

## Esther 2:1-20 The Mark of Grace

Abraham Lincoln said, "No man is poor who has had a godly mother.

A) Many Military heroes, political statesmen, ministers of the Gospel, and athletes,

B) have attributed the development and cultivation of their skills to their mothers and/or their wives.

C) I know that I am very thankful for the Mother the Lord has given to me.

1) Faithful prayer warrior, counselor – cheerleader

D) Godly example to our family.

My wife Denise has been all those things to me and my kids as well.

A) Very thankful for those two amazing women

B) As a Pastor I am blessed that there are so many godly grace filled women in this church

A) You ladies are the heartbeat of this church –

C) I know I don't just speak for myself when I say how grateful I am for all of you –

D) Today we are continuing our study in the book of Esther – today we will actually meet Esther

There are 4 things that we see about Esther in Chapter 2 – that are examples for all of us

A) But especially you ladies – looking for role models – A Woman to look up to

B) These are 4 traits worth noting – worth emulating and praying into your lives

C) Before we get there: We have some set up work to do today.

Chapter 2 begins in this way: **After these things**, What things ?

A) Here is what we need to know is that there is about a 3 year gap in between the events of ch. 1-2

B) Recap on Ch. 1 – 6 month Banquet – leaders from 127 Providences

C) Partying for 6 months –

1) Purpose: Win approval and support for a war with Greece.

C) Turning point: **Final seven days** – calls for his wife – Parade – Crown –

1) Disgrace –

D) **She refuses** – Emergency meeting

1) Instead of humbling himself and asking for forgiveness

**Ahasuerus takes the advice of his advisors**

A) And decides to make Queen an example to all women in Persia who defy their husbands

B) Queen Vashti is banished! That is how ch. 1 ended

C) Now in between ch. 1-2 History tells us that Ahasuerus tried to invade Greece

D) And he was Unsuccessful in Conquering them.

Now I didn't see this movie, but if you saw the movie 300 – that is what it was about –

A) How Greece withstood the invasion of Persia led by King Xerxes –

B) Xerxes is Ahasuerus – Xerxes is his Greek name  
1) Ahasuerus is his Persian name

C) There is an ancient story that is still told today about the Grecian stand against Persia

When King Xerxes marched into Greece and was ultimately humiliated and defeated,

A) it is reported that he told one of the Greek generals, "**You need to surrender your arms,**"

B) And the General said, quote, "**You'll need to come and take them.**"

1) **Move – Lay down your weapons ..... take them!**

C) **And to this day, that's the motto of the Greek army,**

1) and they tell this story to the kids growing up in Greek school,

D) and if you enlist for the military in Greece, they talk about how, they crushed Xerxes.

**So when Ch. 2 Begins we have a king who has returned from battle with his tail between his legs**

A)He is sad and dejected

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

B)Question have you ever done something stupid – made a mistake? –

1)How long did it take you to realize it? – An hour – a day, a week, a month or two

C)Well About 3 years have gone by since the King divorced his wife and banished her from ...Kingdom

**The events of the Banquet we looked at in Ch. 1 took place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ahasuerus reign V.3**

A)Now in V.16 of ch. 2 We are told it is now the 7<sup>th</sup> year and 10months into his reign

B)There will be a year that transpires from v.1 of ch.2 to v.16 of chapter two – so 3+ years gone by

**C)We read when his anger subsided – he remembered his Wife Vashti –**

1)That is one stubborn dude right there

D)Hopefully it doesn't take you 3 plus years to come to grips with a mistake.

**Now Let me just say this: When you are lonely and depressed – discouraged –**

A)Be careful of the counsel you receive when you are in a vulnerable state –

B)When we are in a Vulnerable state, we can be susceptible to BAD COUNSEL

C)The king is going to get some bad counsel here But we will see God is going to use it

**Esther 2:1-4 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."**

**D)Here is the answer of these men: You need a wife – So lets have a Miss Persia Pageant –Sole Judge.**

**This thing pleased the king, and he did so.**

**The King is - I like that idea – Nothing like a bunch of beautiful women to take my mind off of things –**

A)The solution that these men come to is the same one that people make every day.

