

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 3RD - 4TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

THE SEARCH (ESTHER 2:1-4) "SOME TIME LATER"

About 4 years pass from the party in ch. 1 and Xerxes "remember[ing] Vashti" and "what was decided against her."

- In the 4 years, Xerxes raised up an army to fight the Greeks, lost and was humiliated, and returned selfishly remorseful and thinking about the things he didn't have.

WE NEED TO CHEER UP THE KING

The "king's personal attendants" devised a plan to round up all the most attractive virgins in Persia (young teens) and search for a new wife for Xerxes.

- This year-long search and beautification process of young virgins was to please the king's sexual appetite more than anything.

THE LIE OF A QUICK FIX

We still do a version of this today. We have friends who want to distract us with pleasure, or we just pursue it on our own instead of getting to **the root of why we feel unfulfilled.**

- Ironically, the "quick fix" always leads to more heartache and pain! **We must get to the root, not just pacify the symptom.**

ESTHER (ESTHER 2:5-14)

WE SWITCH SCENES

We change focus from a self-absorbed king to a Jewish man named Mordecai (Marduka) and his younger cousin in which he took legal guardianship over, Esther.

- Mordecai's family were exiles from Jerusalem during the Babylonian empire (Daniel) that lived in the city of Susa.

WHY WAS MORDECAI IN SUSAN?

40 years earlier, King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem so they could help rebuild the city, but Ezra and Nehemiah claim **many were comfortable** and chose not to go home.

- **Often times where we are dictates the situations we find ourselves in. Also, easier isn't always better.**

WHY IS ESTHER CALLED TWO NAMES?

Esther is the only person mentioned by two names. Hadassah (Hebrew) and Esther (Gentile).

- The author is trying to convey the struggle of a young woman **living between two different worlds**: a Jewish woman **following God** and a woman trying to navigate a society that only cares about **appearances.**

ESTHER WAS EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE

One of Xerxes' eunuchs, Hegai, saw Esther and "gathered" her along with many other young women at the fortress in Susa.

- Esther "pleased" Hegai by completely **throwing herself into the culture** of the palace, but **gaining favor came at the price of concealing her ethnicity and faith.**

SHE WASN'T ALONE THOUGH...

Mordecai told his young cousin (14?) to conceal her ethnicity. This decision was probably made out of fear for Esther's safety.

- So, Mordecai would walk in the palace courtyards in the hopes of hearing how Esther was during her six-month beauty preparation process for the king.

A MAN DRIVEN BY APPETITES

This extensive preparation of virgin young women was to fulfill the king's appetites.

- These women could take anything they wanted when they spent the night with the king in hopes of being chosen. If she were chosen, she would be "summoned" whenever he wanted her again.

PRETTY TWISTED, HUH?

Imagine a society in which people are objectified and expendable, sex is loveless and casual, people are driven by their appetites, and people's values are based on their looks and sexual performance.

- **Whenever a society becomes Godless, depravity quickly devalues people.**

A NEW QUEEN (ESTHER 2:15-18)

FAVOR THROUGH HUMILITY AND SUBTLETY...

When Esther's night with the king came, she asked for nothing and let Hegai choose how she would be adorned for Xerxes. This suggests that she **approached the king with humility, simplicity, and natural beauty.**

- Many approach the crowning of Esther without really looking at the whole picture.

...OR COMPROMISING AND WINNING?

Esther knew the rules and used them to her advantage. She essentially molded herself into the image of the empire and won the crown through her beauty. A young child of God got **sucked into -an alluring culture.**

- Contrast Esther with the **refusal to conform** of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

SHOWING SOME GRACE AND EMPATHY

This was an exiled young woman, unwillingly "gathered" by a king in a pagan culture, then tempted by prestige, fame, and fortune.

- The point isn't to bash Esther and Mordecai, but to see that **we're all prone to mistakes, are recipients of God's grace, and can still be used by God if we seek Him.**

LET'S PARTY TOGETHER THIS TIME

The coronation of Xerxes and Esther's wedding was quite a different-looking party than the last one with Vashti.

- The celebration was also a public relations stunt to show marital harmony and wealth, and to make the king appear in control after losing several battles with the Greeks.

THE PLOT (ESTHER 2:19-23)

"VIRGINS WERE GATHERED A SECOND TIME"?

Some time had passed since Esther became queen, so the gathering of the virgins implies Xerxes continued sexual perversion.

- At this time, Mordecai was sitting in the royal court (probably an employee of the gov't) and had access to Esther, even though no one knew they were related.

OVERHEARING A CONSPIRACY

While hanging out in the royal court, Mordecai hears two of the king's eunuchs plotting to kill Xerxes. Because of his access, Mordecai tells Esther about the plot.

- Though we know few details, this brief mention of a plot sets up Mordecai being honored later by Xerxes.

"BOTH MEN WERE HANGED ON THE GALLOWS"

After Esther told the king about the assassination plot, it was investigated, and both men were executed. This event was recorded in the Historical Records of the king.

- The record of this event plays a part in the honoring of Mordecai in the future.

INSATIABLE APPETITES

- Like Xerxes, we often try to pacify our discontentment with worldly pleasures. This only leads to more discontentment.
- **Sin has an insatiable appetite.** This simply means that **no amount of selfish pursuit of pleasure will fill the void in our lives and give us fulfillment.**

COMPROMISE

- Even if we don't blatantly give in to sinful desires, we often conceal or suppress our faith in order to avoid uncomfortable or potentially hostile situations.
- **In our very confusing and alluring culture, we must be cautious not to bend on what the Word says to be true!**

ALL THINGS FOR HIS GOOD (ROMANS 8:28)

- We will all compromise at times and make bad decisions, but **if we will humble ourselves, repent, and trust in Jesus, He will forgive, show grace, and even use our mistakes as a vessel for His Kingdom advancing.**

LEARNING TO SHOW GRACE AND EMPATHY

- It is easy to judge Mordecai and Esther for compromising, but we've all done this, and our circumstances weren't as extreme.
- **We cannot compromise our beliefs, but we must learn to listen to people, empathize, and show grace and mercy,** because this will direct them to a loving God.