Room – Fragrance was on Mary

1) Everywhere that Mary went Smelt like Jesus

E) Interesting the Disciples smelled the Fragrance – BUT they didn’t have the fragrance.

Some smell it – I like what I smell in that person the Fragrance of Christ

A) But they don’t have it – THEY DON’T SOAK

B) Can I encourage you – Soak – here – BE ON TIME FOR WORSHIP

C) **SOAK AT HOME** – what happens here should be the overflow of your hearts

D) I pray - That it might be said of us – said of Esther: His grace is upon us!

E) Calvary Vista – bears the Fragrance of Christ

1) Jesus place – Simply Jesus – All about – All to All For -

Esther’s turn comes -

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised.

When it was each girl's turn they could request – clothes – outfitters – accessories –

A) Esther requesting nothing – NO KIM KARDASHIAN –

B) NOT A DIVA - Demanding the latest fashions

C) She simply tells – Hegai – whatever you think is best

And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

Obtained Favor – Grace was all over her!

A) God’s grace causing everyone to like her.

Proverbs 11:16 “A gracious woman attains honor.”

Psalms 5:12

“For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield.”

16 So Esther was **taken** to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal

crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

The King loved her is literally more attracted to her than all the others.

A) I think the king is going to grow to love her which is why he gives her some special privileges later

B) Right now – all attraction – Physical and this special Grace

C) **Right now it is all God** – moving and working in the invisible to orchestrate events –

1) To put His Star into Place – { So She can Shine –for Him

Psalms 75:6-7 says: *For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.*

Application for us:

We all have a place in God's plan

A) Where ever you are right now God has a purpose for it - maybe a short purpose, or a long one;

B) Perhaps a large purpose or a small purpose, but God has a reason.

C) **He knows: Rest – surrender** – quit trying to figure out His purpose.

1) What are you doing next –

D) **Not saying don't plan** – but be faithful in the moment – be faithful in each situation

1) Allow the Lord to surprise you.

Another application:

A) The story of Esther reminds us that in the outworking of His plan, God can use the evil of man.

B) God did not make Ahasuerus drunk,

1) God did not make him demand that his queen present herself in an immodest way before the lords of the kingdom;

C) Yet God allowed this wicked action of man to fulfill a purpose in His greater plan.

So Don't freak out when Evil is happening around you – God is still Sovereign – still on the throne

A) His plan is still going to be carried out

B) Trust him – keep your eyes on Him

C) Delays: Stay true – stay Pure – IN His timing the plan will unfold. – AMEN

18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

AT THIS POINT – MOVIE –

TO BE CONTINUED.....