

There is much that could be said about worldliness and drifting in the empire: much needs to be said about these matters.

Let us conclude by giving attention to Kingdom beauty treatments: Turn to Colossians 3, while read Psalm 90:16,17.

Here is a heritage for our children in a crumbling dangerous world.

17a “beauty” means favor—or delight according to Derek Kidner.

Here is labor that is not in vain—Not only will God's work will endure, but also, with His blessing, *the work of our hands* as well—how different from the pointless existence of the Empire.

Garments often denote our character—that is surely true in the empire; “but you have put off the old man with his deeds” vs. 9

Now comes the dressing/robing of the new man; There must be a new man before he can put on new spiritual clothes: 8 VIRTUES

Colossians 3

The first two are about treatment of others: compassion, kindness

The next two are his estimation of himself: humility, meekness

The next three are about reacting to mistreatment: longsuffering, forbearing (bearing with), and forgiving one another.

Love that bonds all together.

How much better is this than *living under the empire*?

The Spirit of God intends to take you on something like a brief tour of the heathen empire of Persia as it existed in the days of King Ahasuesas. But many features of this kingdom exist in the kingdoms of men on the earth since then. As we take this important tour we will see that some things have hardly changed at all.

We are called to live in the world, but not to love the world, or be of the world. As we become acquainted with Esther and her cousin Mordecai we meet two people who are in the world and of the world and drifting farther and farther away from even nominal religious practice. We have, if I am not mistaken, a similar situation on a large scale today. See what you think as we consider **LIVING UNDER THE EMPIRE**. Esther 2: 1-4, 15-17.

### **I. SEE A BETTER QUEEN ACCORDING TO THE EMPIRE'S REQUIREMENTS.**

A. vs. 2 “beautiful” “young” “virgins” (unmarried) and of course, unlike Vashti, *totally compliant*.

1. That's it? The Spirit of God intends to take you on something like a brief tour of the heathen empire of Persia as it existed in the days of King Ahasueras. But many features of this kingdom exist in the kingdoms of men on the earth since then.

2. The selection process: vs.3. “This is a competition. This is not a competition that a woman had to enter. Appointed officers gathered.”

3. “Since the whole purpose for existence in Ahasuesas' Persian kingdom was **to serve the empire** no permission was needed to draft the young women.”

4. “Even this picture of collecting women for a competition is somewhat misleading since *non of the contestants would be going home afterward.*”

(2-4, are from Ruth & Esther Iain Duguid p.19)

## II. Comparing Empires Then and Now.

Shouldn't we shocked at the last detail of the competition regarding the contestants having little or no choice in being in the contest, and worse still not going home afterward?

A. What? A living doll collection—unthinkable! Not so fast. Think again.

1. Then: Not really that bad on the scale of existence in the empire: well fed; well housed; some manner of social life perhaps. And actually “a wonderful opportunity to have a comfortable, if pointless existence--” no, no, no—No one really thinks that way do they?

2. “If that seems bizarre in our culture, where we emphasize personal freedom, **think of many people around us who pour their entire working careers into jobs they dislike, or even despise, in return for a comfortable salary and security.**”

### Comparing Empires Then and Now.

The empire may have changed its tone and requirements somewhat, “but our world is not so very different after all.”

## III. Tragic religious drifting in the empire: 2:5-7.

We meet the two stars of the story: both drifting in the empire. They both have what are probably dual names: Mordecai a Hebraised form of the Babylonian name *arduka*. Esther's birth name was Hadassah “myrtle”. The empire knew her as Esther, probably for Ishtar.

They have heathen ways as well, with some more or less nominal Jewish belief and practice. They go with flow in empire living.

A. Mordecai: a distant relative of king Saul. His relatives were carried off to exile in 597 with King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin). He has never seen Jerusalem or the Temple. He is a second or third generation exile. He is an employee on the palace grounds.

B. Meet Esther: Neither father nor mother—living. Her older cousin raised her. 'The young woman was lovely and beautiful’ NKJV. ESV says The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at... Visually speaking from the empire's standards Esther is doubly blessed. vs.8 **Esther also was taken to the king's palace.**

C. We don't really understand these two unless we consider that they were both born in exile. Wasn't there a true remnant faithful to the Lord and the faith during the exile and captivity? Yes—but about 50 years earlier the majority of those whose motto was “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord” went back to Israel—the land. In other words a large portion of the Jews who stayed in Persia were, at best, weak nominal drifting believers.

These two were defined by, and established in—The Empire.

## IV. Esther Thrives and Rises: 2:9-12

She didn't merely survive, she thrived: 'Esther learned that the harem was simply life in the empire in miniature: a relatively pointless existence, where life regulated in all its details, and promotion depended not on talent or character, but on pleasing those in charge.’<sup>1</sup>

A. Esther rose to #1 by aiming at it. Sad but true.

1. What 2:9 ff is saying is that she worked for her promotion in the house of women, by fitting into the agenda that the empire set for her.

SHE WAS WILLING TO LET THE EMPIRE DEFINE HER.

NOTHING LEWD OR FLIRTY IS SUGGESTED—AND YET THERE IS NOTHING POSITIVELY SPIRITUAL ABOUT HER *AT ALL*.

2. Since she let the empire define her, and rose by being a pleas-er, she was rewarded: best lodging & early start to her beauty treatments

3. What we learn about Esther is that she is a compliant child of the empire—rising through the ranks.

1 Ruth & Esther Iain M. Duguid

