

BOOK OF
ESTHER



Esther 1:1-22 ESV

1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,

2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel,

3 in the third year of his reign...

The Historical Situation (approx. 486-464 B.C.)



Susa is in the southern part of modern day Iran

The Historical Situation (approx. 486-464 B.C.)

In terms of biblical history, Esther belongs to the period after the Babylonian exile, when Persia had replaced Babylon as the ruling power. The story is set in Susa, the Persian capital, during the reign of King Ahasuerus, better known by his Greek name, Xerxes I (486–464 b.c.). Some Jews had returned to Jerusalem, where they enjoyed a reasonable amount of control over their own affairs as described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Others, like Esther and Mordecai, were still in exile. As a minority group, the Jews were viewed with suspicion and sometimes faced threats to their existence from people in a position to harm them.

Crossway Bibles. (2008). The ESV Study Bible (p. 849). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

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3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him,

4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days.

5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.



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6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

7 Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king.



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**8 And drinking was according to this edict:
“There is no compulsion.” For the king had given
orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each
man desired.**

**9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women
in the palace that 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 Carkas, the seven eunuchs
who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,**

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11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

What's Going on Here???

The author does not explain exactly why Esther refused.

It may very likely have been because she was going to be paraded around as some object to be desired.

Regardless of the reason, she refused the king and that is something you never do.

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13 Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment,

14 the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom): **15** “According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?”

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16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, “Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

17 For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.’

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18 This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.

19 If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

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20 So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.”

21 This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.

22 He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.

You may be asking “So what?”

What can we learn from this?

Does this really even relate to us?

God is Always at Work

In the book of Esther, we “see” the invisible hand of God. His ways and timing are different from ours.



Isaiah 55:8-11

**8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares
the Lord.**

**9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my
thoughts than your thoughts.**

Isaiah 55:8-11

10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

We Need to Remember there is a Bigger Picture

In this situation in Esther, like in ours, God is working in a larger context. In the Book of Esther, He is protecting His people as He promised.



We Need to Remember there is a Bigger Picture

Think of the chain of events:

If there was no feast, there would be no drunk king

No drunk king, no drunk call to his wife

No refusal of the king, no angry king

No angry king, no foolish counsel

No foolish counsel, no Vashti deposal

No Vashti deposal, no Esther

No Esther, no Jews

No Jews, no Jesus

No Jesus, no hope

BOOK OF
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God is Sovereign and in Control

Proverbs 21:1 ESV

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

God is Sovereign and in Control



<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/indian-farmers-deep-debt-seek-031140868.html>

God is Sovereign and in Control

The metaphor of the king's heart as being like a God-directed stream borrows from common ancient Near Eastern life.

Due to the arid conditions of the region, farmers in the ancient world—and even today—had to redirect the natural flow of rivers and streams to supply their gardens with life-giving water. This was no easy task for human beings, but the Creator who set rivers and streams on their courses can with ease direct water where He wants it to go (Ps. 78:15–16). **It is a similarly easy task for Him to direct the hearts of kings to accomplish His purposes.**

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/lord-over-hearts-men/>

God is Sovereign and in Control

...if the only wise God is truly in control of absolutely everything that ever happens in the universe, we know that even apparently random events have purpose, and that He can work all things together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

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