

Esther 1-3 –16 March 2023

“Always Setting The Stage”

Introduction

- * Author had to be a Jew closely related to the affairs of the palace – Mordecai is likely
- * Back in Israel Zerubbabel has already restored worship by building the altar shown in Ezra 1-6
- * Account of Esther takes place 483-473 BC after Ezra 6 and before the man Ezra comes in Ezra 7
- * Theme of the book: Do you have the faith to be part of God’s providential plan & be blessed for it?
- * God is always setting the stage of our life, orchestrating many more pieces than we can imagine
- * God IS involved w/ you – He intimately cares for us
- * Today let’s look at 3 ways God sets the stage in our life allowing us to accomplish His purposes**

1st way God sets the stage is by moving pieces out of our life (Chap 1)

Read Chap 1:1-8 – *The Divorce of Vashti*

1. Consider the great influence of such people
 - a. Ruling 127 provinces or kingdoms
 - b. Drank from gold cups
2. Shushan was the Persian kings winter residence
 - a. Party was for morale and coordination
 - b. Persia would invade Greece in 2 years

Read Vs 9-12

1. Vashti stood up to the king w/ life on the line
2. Can't be dogmatic if she's right or wrong
 - a. She should be so loved that she wants to do what her husband asks of her – *so she's wrong*
 - b. She shouldn't be paraded as a symbol of physical beauty – *so she's right*
3. Consider both queens stand up to the king w/ life on the line
 - a. Vashti - trivial issue - didn't help anyone
 - b. Esther - major issue – helps many

4. Endure some trivial issues, so we can stick around long enough to use our influence for good

Read Vs 13-19

1. The king is to represent authority & to have his authority refused, they know that idea will spread
2. Maybe king made a foolish, drunken request to have her come but now he's forced to deal with it
3. We make requests & take actions that just lead to trouble
 - a. Maybe we should just wait & do nothing
4. So the king is counseled to divorce her
5. This foolish decision ultimately is God providentially opening the door to put his servant Esther in an influential position

Read Vs 20-22

1. So the edict goes out for all husbands to have rule in the house
2. Jesus knew the only way for wives to honestly submit to this was for the husbands to be given their own principle - 'love your wives'

2nd way God sets the stage is by moving pieces into our life (Chap 2)

Read Chap 2:1 – *Discovery of Esther & Mordecai*

1. A period of time has passed of going out to war
2. Now that king's home, he's longing for a wife

Read Vs 2-4

1. So the search is on for a new queen

Read Vs 5-7

1. Mordecai was a Jew whose family has been there for 100 years
2. He's raising his orphaned cousin Esther as a daughter
3. Esther was beautiful – whatever gifts God give you; He wants to be used for His glory

Read Vs 8

1. God's hand in choosing her to be part of group

Read Vs 9

1. God's hand in giving favor w/ the eunuch

Read Vs 10-11

1. Mordecai asked her to hold back her ID / faith
2. We're told if we acknowledge Jesus before men, He'll acknowledge us...and the opposite
 - a. Isn't akin to denying her faith & identity, but more like waiting for strategic opportunity
 - b. Like playing dumb (for a minute) when a cult comes witnessing at your front door

Read Vs 12-14

1. 12 months to gets these ladies sufficiently 'Persian enough' to go before the king
2. So they spent an evening with the king, for him to know them

Read Vs 15

1. At Esther's turn, she didn't take much jewelry but just what the eunuch told her to bring
2. She's not afraid to be herself & get a little friendly advice from the eunuch

Read Vs 16-17

1. So 4 years after the divorce, Esther is now made queen
2. This is just after a crushing defeat for Persia by Greece at Salamis

Read Vs 18-20

1. So the celebration is on
2. Mordecai in the gate means he was a high-ranking officer for Persia

Read Vs 21-23

1. This will be a 13-year marriage until Xerxes is assassinated by Artabanus, commander of the royal bodyguard – threats were always coming
2. Mordecai here relays this threat thru Esther to the king for the saving of the king's live
3. Though loyal to God, they were also loyal to their earthly rulers

3rd way God sets the stage is by bringing opportunities to show faith (Chap 3)

Read Chap 3:1-3 – *Decree of Haman*

1. Haman was an Agagite or of the Amalekites
 - a. King Saul was supposed to wipe them out
2. Mordecai must have known something about Haman to not bow to him
 - a. Maybe Haman was claiming deity which many kings did & a Jew couldn't bow for that
 - b. Maybe Mordecai knew Haman was Agagite

Read Vs 4-6

1. Haman could have let this matter go but clearly had a bone to pick with the Jews
 - a. Justice would be to correct Mordecai
 - b. Wrath would be to crush Mordecai
 - c. Satanic would be to murder all the Jews

Read Vs 7

1. Haman casts a lot or dice to determine that it would be 11 months before he effects his plan
2. Plural of Pur is Purim where holiday comes from

Read Vs 8-11

1. So Haman's idea is to kill all Jews b/c "they're bad" and harm the kingdom
2. He almost bribes the king by saying that 10,000 talents of silver will be put into Persian treasury
 - a. He intends to get this from dead Jew's land
3. Notice king trusted Haman to such extent, he didn't even inquire as to what people group it was
4. King's ring would be official seal of authority

Read Vs 12-15

1. Remember Persia controlled from India to Greece and well into Africa – all Jews are at risk
2. But in the providence of God, they had 11 months to listen for the direction of the Lord for salvation and then act in faith trusting Him

Conclusion

So, watch for God to arrange the chess pieces of your life in His sovereign will giving us chances to act in faith to the accomplishing of His purposes

1. **Sometimes God moves pieces out of our life**
 - a. Subtraction from our life can be good
2. **Sometimes God moves pieces into our life**
 - a. Esther was moved into a new direction almost against her will, but it was right where God wanted her to be.... like Joseph in Egypt
3. **Sometimes God brings opportunities to show our faith & trust in Him**
 - a. These are the moments we need to seize upon – look for chances and take them

Today 3 people stood before the king

1. Vashti – To defend herself
2. Haman – To attack others
3. Esther & Mordecai – To defend others

Whether life brings additions or subtractions, be ready to act in faith like Esther and like Mordecai!