

The Queen Who Refused Esther 1:1-22

INTRO: The book of Esther is an unusual book of the Bible. There is no mention of God, of prayer, or of religion. At the time the book of Esther was written, there was a strong anti-Semitic feeling in Persia.

Although God is not mentioned by name, He is in the wings directing all that is going on (Rm 8:28). The providential working of God is seen throughout this book of the Bible. At the very time when God needs people of faith to be used in His hands to save the Jewish race, Mordecai and Esther are in the right place at the right time (4:14).

Our story begins with a feast and a problem. The feast, as you shall see, could be called the Mother of all Feasts! It lasted 180 days plus. It was a big feast. Not only do we have a big feast in chapter one of Esther, we have a big problem: a marital problem that had international impact.

I. VSS. 1-8, THE SPREAD

- A. Vs. 1, Ahasuerus is a title and not a name. This title means “high father,” “ruler,” or “venerable king worthy of reverence.”
 - 1. When we hear the term Caesar, it is a title for a man but not the man’s real name. There are other titles that illustrate this:
 - a. Darius— “maintainer.”
 - b. Artaxerxes- “great king, great.” A ruler of a great empire.
 - 2. The vastness of the Persian Empire mentioned here, has been confirmed by the excavation of the foundation stone of one Xerxes’ capital cities Persepolis.
- B. Vs. 2, Because of the vastness of the kingdom that Ahasuerus ruled over, I believe that he was Xerxes the Great of Persia.
 - 1. Xerxes brought the Medo-Persian Empire to its zenith.
 - 2. Xerxes made a great effort to wrest power from the west. He wanted the East to dominate the West.
 - 3. He wanted to get the military leaders of the East lined up, that is the history of the feast we read about in verses 3-8.
- C. Vs. 3, Ahasuerus had been ruling for three years when he really put on the dog. Here it is the mother of all feasts.
 - 1. He made this feast for all his princes and servants.
 - a. There were 127 provinces.

- b. Each province brought a delegation.
 - 2. Possibly two thousand people went to this banquet. This was not a private supper party.
 - D. Vs. 4, For six months Ahasuerus showed off the riches and majesty of his glorious kingdom.
 - 1. He did this to influence his princes.
 - 2. Louis XV talked to his exchequer about this banquet saying that he did not see how Ahasuerus had the patience for such a banquet. The exchequer, who handled the finances of Louis XV, said he did not know how he financed it.
 - 3. Influence buying is big business. In September of 1863, the Russian Atlantic fleet visited New York.
 - a. Northerners rejoiced at this visit because the U.S. Navy was hard pressed and feared that Britain and France would intervene for the South.
 - b. In an effort to buy the favor of the Czar, many banquets were held. The most elaborate was held at the New York Academy of Music. “Hundreds of guests feasted on 12,000 oysters, 1,000 pounds of tenderloin, 300 pounds of salmon and 250 turkeys. All of it was washed down with 3,500 bottles of wine and champagne” (The Civil War, ed. Simons, 136).
 - E. Vs. 5, For the final seven days of feasting, Ahasuerus brings in many folks from the general public to the court of the garden.
 - F. Vss 6-7, Note the wealth, the luxury and royal character of this feast.
 - 1. Ahasuerus had a reason for all of this finery, influence peddling, selling his plans.
 - 2. He wanted to be the supreme world leader and could have, should have, and would have if God had not stopped him providentially.
 - G. Vs. 8, We see here that even these pagan Oriental rulers who had absolute sovereignty did not force anyone to drink. Today in our civilized world many times, you have to drink or get out, participate or be ridiculed.

II. VSS. 9-12, THE SCRUPLE OF THE QUEEN

- A. Vs. 9, I want you to take a good look at the name of this Queen for it will soon disappear not to surface again.
 - 1. She made a feast for those wives whose husbands came to

the king's feast. It was as J. Vernon McGee said: "...a feast for the woman's auxiliary" (31).

2. In those days, women could not go to the main banquet.
- B. Vs. 10, Ahasuerus is about to do a foolish thing, something he would not have done if he had not been drunk.
1. Here is a ruler who cannot control himself. A man not fit to be a ruler.
 2. Prov 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."
 3. Robert E. Lee said, "I cannot consent to place in control of others one who cannot control himself" (Wilkins 249).
 4. In a heathen kingdom like that of Ahasuerus you expect paganism, but that does not make it right. In a Christian nation, you should expect godly leadership.
- C. Vs 11, Because of his drunkenness, the king went beyond that which is accepted even in a pagan nation: the open display of a man's wife. He had shown everything else about the kingdom now he goes too far. He wanted her to display her beauty, to display her body. There are things in marriage that are too intimate for public display.
- D. Vs. 12, The Queen refused to obey her husband. This took moral courage.
1. This started a scandal. The king is having trouble with his wife.
 2. According to the etiquette of that day, she did not have to come. She did not belong in such a gathering.
 3. The king had probably really build everybody up about the beauty of the Queen, and now the program has to be changed.
 4. The question is asked: "Is he king or not?"

III. VSS. 13-22, THE SURGERY

- A. Vs. 13-15, Here we have an emergency meeting of the cabinet. A great military campaign was in the works and now this! The queen is not submissive.
1. This bride, Vashti, may have had reason to refuse, but the bride of Christ will never be asked to do anything that is not right.
 2. The bride of Christ, the church, is to be obedient. We are

- to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).
- B. Vss. 16-18, In these verses, we have the reasoning of Memucan. Some say he was henpecked and didn't want his wife to get any ideas. (ILL: A man came into the office boasting: "Last night my wife was down on her knees before me." One skeptic asked what were the circumstances. The man replied, "She was on her knees looking under the bed saying, 'Come out from under there you coward!'")
- C. Vs. 19, Here is Memucan's recommendation, and it amounts to radical surgery.
1. I want you to know that what the king did was wrong, and it was unchristian. But remember this was a pagan king and kingdom.
 2. Ahasuerus and his cabinet made a new law, the law of the Medes and Persians. The law they made is found in this verse.
 3. This law reveals a hot headed leader. This is the same Xerxes whose navy was destroyed at Salamis after which in a fit of rage he beat the sea with his belt. Many leaders are abnormal like Hitler, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, etc.
- D. Vss 20-22, The law was now established and published. It was as all of the law of the Medes and Persians irrevocable.
1. We are reminded that God has laws that cannot be broken: they are irrevocable.
 - a. Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die...."
 - b. Romans 3:23, "All have sinned, and come short..."
 - c. All have sinned, the soul that sins dies. That puts us in a terrible way, for God's law cannot, and He will not change it.
 - d. Yes. "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23).
 2. Friends, here is the answer to the dilemma of God's unchangeable law. Jesus took our place. He became sin for us.
 - a. "...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
 - b. "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us...." (II Cor 5:21).

CONCLUSION: Praise the Lord for Amazing Grace! Christ came to save sinners like you and me.

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