B)They realize there is a void in their lives – they think – I need a person to fill this void

C)The Kings heart problem is going to be fixed with a new wife.

D)The problem so many people make – seek to fill a void in their lives with people / things/ experiences

1)It is a void that can only be filled by God

**Now as we come to V.5 we are introduced to two of the most important people in this story.**

**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.**

**The first person we meet is a Jewish man by the name of Mordecai –**

A)Here We are told how he ended up in Persia

B)Points back 118 yrs to a time in History when the Babylonians led by King Neb – invaded Jerusalem

**It was during the reign Jeconiah in Israel**

A)At that time Mordecai's great grandfather Kish and his family were taken captive in that group.

B)Which means Mordecai was born in Persia.

C)So Mordecai is a Jew living in Persia – he has grown up in this culture

1) We will see in v.20 today has a job working for the King.

**D) He is a man who took on the role of a father to his cousin Hadassah**

1) A role that will have ramifications beyond what he could ever possibly imagine.

**7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.**

A) Here we meet Hadassah – also known as Esther

B) She is much younger than Mordecai – **means she also was born in Persia** – somehow her parents died

1) She becomes an orphan

C) Mordecai takes her in and raises her as his own daughter

**I love the description that we are given here of Esther – Lovely and beautiful**

A) Original language – beautiful in form and lovely to look at.

B) We will also see that she was lovely on the inside as well. – That is what matters most!

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

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

1) Ray Stedman points out Hebrew Scholars translates Esther to mean to hide or hidden

**Stedman: combines those two definitions to form this idea – God had 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.

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

A) Sure that was confusing to her – why would God allow that to happen?

B) She was going to discover that God had a plan for her life – she could have never even imagined

**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

**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.**

**Now there are two important things to point out here from the text –**

A) #1 The Beauty pageant was a Command and a decree –

B) the decree said that all the girls deemed beautiful would be brought to the Palace.

C) So don't picture all these mini beauty pageants happening in all 127 provinces of Persia

1) where girls would win the right to compete for the MRS Persia pageant

D) Don't picture – young girls sending in their audition videos

**This was not a desirable opportunity for anyone**

A) Yes one girl would be chosen to be the queen – but many of the rest would end up in his Harem

**B) See The Persian King had a wife for companionship and the bear children –**

C) He had a Harem full of Concubines for the sole purpose of sexual pleasure.

D) So if you were picked to be in the Harem – no children ever married

1) No parent wanted that for their daughter – and most of these young girls weren't crazy for that idea either

**#2 A Word concerning Esther v.8 that she was taken**

**Idea – taken against her will. Taken by force**

A) She was a reluctant participant in this whole thing

**B)Once again – I think some Bible commentators ignore this – try to romanticize this story**

**C)Thinking of a fairytale like Cinderella – where Mordecai and Esther conspiring together  
1)to advance Esther in a worldly fashion**

**D)To Use her good looks to get ahead.**

**E)That is not what is happening here at all.**

1)Esther is spotted for her beauty and is taken against her will.

**All to the dismay of Mordecai –**

**A)Because both he and Esther know that if she is not chosen to be Queen**

**B)There is a good Chance she will become a part of the Kings Harem.**

1)Imagine that dads - He must have been heartbroken

**C)At this moment Esther and Mordecai have no idea what God is doing. – All they can do is trust God**

1)The hardest thing for a parent – when your child is going through a difficulty –

2) and all you can do is trust God – SO HARD

**Now I want to address an error that many good Bible teachers make in interpreting the story of Esther.**

**A)Often times the point is made that Esther and Mordecai didn't belong in Persia**

**B)They are living in a backslidden state.**

1)Why do they say that?

