

Safe Harbor Baptist Church

11-2-2022 Wednesday night

Esther Sermon 1 "The God who works behind the scenes"

Pastor Josh Montgomery

***"The Character of Vashti"***

Esther 1

**Introduction:**

The Book of Esther is one of two books in the Bible named after a woman. The other of course being the book of Ruth.

There is much controversy over the book of Esther, beginning with the name of the book itself.

There are many Bible commentators that argue that the book should be called the "Book of Mordecai" for the simple reason that Mordecai is mentioned more in the book than Esther.

Mordecai- 58 times.

Esther- 56 times.

Most Commentators believe that Mordecai wrote the book, and he entitled it as the book of Esther to honor her bravery and heroics on behalf of the Jewish people. But no one can know for certain.

The events in the book of Esther cover about 10 years.

The setting timewise for this book is about 53 years after the Jews returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel. (The book of Ezra) 20 years later the Temple would be completed.

Even though the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity there were still a large group that had settled in Babylon and Persia and were content to live their lives in that location.

To give further context of this book in Jewish history, the book of Esther and the events thereof occur about 38 years before the book of Nehemiah.

This book is interesting also because it is only one of two books where "God" is not mentioned at all. (Song of Solomon being the other book).

Why is the name of God absent from this book?

One reason suggested for the absence of God's name was that a half century before, Cyrus had issued the proclamation permitting the Jews to return to Palestine. Not a Jew should have remained in Persia. Yet many Jews were far too comfortable in the land of exile to face the hardships of rebuilding Canaan.

God did not allow his name to be linked with them, although in grace he protected them. Long before he had warned of such a day. (James Knox notes: Old Testament Survey, pg. 299-300)

Deuteronomy 31:16-18 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? 18 And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.*

The purpose of this great book is to teach us about God. Even though we do not see his name in the book, we see his fingerprints throughout the entire book.

This teaches us about:

- God's *Providence*.

Providence- To provide in advance.

- God's *Power*.
- God's *Pity*.

Even though the Jews were not living where they were supposed to be. They were not what they were supposed to be. God still had mercy on them and worked on their behalf through all their turmoil.

The book of Esther is a great "narrative" book; Meaning that it is telling a story.

In each chapter we will see the hand of God working.

### Esther 1- "The Character of Vashti"

#### End of Introduction:

Vs 1-2 *Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)*

*2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,*

We are introduced to the King in this book and his name is Ahasuerus which means “I will be poor and silent”. Most Bible commentators agree that Ahasuerus was probably a title rather than a name much like the titles “Pharaoh and Herod”

The other name that he is known for in history is Xerxes (pronounced zurk seez) which means “The lion king”.

He reigned from India to Ethiopia which in today's geographic layout would include, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, West Jordan, most of Egypt, North Sudan, Northeast Libya, Northeast Greece, the Black Sea, the coast of Bulgaria and Southwest Russia. (Rob Matton, Esther pg. 7)

Needless to say he had a large kingdom, with much wealth and responsibility.

Shushan was the capital of the Persian empire. The Rock of Ages study Bible tells us that Emperors usually spent the winters in Babylon and the summers in Shushan.

Vs 3-4 *In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:*

*4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.*

As our text unfolds we note that he is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign and he sends out an invitation to all his princes and servants for them to join him in Shushan to have a great feast.

This “feast” lasted according to Vs 4 of our text 180 days.

He was showing all this riches, wealth and material possessions.

This speaks of the pride and the arrogance that the King possessed. As we will learn in this text he felt that since he had all this wealth and riches that he could do as he pleased.

Proverbs 29:23 *A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.*

It is also believed that this feast was for the planning and preparation for the invasion of Greece which would take place in 481 B.C. It was common practice for Persian kings to use feast to plan wars. (Rod Matton, Esther pg. 10)

Vs 5-6 *And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; 6 Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of*

*marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.*

It appears that in these verses when the 180-day feast had concluded that there was another feast that was opened to the public, and this feast lasted for another 7 days.

To further gain a perception of the wealth of the Persian empire we note Vs 6 where we are told of the decorations that we inside the court of the garden.

Beautiful drapes, and curtains were hung along with beds and couches made of Gold and Silver, and they were sitting on pavement that was red, blue, white and black marble.

One writer surmises that these feast cost millions of dollars to put on.

*Vs 7-8 And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.*

*8 And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.*

The vessels that were used for the consumption of wine and alcoholic beverages were made from gold.

The wine was the finest that the king possessed.

The phrase in Vs 8 “*And the drinking was according to the law*” refers to the law of the Persians which was this “drink in abundance”.

In other words, they could drink when they wanted and as much as they wanted to. There were no restrictions!

