

Esther 1

Introduction to the book of *Esther*

Esther = Greek and Akkadian word for "star"

Hadassah = Hebrew word for "myrtle"

The book of *Esther* is at the end of the 12 books of history in the Old Testament

Basic dates to keep in mind:

539 BC – Medo-Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonian Empire

536 BC – The first group of Jews returned under Zerubbabel

458 BC – The second group of Jews returned under Ezra

444 BC – The third group of Jews returned under Nehemiah

-The book of *Esther* takes place c.480 BC

-Between the *chapters 6-7* of *Ezra*

-It was during the reign of Xerxes I of Persia

Author - the Bible doesn't say

-Candidates: Ezra, Nehemiah, possibly Mordecai – maybe Nehemiah is the best candidate

When Zerubbabel led the Jews back to Jerusalem, not all Jews went (or even wanted to go)

-They had been in Persia about 70 years and were established there (maybe a little shoe shop down on the square)

-The same with Israel today – the country was established in 1947, but many Jews around the world stayed in their own countries – they were not interested in returning to Israel

King Ahasuerus (Hebrew name) or Xerxes I (Persian name)

-His reign: 486-465 BC – a great general, but a rough person

Book of *Esther* is one of the most exciting books in the Bible – more exciting than most programs on TV and movies today: intrigue, love, hatred, revenge, courage, and honor

Very interesting point: The name of God is not mentioned anywhere in the book – there is no reference to God (the only book in the Bible to omit his name or even his existence) (*3 John* talks about "the Name" – *3 John 7*)

-Some say that this was intentional – more on that later [Later: Notice *Esther 5.4* – it is an acrostic for God]

Esther 1.1-9

V1 – King: A-haz-u-e'-rus (accent on 4th syllable) – other name: Xerxes I

-Check any good Bible dictionary or encyclopedias, and you will find many historical references to this king

-After Xerxes' defeat at Salamis, Herodotus said that Xerxes consoled himself with women (a reference to the time of *Esther*)

V2 – Capital of Persia? Susa

V3 – Who was to be present for this feast? Representatives from all the 127 provinces of

Persia

V 4 – **What did Ahasuerus do at this feast?** Displayed all the glory of his kingdom

-**How long was the feast to last?** 180 days (about 6 months)

V 5 – **What happened after 6 months of feasting?** – a giant drinking bash for 7 days straight

V 6 – The Persians were wealthy and lavish

-Herodotus (IX, 82) speaks of gold and silver couches they captured from the Babylonians

-Archaeologists have uncovered marble pillars and the mosaic pavement in Susa [*Beacon Bible Commentary*, II, 676]

V 7 – **Describe the drinking?** In golden glasses, and the wine was plentiful

V 8 – "According to the law" – the women were separated from the men

-**What else happened concerning their drinking?** Each one could drink as much as he wanted

V 9 – **What was Queen Vashti doing?** Hosting the women

Esther 1.10-17

V 10 – **What was the condition of the men by the 7th day?** "merry with wine"

-**How do you describe the behavior of men who are drunk?** – terrible

-The king gave orders to his servants

V 11 – **What was the order the king gave?** – to bring Queen Vashti before the men and let her show her beauty to them

-**Is there any indication that the king wanted her to disrobe?** No, but it is implied

-If not disrobe, then he wanted her to show her beauty, as at a beauty pageant today

-**Any scriptures on this subject?** Read **1 Timothy 2.9-10, 1 Peter 3.1-5**

World's view? If you have it, flaunt it. (not the Christian view)

-**Could Vashti have justified obeying the king?** Yes – he was king (obey the government); her husband; "Go along to get along."

-**Was Vashti a Jew?** No – a pagan living under the Patriarchal Age – yet she showed great courage here [in some ways she was more noble than Esther]

V 12 – **Vashti's decision?** She would not appear before the men

-**Reaction of Ahasuerus?** Extremely mad

-**Why mad?** She had embarrassed him in front of his drinking buddies

V 13 – The king spoke to his advisors (probably astrologers)

-Remember that the king was very drunk (along with everyone else)

V 14 – List of his advisors

V 15 – What was to be done with Vashti?

-Wouldn't you hate to have your fate in the hands of men like that?

V 16-18 – Their assessment of the situation? Vashti had done wrong – she set a bad example for all the women of Persia; it would encourage them to disobey their husbands also

Esther 1.19-21

V 19 – Decision of advisors? Depose Vashti (a Persian law could not be broken or repealed)

V 20 – Result of this action (supposedly)? To make all wives obey their husbands

V 21 – Decision of Xerxes? He followed the advice of his advisors

This shows how women were treated where God's religion had not gone

-Today, pagan nations have a very low esteem for women (in other words, Moslem countries)

Esther 1 – the story of great courage and modesty, especially from a non-Jewish woman

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