**Well they say the Jews were given the opportunity to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.**

**A)But the majority of the Jewish people stayed in Persia – they were comfortable in Persia**

**B)That is a true statement – I in fact made that statement in our first study**

1)But I want you to understand – why that doesn't apply to Mordecai or Esther or their peers

**Here is why: The decree was issued by Ahasuerus's grandfather Cyrus in 539 BC**

**A)The first group left in 538BC with Zerubbabel – about a 1,000 people initially went**

**B)From Shushan in Persia to Jerusalem was about 900 miles – traveling on foot**

1)Oceanside to Portland Oregon – 17 hr drive  
Unless Denise 20 hrs ☺

**So the first group goes out with Zerubbabel – about a 1,000 people.**

**A)The next group that goes out was also in 538BC led by Ezra – about 50K pp**

**B)The time frame of the book of Esther takes place beginning in 486 BC – Ahasuerus – reign started**

1)Here is Chapter 2 it is 479 BC – 7<sup>th</sup> year

**C)So it has been 59 years since the first group left to go back to Jerusalem**

**So Esther wasn't even born when the first group left–**

**A)To be one of the young virgins in running to be the queen means she is at the most 20 yrs of age when we meet her here in ch. 2 –**

**B)Women married young in those days – usually in their teens**

**C)It is safe to say that Mordecai was probably not even born –**

1)because – he would have had to have been at least 20 yrs old when he started taking care of the orphaned Esther

**D)If he was 20 in 538 BC when the first group went back he would be 80yrs old now –**

1) Highly unlikely

**So neither Mordecai nor Esther were even born when the opportunity was given to go back 538bc**

**A)And for the next 80yrs there were no other groups going back**

**B)And It wasn't like you could just come and go when you pleased in Persia**

1)Again 900 mile journey on foot.

No planes – trains to get her out of the city

**C)Some fault Mordecai for not getting Esther out of Persia – where would he go?**

1)They are in the Middle of a desert – Persia is in control of the whole middle east –

**My Point is this: it is poor Biblical exegesis to fault Esther and Mordecai for being in the Persia**

A)They had no choice

B)Instead They are a good description for us two people being born into a sinful world – sinful society

**C)Trying to make their mark in a world that was not their home.**

D)And they are thrust into a situation where all they can do is trust God.

**So beautiful girls are TAKEN 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.**

**4 Noteworthy things about Esther**

**#1 She was beautiful on the inside and the outside**

A)She catches the eye of Hegai –

B)The phrase in V.9 **she obtained favor** is pregnant with meaning in the original Hebrew

C))The literal translation for she obtained favor is means: **She lifted up grace before his face.**

1)there was something about her that was different

D)Her countenance was grace magnified

**It is interesting that this same phrase is used 3X in this chapter to describe Esther**

A)V.9 with Hegai –

B)Again in V.15 with everyone who came in contact with her then - V.17 the King himself

C)The Apostle Peter admonished women in the NT church – Don't just be focused on outer beauty

**D)But Cultivate what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.**

E)True Esther was beautiful on the outside but it was her inner beauty that caused her to stand out

**So Here she is taken against her will – thrust into this pageant– all these other girls –**

A)The competition was probably intense – these girls know what is at stake for them

B)But In the midst of all that Esther did not display a Sour attitude. – She was different

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

D)Instead she chose to model grace before this influential servant of the king - **Great trait**

**What do you Model in difficulty?**

A)Sad to admit for me – not always grace – not always trust –

B)Complaining – Freaking out – God what are you doing – this is not right

C)You want to be attractive and influence other in difficulty – ask God to shower you in his grace!

**So God's hand is on Esther She Modeled grace – 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) Hegai starts giving her extra spa treatments – the choice maidens to help her –

1)Best of the Best – trainers beauticians

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

**Now from a human perspective we could look at this and think – NOT FAIR –**

A)No wonder Esther is going to Win – She got all this extra treatment

B)But the way that we need to see this is – Here the Lord is coming along side this Scared young girl

1)and is letting her know – **I AM WITH YOU!**

**C)When everything around us is seemingly falling apart and filled with uncertainty**

1)God has his ways of reminding us – He is there

D)My life down times – discouraging times – times when I am doubting

1)I get a text – email – a call – and opportunity

E)God’s way of reminding me – I am here – not forsaken – or forgotten- IVE GOT YOU!

