

# Queen for A Day Such as This

Studies in the Book of Esther

## *"Impotent Notables"*

Esther was the queen of Persia who saved the Jews from extermination with her wholehearted commitment to God.

Risking her life to save her people by coming uninvited before the king, her famous declaration was, "If I perish, I perish."

**She didn't start that way.** When we first meet her, she is anything but committed. In fact, **her heart isn't into walking with God at all.**

- As the book opens, we will see Esther enter the king's harem as a contestant to become his next queen. She did so willingly, not by force. It's sort of like being on the Bachelor.
- In her preparations Esther ate foods which were prohibited for a Jew. Compare Daniel and his three friends in a similar situation in Babylon about a century earlier. Esther would have known about Daniel, since Persia conquered Babylon, and Daniel had been involved at a high level in the Persian government under Darius, who ruled before the king that Esther married.
- This was no beauty contest to win the king's affections. The women, Esther included, were being prepared to have sexual relations with the king.
- Esther married the king. Marriage to a non-Jew was strictly prohibited by God's law. Her contemporaries, Nehemiah and Ezra, were forcing Jews who had married Persians to divorce.

- It was almost five years from the time Esther became queen to the time she revealed her true identity as a Jew. As queen she ate, dressed, and acted like a Persian - *including worshipping like a Persian!*

What we are looking at, *theologically*, in this book is huge. God providentially preserved His chosen people, against all odds, in order for Jesus to be born as promised to be the Savior of the world.

What we are looking at, *devotionally*, is a call to fully committing our lives to God, **without** the crisis.

Even if I've been a believer for some time, this can really speak to me. Spiritual apathy is an ever-present peril.

Chapter one takes us back to the fifth century BC. King Ahasuerus of Persia holds a lavish banquet, initially for his court and dignitaries and afterwards for all the inhabitants of the capital city, Shushan.

For the big finale, Ahasuerus orders his queen, Vashti, to come and display her beauty before the guests. She refuses. Furious, Ahasuerus has her removed from her position and makes arrangements to choose a new queen from a selection of the most beautiful young women from throughout the empire.

There is a kind of forced-perspective in the way the chapter is written:

1. In verses one through eleven it's as if you are approaching the throne of King Ahasuerus. You are forced to look around at his world and are seduced by its splendor.

2. In verses twelve through twenty-two it's as if you are sitting on the throne with Ahasuerus. You are forced to look within, at his heart, and see it enslaved to natural passions.

Est 1:1 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),

Est 1:2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel,

Est 1:3 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 -

Est 1:4 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.

Est 1:5 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.

Est 1:6 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 on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.

Est 1:7 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.

Est 1:8 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.

Est 1:9 Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

**They partied for six months.**

The king probably didn't assemble all his leaders at one time; that would have kept them away from their duties too long. It's more likely that, over a period of six months, Ahasuerus brought the officers to Shushan on a rotation. He brought them all together for the seven-day city-wide feast finale.

You are forced to walk through King Ahasuerus' palaces on an approach to his throne. The subtle suggestion is that you, too, can sit enthroned – at least over your own smaller empire – and enjoy the best that the world has to offer.

Persia represents the material world to you. The world can be a place of beauty, wealth, pleasure, and power.

If you are not careful, you are seduced by the world. Instead of living for spiritual realities, you settle for material trifles. You gain the world, but lose those things that are most important and meaningful.

The wine vessels symbolize the whole affair. Each person had a custom made golden goblet. I'd like to think that they kept it as a souvenir.

In their goblet they drank the royal wine that was normally reserved for the king. They held in their own hands a little part of the world's splendor, and drank it to their fill.

In verse eight, where it says, "the drinking was not compulsory," a better translation is, "each drank in his own way." The idea is that you could pace yourself, or you could get blitzed. This was, however, very definitely a drunken party.

King Ahasuerus decided to go for the big close by bringing out Queen Vashti.

Esther 1:10 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,

Esther 1:11 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.

Vashti, in one beautiful package, was everything Ahasuerus was trying to portray. She represented what the Persian material world had to offer. She was its beauty; she was its pleasure.

The thing that most stands out to me are the seven eunuchs who served King Ahasuerus. The men closest to the king were always castrated. That way they could not have any children who would challenge the king for his throne. They were powerful men, in a worldly sense – having access to the king and all the privileges of his palace. But they were impotent.

Powerful, but impotent. **That is what the world makes you.** It seduces you; but when you think you are going to sit on a throne, and enjoy your own little kingdom, you find you've been rendered impotent. You're a eunuch serving the king of this world.

Esther 1:12 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.

Having come right up to the throne, we looked around at the world. Now we're going to look within – at the world within, at the heart. In the case of Ahasuerus, he was a slave to his anger. His anger represents all of the works of our flesh that are a part of the sin nature we are born with.

He began by seeking some spiritual help:

Esther 1:13 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,

Esther 1:14 those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom):

The description, "wise men who understood the times," means these guys were occult astrologers. They practiced things like divination and sorcery and dream research in order to predict the future and give advice.

It was *spiritual* help, but not *biblical* help. The world is filled with spiritual help that is not biblical. You know what that tells us? **It tells us that most people realize the material world is not enough.** People innately know they have a spiritual side.

Here is their best advice:

Esther 1:15 "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?" Esther 1:16 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. Esther 1:17 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.'

Esther 1:18 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.

Esther 1:19 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.

Esther 1:20 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."

Their advice reveals their heart. They were small; they were mean; they were vindictive; they were cruel; they were selfish.

The best spiritual advice that human religion and philosophy can give is always flawed because it comes from the sin nature. Only God can offer mercy and grace.

Esther 1:21 And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

Esther 1:22 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.

Memucan probably got a book deal - *Memucan's Marriage Manifesto* His talk show, *Memucan's Mastery of Marriage*, was must-see TV for husbands dealing with insubordinate wives. It sounds funny... **But this is what we do today with those dispensing stupid advice.**

Ahasuerus was a slave to the world within him. It made the world around him all the more dangerous. When the world appeals to your flesh, and you have only religion and philosophy to guide you... You are a slave – no matter that you are seated on a throne.

When you become a Christian, God gives you a new nature. The Holy Spirit lives within you, giving you power to say “No!” to the flesh and “Yes!” to obeying God.

The Word of God gives you a new and proper perspective on the world around you. You are in the world, but not of the world. You can enjoy much of it without being seduced by it. You are passing through it to your home in Heaven.

God is seated on the Throne. You are happy to let Him sit there. You are His servant. *But you're not a eunuch!* Instead, you are promised power – His spiritual power.

The world attempts to seduce you. It won't succeed if you remember you have a Lover in Jesus and are betrothed to Him.

He'll return for you at any moment. Be ready.