*Esther**

Esther 1:1-5 (1) 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,
(3) 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.
(5) 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;
The book of Esther is unique in at least two respects. It is one of only two Biblical books centered around a woman (the other is Ruth). It is the only book with no mention of God anywhere in its ten chapters, although the providential hand of God is marvelously evident throughout the book. The setting is in the court of the great Persian emperor Ahasuerus, where Esther had been made queen. The authorship of Esther is uncertain altho a number of scholars think Ezra may have written it since the time corresponds to that of Ezra, and both were associated with the Persian court. Many others ascribe it to Mordecai, Esther's older cousin and mentor. For some unclear reason, the author apparently made considerable effort to keep his account free of any mention of God, prayer or other religious matters. Presumably, this was because there was considerable anti-Semitic feeling in Persia at the time, very likely because of the attempted Haman genocide and the Jews' bloody vengeance in return. Nevertheless, one senses the strong faith of both Esther and Mordecai, as well as

the remarkable sequence of providential ways in which God, behind the scenes, was preserving His chosen people. Let's continue at verse;

9-22 (9) Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.
(10) 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.
(12) But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.
(13) 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?
(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.
(17) 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.
(19) 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.
(21) 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.

This story is difficult because there are two conflicting thoughts about Vashti. ***First Thought****: She is a fantastic example of standing up for your standards. She didn't allow herself to be forced into doing something she knew was degrading and inappropriate. She was willing to take a great risk in standing up to her husband, who tried to control her with unrighteous dominion in his drunken stupor. The king treated his wife as though she were little more than a harlot, commanding that she parade herself in front of drunken, lusty eyed men. She knew how she should be treated and she demanded it. She had strength and courage that should be admired.* ***Second Thought****: Both Vashti and Esther disobeyed the king, yet they did so in very different ways and when the king was of a different disposition. Vashti REFUSED TO COME when a drunken king called her/ Esther WENT TO a sober king when she wasn't called; Vashti offended and humiliated her drunken husband with her disobedience/Esther pleased and*

empowered her sober husband with her disobedience; Vashti's disobedience resulted in her banishment/ Esther's disobedience resulted in giving her more freedom and more power as a queen; Vashti's way of disobeying led to more restrictions and control over women in the empire/Esther's way of disobeying saved the lives of all the Jews in the empire and elevated their status in the eyes of the king. I can't help but feel that while Vashti had a VERY valid reason for disobeying her husband, she might have done it the wrong way. Perhaps she was haughty, forceful, blunt, or undiplomatic. Her disobedience didn't do anything to help women's situation in the Empire either, it made it much worse for them. Life has gotten better for many women since 20 BC, at least in Christian lands. There are women living in parts of the world today where things haven't changed very much; ancient Persia is modern day Iran and the plight of women in that part of the world today may even be worse than in ancient times. Under Islam, women are little more than slaves and are considered property. Women may even be legally killed by the so-called honor killing system. That is the bone chilling horrific cruelty committed against women for anything from speaking to an unrelated man, refusing forced marriages; even marrying according to their own choosing; or even women and girls who have been raped. The killers mainly defend their act of murder by referring to the Koran and Islam. True, Veshti's situation was different than Esther's, but Esther used all her feminine resources to get what she needed. She used her beauty, her brains, her charm, and quite a bit of prayer and fasting to change the mind of her husband and gain respect. So you see, that is the dilemma about Vashti. Deciding if her way or Esther's way is better--or maybe they are just different. Perhaps there are times when women need to be like Vashti and times when they need to be like Esther. In preparation for her coming opportunity, Esther spent 12 months going through beauty treatments (Esther 2:12). Can't

we just see that now, "Mom I need to take a year off from school to take beauty treatments!" You probably wouldn't get a very positive reaction, would you? However, when it was time to appear before the king, Esther requested nothing except what the custodian of women recommended. I would say she was very humble, turn to.

Esther 2:16-18 (16) So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

(17) And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

(18) Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

Chronologically, though this book comes after the book of Nehemiah, yet its events antedate Nehemiah by about 30 years. Esther, it seems, made possible the work of Nehemiah. Her marriage to the King must have given Jews great prestige. It is impossible to guess what might have happened to the Hebrew nation had there been no Esther. Except for her, Jerusalem might never have been rebuilt, and there might have been a different story to tell to all future ages. The book of Esther is about a very important historical event, not just a story to point out a moral issue: its about the Hebrew Nation's deliverance from extinction in the days following the Babylonian captivity. Between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, there is a fifty eight year gap. During that gap of time the events of Esther took place. If the Hebrew Nation had been entirely wiped out of existence 500 years before it brought Christ into the world, that might have been devastating to the destiny of mankind; no Hebrew Nation, no Messiah; no Messiah, a lost world.