**That I believe is what GOD is doing here with Esther – He is assuring her – Don’t worry Trust me!**

A)#2 Esther was teachable **10 Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.**

B)Again Some commentators take this too far – suggesting that Mordecai is being secretive

1)He and isn’t practicing Judaism –Keeping his race and religion a secret

C)Again that is not the case – not consistent with the story –

1)In the next chapter we will find Mordecai – boldly not bowing before a man name Haman

**D)It is obvious to all that he is Jewish – and Haman – from that one act of defiance**

1)Seeks to have all the Jews in the Kingdom annihilated

**So I believe Mordecai is being wise and protective here –**

A)He doesn’t want these other girls to lash out at Esther simply because she is Jewish

B)He is looking out for this girl who he has raised as his own daughter –

C)She doesn’t unnecessarily put herself in harms way - Show some verbal restraint

**Esther wisely listens to him – showing that she has a teachable spirit**

**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 – Dad pacing – worried

**12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed 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 spa treatments and Beautifying {Wow – sounds awesome right?**

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

**Whatever dress – Jewelry – accessories – you pick**

**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.**

This is like the Bachelor – Persia Style – one shot to spend the night with the King

**V.15 – It Esther’s turn:**

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

A)She only did what Hegai advised – teachable

B)She found favor in the sight of all who saw her

**#3 She remained authentic – she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised.**

A)The idea here is she doesn’t overdo it

B)She wasn’t going to be someone she wasn’t

**C)Being a person of integrity doesn't mean being perfect. It means being authentic. — Chuck Swindoll**

**Authenticity is such an appealing quality in people**

A)I hate when I see someone trying to be something they are not to be liked --- by others

B) Be yourself – quit trying to impress others with spirituality or your appearance – wealth – status

C) Life is full of imitations. Which is why today's culture needs genuine, transparent people of God. People of purpose, **not perfection**. Warren Wiersbe

Esther remained true to herself – another attractive quality

A) One of the things that I have always loved about my wife Denise

B) First met – she was this country girl from Oregon flannel shirts and overalls -

C) She was so Genuine – radiated Jesus

Even after becoming my wife – She wasn't so focused on that – Pastors wife – perceptions – expectations

A) She has always put our marriage and our kids first

B) Even now – although she is a good Bible teacher – she recognizes – not her primary gifting

C) God uses her more in Vision organization – encouraging others – raising up others

1) Giving others opportunity – it is beautiful

I often see so many men and women – trying to be something – God hasn't called them to be

A) Encourage you – BE YOURSELF

B) Don't let others put you into a box – this is what a Christian mom is supposed to be –

C) Be authentic – Be who the Lord has made you

1) Be content with your calling – your life – doors...

Husbands – Support your wife in who God has made her to be

A) Don't put pressure on her to be something she is not –

B) **Dwell with her in understanding** – See how the Lord has wired her – gifted her – support that

C) Years ago – I was meeting with a husband in the church who wanted his wife to be more involved in ministry. –

1) She was more content – Serve in the Home – family was very important to her.

D) I asked him – What is she like as a cook ?

1) Mom? House keeper? Wife?

I know a bunch of men in the church that would be overjoyed if their wife was all at

A) Support her – compliment her – in who she is

**B) Quit trying to get her to be something she isn't**

C) Compliment her in her authenticity

D) Esther was Authentic -

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. Esthers turn with the King

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.

A) She obtained grace and favor -

B) again the idea her is he was attracted to something other than her physical beauty

C) There was something about her inner character that drew him towards her.

He is going to literally fall in love with her and give her privileges that were not normal in his kingdom

A) **Right now it is all God** – moving working in the invisible to orchestrate events – for a greater good

B) God is putting his Star into Place – So she is in a position to shine at the right time

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.

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, {more for the Harem} Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

A) This is why Scholars say that Mordecai was working for the King – Sat in the Kings gate

**B) In the ancient orient, the gates of a city were the place where commercial and judicial and civil matters were transacted.**

**C) Mordecai's presence at the king's gate supports the premise that he held a position of esteem in the judicial system of the King**

**20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him. \**

**#4 Esther remained humble: Still listening to Mordecai –even after she is chosen to be queen.**

**A) Not getting prideful with her position.**

**B) Humility teachability were graces that caused her start to shine brightly**

**C) She was growing in grace and favor with everyone**

**Jesus grew in Favor with**

**A) Lesson for women today: Compassion for women**