**The Book of Esther**

**Wednesday Night Bible Study**

**Wednesday, 05 May 2021**

**Queens Chapel UMC \* 7410 Muirkirk Road \* Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Will Butler**

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**Theme:** **“A Woman for Such a Time as This”** **(Esther 4:14)**

 "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

**Esther Chapter 1**

**Home Assignment:**

* When or Where have you experienced God’s providential care?
* How did you know it was God that was speaking?
* Is God speaking in our world today? How?

**Esther 1:1**

 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus *[a-haz-u-e-rus]* (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia),

**Amplified**

It was in the days of Ahasuerus ([[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther%201&version=AMP#fen-AMP-12704a)]Xerxes) who reigned from India to Ethiopia (Cush) over 127 provinces,

* First, Ahasuerus *[a-haz-u-e-rus]* is not the King’s name, it is his title.
* Ahasuerus means “high Father” or “venerable King.” It ‘s the Hebrew form of the name “Xerxes” [zurk-sez]
* For example, Caesar in the NT, was a title given to all the Roman emperors after Julius Caesar.

**Note:**

 The British Museum published a volume entitled “***The Sculptures and Inscriptions of Darius the Great in Persia***” declared, Cyrus Cylinders translated that Ahasuerus *[a-haz-u-e-rus]* and Esther were the parents of Cyrus the Great—conqueror of Babylon, that’s recorded in **Isaiah 45:1-3,**

 1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-To subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:

 2 'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.

 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel.

* “Xerxes” [zurk-sez] reigned over a very large empire, from India to Ethiopia

**See Map…**

**Esther 1:2-3**

 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan *[shoo-shan]* the citadel,

 3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him—

* “Xerxes” [zurk-sez] reigned over about **27 provinces** and out of each of these he invited a delegation from each—which probably number about **2,000 people** at this banquet.
* This was considered the banquet of all banquets.
* Everybody who was somebody was at this affair. I would not be surprised if they had a “Red Carpet”

**Time to share:**

Q = Have you ever attended a banquet where celebrities or important elected officials were there? Who was invited?

Q = Whose pictures do you keep on your wall or in your cell phone related to that banquet? Why are these pictures important to you?

 **If cameras were invented then, the invited guest would have done the same:**

**Esther 1:4**

 4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.

**Amplified**

 And he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days *in all*.

* For six months, Xerxes [zurk-sez] entertained and showed off his kingdom to 2,000 guests.
* The King wanted this banquet to reveal the wealth, the luxury and character of his kingdom

Why?

* Xerxes wanted to win their whole-hearted support for the military campaign to capture Greece and to make himself the supreme ruler of the entire world of that day.
* What Xerxes didn’t realize was that God is in control of all rulers upon the earth—**Daniel 2:21-22**

 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; **He removes kings and raises up kings;** He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

 22 He reveals deep and secret things; **He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him.**

Riches are not given to show off: Two truths we must remember about riches:

1) God gives one power to get wealth—**Deuteronomy 8:18**

 “But thou shalt remember **the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth**, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day.”

2) Riches are a gift from God—**Ecclesiastes 5:19**

 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; **this is the gift of God.**

**Esther 1:5**

 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace.

* Shushan, which is located in modern-day Iran, was the capitol of the Persian empire.  The events of the Book of Esther took place in this location.
* It was also where Nehemiah lived before going to the Land of Israel to rebuild the wall—**Nehemiah 1:1**

 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah *[hak-a-lee-a]*. It came to pass in the month of Chislev *[kis-lev],* in the twentieth year, **as I was in Shushan the citadel,**

* Xerxes brought the banquet to a climax in the last seven days.
* He had his people to prepare a smorgasbord that would have made the largest modern-day cruise ship banquet appear amateurish

**Esther 1:6-7**

 6 There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.

 7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.

* The silver, the gold, the jewels, and the beautiful hangings reveals to the reader how wealthy this kingdom was.
* This was also Xerxes’ way of letting everyone know that he could not only afford a war with his wealth, but he could also conquer any place he wanted.

**Esther 1:8**

 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man’s pleasure.

**Amplified**

 The drinking was *carried on* in accordance with the law; no one was compelled [to drink], for the king had directed each official of his household to comply with each guest’s wishes.

* Even though these pagan rulers, who had absolute sovereignty, never forced anyone to drink.
* Even though it was available, they were not forced to do so

**Esther 1:9**

 Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

* His wife Vashti made a feast for the wives of the men who attended the Kings Banquet.
* It was a breach of social custom for men and women to attend the same banquet.

**The King makes a foolish request:**

**Esther 1:10-11**

 10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman [me-hu-man], Biztha [biz-tha], Harbona [har-bo-na], Bigtha [big-tha], Abagtha [a-bag-tha], Zethar [ze-thar], and Carcas [car-cas], seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.

* The King got drunk and overstepped his bounds

**God’s message concerning drunkenness is very clear in Scripture**

**Luke 21:34**

 “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”

**Proverbs 20:1**

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

* The King commands 7 seven eunuchs, his chamberlains [managers] who faithfully served him 24/07—to do something that was considered disrespectful.
* notice their names and meanings

Mehuman [me-hu-man] – Faithful One

Biztha [biz-tha] – double gift

Harbona [har-bo-na] – the bold man

Bigtha [big-tha] – gift from God

Abagtha [a-bag-tha] – gift from God

Zethar [ze-thar] - slayer

Carcas [car-cas] – dead body

Q = Based on the names and their meanings, was the King surrounded by the right men to receive counsel?

Why it’s importance of seeking wise counsel:

* 1) There is safety in wise counsel—**Proverbs 11:44**

 Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.

* 2) There is wisdom in seeking counsel—**Proverbs 13:10**

Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise.

* 3) Plans are successful in wise Counsel—**Proverbs 15:22**

 Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.

Q = If Xerxes was not under the influence of alcohol, do you think he would have made the same decision?

* Because he was under the influence, he does something that is contrary to the proprieties—the proper behavior of that day
* The King wanted to display his wife in front of the men in the banquet while their wives were in the other room
* It was a very ungentlemanly thing to do to your own wife.

**Esther 1:12**

 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’ command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

* One of the King’s chamberlains told the King, “She refuses to come.”

Q = Do you thing Vashti refused because she knew the King was under the influence?

Q = Do you believe Vashti showed self-respect, humility and modesty by not allowing herself to be displayed in a disrespectful way? Why?

Q = Why should these three characteristics, self-respect, humility and modesty,

Be a part of a godly woman’s personality?

**Biblical References:**

**1 Timothy 2:9-10 (NLT)**

 9 And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes.

 10 For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.

Q = How should a “godly” woman dress in our culture today?

Q = How would you define “modest appearance” for a godly woman Today?

**1 Peter 3:1-2**

 **1** In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. **Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words.** They will be won over

**2** by observing your pure and reverent lives.

Q = Do you think Vashti should have obeyed her husband, knowing that her refusal would start a scandal that would hurt her husband reputation as a King?

Q = Do you think Vashti should have obeyed her husband, knowing that her refusal would put herself in danger?