This beautiful Jewish girl of long ago, though she herself may

not have known it, yet she played her part in paving the way for the coming of the world's Saviour. The entire book of Esther shows that God's providential hand was working behind the scenes to save the Jewish nation. Esther's guardian, Mordecai, once said to her: "Who knoweth whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). *His statement shows that he was seeing God's possible plan for Esther. Vashti's banishment became Esther's opportunity as a representative of her people that they might live another day. I propose that each of us ask ourselves the same question, who knows whether you have come into the Kingdom of God's dear Son for such a time as this?* As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal 6:10).

But why were the Jewish people in danger? Turn to;

Esther 3:1-6 (1) After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.
(2) And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.
(3) Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?
(4) Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.
(5) And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.
(6) And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Haman had been raised to the highest position by king Ahasuerus, an honor that came with great prestige. But Mordecai refused to bow down before him; and Haman, being stung to the quick by the conduct of Mordecai, resolved to accomplish his death in a wholesale destruction of the Jewish exiles throughout the Persian empire. Tidings of this cruel scheme soon reached the ears of Mordecai, who communicated with Queen Esther regarding it, and by her wise and bold intervention, the scheme was frustrated. The Jews were delivered from destruction, Mordecai was raised to a high rank, and Haman was executed on the gallows he had by anticipation erected for Mordecai. In memory of the deliverance thus wrought for them, turn with me to;
Esther 9:24-28 (24) Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;
(25) But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.
(26) Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,
(27) The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year;
(28) And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

Haman, a man who hated the Jews without cause and tried to exterminate them because, Mordecai, a Jew, would not pay homage or bow down to him. But instead of taking vengeance on Mordecai alone, Haman instead sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the Persian kingdom. To accomplish this, he persuaded King Ahasuerus of Persia to issue a decree to annihilate all Jews in the Persian provinces, both young and old, women and children. Esther, the wife of King Ahasuerus, was a Jew and the cousin of Mordecai, who had raised her. She told King Ahasuerus that Mordecai, who had earlier protected the king by reporting a plot against him, was her relative. She also told the king that Haman's wicked plan was against her people, and beseeched the king to allow the Jews to defend themselves. In her day and age it was not wise for anyone to go before the king without permission, not even the Queen, but Esther having heard of what was being planned risked her life and position as Queen to go before Ahasuerus in behalf of herself and her people. Esther went before the King and asked him if he knew that his order to kill all the Jews would also extend to her and Mordecia since they were Jews! King Ahasuerus had Haman hanged on the same gallows he had intended for Mordecai, and he permitted the Jews in every city to gather together and protect themselves against those who tried to assault them. The term gallows in the book of Esther is not to hang by a noose which is representative of capital punishment in the old west. Rather, the victims of hanging in Persian times were impaled on a sharp pointed stake and left to hang for public exhibition. I had intended to make remarks concerning this type of punishment but the details were so ghastly I decided against it. Now turn to;
Romans 11:21-22 (21) For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.
(22) Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

For Haman, severity, but for Mordecai, goodness, because he remained true to God's laws set down for him and the Jews of his day. Mordecai became next to the king of Persia.
The honor extended to Mordecai is recorded in;
Esther 10:1-3 (1) And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.
(2) And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?
(3) For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.
For the people of God in these latter days, the moral of the story about Esther is that we Christians should be willing to communicate the word of Jesus at every opportunity, even in the face of humiliation. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (Hebrews 12:1). *The weight that so easily besets me, may not be the weight that haunts you. The sin that so easily besets me, may not be the sin that betrays you. But one thing that remains the same for you and I is;* He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels(Rev 3:5). *If Esther was willing to spend an entire year in preparation, surly you should be willing to;* Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2Tim 2:15). And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; (1Thes 4:11). *Both Esther and Mordecia as well as the Jews that fought against Haman's hinchmen were*

doing what they were capable of through the providence of God. To put this in perspective; in the story of Esther, not all were Esther's, not all were Mordecia's, of the Jews called to fight, not all had the same combative skills. Army's of ancient times consisted of a commander in chief, his field marshal, lesser officers, archers, shield-bearers, slingers, spearmen and infantry both heavy and light. As easily seen, all members have not the same office but all work in unison to achieve a common goal. It's the same within the Church of Christ, our Commander in Chief is God, His Field Marshal, Jesus Christ. The lesser officers in the Church would be the Apostles followed by, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (1Cor 12:28). *With the exception of Field Marshal, the Apostles could fulfill all other positions God hath set in the Church. By the same token, there is one position all must fulfill, that of shield-bearer.* Above all, taking the **shield of faith**, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph 6:16). *What faith? Faith in Christ that is the effect of belief, and submission to baptism that is the effect of faith; only those who first believe the testimony of God, by faith repent of their sins, confess Christ, and are baptized into His death for remission of sin, have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. This is the gospel. It's invitation is always open, also prayer requests for other reasons, in either case come while we persuade with song.*

This message approved by
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The message 'Esther' Revised; 01042018
This message presented to; BaronOk-Sep2012/
OKC-Sep2012/