

Message #3

Esther 1:10-22

Esther is a book that opens with a wild and bizarre episode in which King Ahasuerus puts on a couple of wine drinking banquets, one for his leaders and another for all the people from Susa, the Persian capital. While he was doing this, his wife, Queen Vashti, was putting on her own banquet for women only.

NO MATTER HOW WILD OR BIZARRE THE SURROUNDING WORLD AND CONTROLLING POWERS MAY APPEAR TO BE, GOD IS STILL WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES CONTROLLING ALL THINGS AND CARING FOR HIS PEOPLE.

God can use things positive or negative, things spiritual or unspiritual, things good or bad, things moral or immoral to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

One cannot help but think of Samson's lust for a Philistine woman. No Israelite was supposed to get involved with a Philistine and yet behind the scenes was God and Judges tells us "it was of the LORD" (Judges 14:1-4).

PART #1 – A drunken Persian king commands his wife to do something shameful. **1:10-11**

The Hebrew word "merry" indicates that his heart was "good" with wine, which means he was very near being stoned-drunk. Ahasuerus wanted her to wear her royal crown and many commentators believe that was all he wanted her to wear.

This would certainly suggest why the king sent eunuchs to bring her since the word "eunuch" comes from a Hebrew word that refers to one who has been castrated (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 595). Mark Roberts writes: "In the ancient world, eunuchs had charge of royal wives and concubines for the obvious reason that there was no danger they would molest these women" (Mark Roberts, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, p. 339).

What we do specifically know from the text is that Queen Vashti was a beautiful woman and since the king had already displayed, at these parties, his home, his wealth and his power, it was only logical for him to want to publicly display his wife.

One must admit you would never expect to find God working out His plan in such a lascivious, lecherous, lewd, libertine, lustful and licentious environment. But God was at this party working behind the scenes in every phase of it in order to protect and preserve His people.

PART #2 – A sober Persian queen refuses to obey the king's command. **1:12**

The text does not tell us why she refused, it just says she "refused" which means she was unwilling to obey this command and rejected it (Gesenius, p. 445).

There are at least four reasons given as to why Vashti did not want to appear:

- 1) She did not want to appear naked before any but her husband.
- 2) She did not want to put herself in an environment of drunken men.
- 3) She did not want to appear before Jews.
- 4) She did not want to display herself because of some physical defect.

Vashti found herself in a real dilemma: she had to refuse herself and her integrity or she had to refuse her husband and Persian law. Regardless of the reasons, to blatantly refuse to obey a king's command during O.T. times was a very serious crime for anyone, even a king's wife.

PART #3 – A drunken Persian king reacts to his wife's refusal to obey his command. **1:12b-22**

Reaction #1 - The king's emotional reaction. **1:12b**

When King Ahasuerus got word that Vashti refused to obey his command, he “became very angry and his wrath burned within him.” These Hebrew words describe the fact that the king immediately broke out in a burning, poisonous type of anger (Gesenius, p. 738, 286). The king was boiling hot over the fact that his wife dared refuse his command.

Reaction #2 - The king's royal counsel. **1:13-20**

These royal advisors were very skilled in understanding Persian law and customs and in applying these laws and customs to judicial decisions. When the text says in **verse 13** that these men “understood the times,” the Hebrew implies these wise men were royal astrologers who made many decisions by the position of the stars and planets.

This is not a place you would expect to find the sovereign work of God or the presence of God. God works through all leadership, both godly and godless. He is sovereign and no one will ever thwart His plan in caring for His people.

- 1) The queen's rebellion was a wrong against the king. **1:16a**
- 2) The queen's rebellion was a wrong against other leaders. **1:16b**
- 3) The queen's rebellion was a wrong against all people. **1:16c**
- 4) The queen's rebellion will promote a feminist rebellion. **1:17-18**

There is no question that one of the purposes for carrying out disciplinary action is so that others will be fearful of doing the same thing (i.e. I Tim. 5:20).

Memucan came up with a plan which required four actions:

- 1) A royal and legal decree should be given that cannot be changed. **1:19a**
- 2) This decree should include the fact that Vashti is never to see the king again. **1:19b**
This is a royal decree of divorce that includes not even allowing Vashti to ever see the king again.

- 3) This decree should include a decree for a new queen. **1:19c**
The new queen should be “more worthy.” The Hebrew word can mean either more beautiful or more virtuous and would certainly include the idea of more submissive (Huey, p. 802). The Apostle Peter describes the type of woman God deems as precious in His sight (I Pet. 3:1-6), and it certainly includes the idea of a meek, quiet and submissive spirit.
- 4) This decree should be proclaimed through all the kingdom. **1:20**
All 127 provinces should hear what Vashti did and what the results of her rebellion were. In this way, according to Memucan, all women would give honor to their husbands.

Reaction #3 - The king's royal decree. **1:21-22**

Ahasuerus decreed that every man should be the master of his own house and he should do so “in the language of his own people.” This may mean:

- 1) He should master his own house in his own language, keeping his wife in ignorance of any foreign language.
- 2) He should master his own house by speaking plainly the language that his wife and family understood.
- 3) He should make it very clear in language everyone in the house knew that he was the decreed master of the house.

Could God be in such a bizarre episode? Could God actually be working out His plan and program in the midst of this rebellion and reaction to the rebellion? The answer is “Yes!”

There are many lessons to learn from this section.

- 1) God can work out His sovereign plan even with godless leadership.
- 2) God can work out His sovereign plan even with rebellious people.
- 3) God can work out His sovereign plan even in the midst of wild judicial decrees.
- 4) God will raise His people to His ordained positions.
- 5) God will care for His people no matter what the power or circumstances.