But if they choose not to drink that they would not be made to.

The King had the mentality and relayed to his people “you can do what you want to do”. Sadly this ideology is preached in many pulpits today “If it feels good do it”

Alcohol has never done anyone any good!

Proverbs 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

Proverbs 23:20-21 *Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: 21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.*

Many “so called” ministers are even advocating drinking now. They claim that it is not a sin to drink, as long as you do not get drunk.

That's like saying that it's alright to jump into the swimming pool as long as you do not get wet!

The best way to never get drunk, is to never drink!!

*Vs 9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.*

Vashti was the wife of the King making her the Queen obviously.

She was permitted to provide her own feast for the women, separate from the men's feast.

This was very common in this culture because men and women did not attend these feasts together.

Women in this culture were to be silent; they were to be covered with large blue capes and they wore linen veils with eye holes over the face and their head was to be covered, the men were not to speak of their wives in public and husbands and wives only called one another by name in private.

*Vs 10-11 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,*

*11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.*

The King is now drunk, and commands his servants known as the "chamberlains" to go and get his wife, Queen Vashti and bring her before the guest of the king so that they could see her beauty.

Most Bible commentators agree that the King's request was for the Queen to be brought out unclothed to stand before these men.

The reason for this assumption is if she came in her proper attire as we mentioned before, they would not be able to see her, to identify her as the Queen because of the veil.

We find a similar situation in Matthew 14 concerning Herod and the daughter of Herodias.

*Matthew 14:6-8 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.*

This is where the consumption of alcohol and wine always leads, Immorality!

We learn that a man has to be drunk out of his mind and foolish to want to parade his wife in an improper fashion before a group of hundreds of other drunk men.

The King in doing so would be guilty of providing an opportunity for lust, and wicked thoughts to develop within the heart and minds of his guest, not to mention that this was his wife!

Vs 12- *But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wrath, and his anger burned in him.*

I am not claiming that Vashti was a believer in Jehovah God, most likely she was not. But I do want to emphasize her Character in this text.

She refused to go and stand before those men in an immodest fashion, she just said NO!

When the King heard this response, he was filled with wrath and anger!

Alcohol, Adultery and Anger all go together!

Proverbs 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Proverbs 25:28 *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Many have speculated on why the King became so angry at the Queen denying his request. I believe he was just angry because he did not get his way!

Thank God for the Character of Vashti!

Vs 13-15- *Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:*

*14 And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;)*

*15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?*

Because the King did not get his "way" he goes to his "wise" men and seeks suggestions of what he can do according to the law to deal with the disobedience of his wife.

Point: Married couples, when you have disagreements, arguments, fights etc. DO NOT go to your friends, your Parents etc. and talk to them and see what they think you should do. You need to pray work things out with your spouse. (Of course, I am not speaking of abuse and adultery).

Instead of being concerned of how he could restore what he had lost with his wife by his foolish request, he sought how he could make things worse for her. And he found that there was a group of people that would sit down and listen to him!

*Vs 16- And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.*

This man "Memucan" stated that not only had she done the king wrong, but all the princes and all the people!

He felt this way because he was a lustful heathen just as the King!

The devil will always make sure you have someone that will agree with you about your sin!

*Vs 17-18- For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.*

*18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.*

The fear that this wicked man had was that other women would hear about the Character of Vashti and they would also deny the wicked desires and demands that their husbands would place upon them.

*Vs 19-20 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.*

*20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.*

The solution that Memucan constructed was to make a law among the Medes and Persians (which meant that it could not be changed) that would not allow Vashti to come before the King anymore.

These men were so scared of one person with Character, that they made a law for one person!

This is what they did against Daniel and his prayer life in Daniel 6.

Point: I wonder if you and I have enough character and consistency for the LORD that our enemies would have to make a law, designed just for us?

The other part of the solution was to replace Vashti with another Queen, that they surmised would be better than Vashti.

The idea was this; Once this law had been written and decreed that all the other women would hear about the law and they would willingly submit to the wickedness of their husbands.

Vs 21-22- *And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:*

*22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.*

The King hears the idea and suggestion of Memucan and he liked what he heard and made it the law of the land.

He sent letters throughout all the land informing them that Vashti had been removed and there would be a new Queen in the land!

### **Conclusion:**

Lessons learned from Esther 1

1. Wealth and Riches does not mean you will have a Happy home. Vs 1-12
2. There will always be someone to agree with you about your sin. Vs 13-16
3. One persons character and integrity can have an impact on someone else! Vs 17-18
4. Throughout all this wickedness God is setting the stage to bring Esther to a place of power to spare the Jews and preserve the seed line for his Son, Jesus Christ!

In Esther 1 we see God working behind the scenes in "The Character of Vashti"