

Esther
Part 1
“From Obscurity to Royalty”

Ester 1 NIV

Vs. 1,2

1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes (Ahasuerus), the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:

2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,

- Esther is the last of the historical books of the Bible. With all the Historical books of the Bible being (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.)

*“This King **Ahasuerus** is well known to history, though more commonly under the name Xerxes. He inherited the vast Persian Empire from his father, Darius I.” (Guzik)*

- In its day, the Persian Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. It covered what we call today Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; and also, parts of modern-day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Arabia.

Maps:

Esther 1 sets the stage for the book by detailing King Xerxes extravagant, 180-day Persian feast designed to showcase his immense wealth and power. The chapter culminates in Queen Vashti's refusal to appear before the drunken King, resulting in her permanent banishment, a move intended to prevent domestic insubordination across the empire.

- Vs. 1-9 King Xerxes of Persia hosts a 180-day feast for his officials and a subsequent 7-day feast for all citizens in Susa to display his wealth, power, and glory.

- At the same time Queen Vashti hosts a separate banquet for the women in the royal palace.
- Vs. 10–12 On the seventh day, intoxicated King Xerxes orders his seven eunuchs to bring Queen Vashti to showcase her beauty to the guests. Queen Vashti refuses to come, violating the king's command.
- Vs. 13–15 As a result of Queen Vashti refusing to come the king is furious and consults his advisors on how to legally handle Vashti's disobedience, according to the laws of Media and Persia.
- Vs. 16-20 One of the king's advisors, Memucan, warns that Vashti's actions will prompt all women in the empire to despise their husbands. He advises that Vashti be banished and her royal title be given to a worthier woman.
- Vs. 21–22 Memucan's advice pleased the king so he sent letters to all the king's provinces, that each man should be master in his own house.

This chapter sets up the need for a new queen, directly leading to the events of chapter 2.

Note: The story of Esther is similar to other stories in the Bible where at first there is a Disruption. The Disruption leads to an Dilemma/ Disturbance. God answers the Dilemma with a Deliverer for the purpose of carrying out his ultimate plan and protection for his people Israel and later his Church.

Whether the invoked Disruption is Divine or Demonic we are not sure. One thing we know is God seeks for an willing/obedient servant. God then carries out his plans with supernatural favor, providence and power and His purpose is carried out.

We see this cycle of Disruption-Dilemma-Deliverance in the Story of Joseph with Pharaoh. Moses with Israel. Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar, Jesus with Herod and here in the Story of Esther.

Esther 2

1 Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. **2** Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. **3** Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. **4** Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

Vs. 1 Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti...

- The "**Later**" spoken of here, some believe, was a gap of four years.
- During that time Xerxes' suffered an unsuccessful invasion of Greece.
- After Xerxes suffered military loss and coming home to an empty house this must have brought level of Anguish to the King. It's as if God allowed anguish to bring Xerxes to a place of change.
- The place of change, ultimately provides opportunity for Esther to be found and then exalted for a great purpose.

Vs. 5-7

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, **6** who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of

Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. **7** Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

- Esther (whose Jewish name **Hadassah** means “myrtle”; the Persian name Esther means “star”)

Vs. 7 “This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful.”

- Beauty was one of the things God had graced Esther with. In the same way “Daniel was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding” (**Daniel 5:12**), and “David was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.” (**1 Samuel 16:12**). Esther was beautiful and had a lovely figure.

It seems, as with Esther, that God performs random acts of Grace. Have you ever tried to understand how God chooses a person? I would say it’s impossible and doesn’t always calculate. It is as if he plucks them out of unusual circumstances.

- Maybe, like Esther, they lost their parents and were adopted by another family. Or like David who was the youngest and least likely to be noticed.
- They simply come from an unlikely circumstances but God chooses them and performs a random act of Grace upon them. This is a common theme throughout the Bible.

Vs. 8-11

8 When the king’s order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to

Hegai, who had charge of the harem. **9** She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. **11** Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

- Esther won the favor and blessing of Haggai much like Joseph did with Potiphar in

Genesis 39:2-4 *“The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant.”*

- Because of this favor, Haggai gave Esther special beauty preparations, beyond her allowance. He also gave her seven choice maidservants to look after her beauty needs.

Vs. 10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so.

“However, we do recognize that there are situations where God may direct us to cover our Christian identity – not for the purposes of permanently concealing it, but wait for the opportune moment to reveal it. Apparently, this is what Mordecai sensed was right to do in this circumstance, and Esther agreed.” (Guzik)

- I am never quick to tell people that I am a Pastor. I understand that for some, it can skew the perception that some may have. I appreciate the process of building trust and credibility before titles.

Plus it makes it more interesting to see the look on their faces when they do find out.

Vs. 12-18

12 Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. **13** And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. **14** In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. **16** She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. **18** And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

When you parallel the story of Joseph with Esther you find the journey to the throne is very different:

Joseph's Experience:

- Joseph was nearly murdered by his brothers
- They decided to sell him into slavery
- God's favor was on Joseph as he served in Potiphar's house.
- Joseph, out of the fear of the Lord, flees Potiphar's wife and is thrown into a dungeon of a prison. Genesis 41:14
- In prison, God's favor again exalted Joseph
- Joseph's gift of interpreting dreams in prison is used to minister to the cup bearer and baker and eventually was found out by the king
- Joseph risks his life interpreting the king's dream but because his interpretation is correct, he avoids death and is exalted second in power of Egypt.

Esther's Experience:

- Esther was beautiful and everybody loved her. Vs. 15
- Esther suffers beauty treatments for twelve months, oil treatments for six months, perfume and cosmetic treatments for six months.
- The King likes her the best and makes her the queen.

Moral of this part of the story: Not everyone's journey is the same. Esther's journey to the throne is different than Jacob's. But, because of God's purpose for Esther, she will in time risk her life. It will require much prayer and courage for Esther to do what God calls her to do.

Vs. 19-23

19 When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. **20** But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

21 During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. **22** But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. **23** And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

- Mordecai, the cousin and adopted father of Esther, remains an important person in this story. It seems that at this point Mordecai may have gained privileged access when it says in **Vs. 19** "When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate."
- Mordecai didn't take this access for granted. When Mordecai found out about the assassination plot of the two guards, he was diligent to act.

Mordecai did what **1 Peter 2:17** instructs.

"Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

- This courageous act of Mordecai to prevent the assassination of King Xerxes will later reflect on his character and will play a part to save his own life.

Closing: