

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

## DARK PALACE (ESTHER 2:1-11) REGRETS

A law gets passed for women to honor their husbands, and Vashti is banished.

- The king reflected on what Vashti had done and how he responded. Perhaps he misses having her as a wife.
- Here is this man who looks like he has everything, but all he can think about right now is what he doesn't have.

## ALL ABOUT THE KING

The king's personal attendants offered a plan to cheer the king up. "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king."

- Thousands of young women were brought into the harem, and the girl who pleased the king would be queen.

- **Do we surround ourselves with people who point us to God or ourselves?**

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

Mordecai adopted his cousin, Hadassah (Esther), when her father and mother died.

- Like many Jews in captivity, Esther had both a Jewish and a Gentile name.
- This is probably the author's way of depicting Esther as a young woman trying to live in two worlds. **Christians are in this world but not of this world** (Romans 12:1-2).

## HAREM LIFE

Women are taken out of their homes as young girls and will never go back.

- Each girl went through a twelve-month regimen of beautification before the king considered her. They will have one night to please the king. Out of the 400 or so, one will be chosen, and the rest will spend the rest of their lives secluded in the harem.

## TWO NAMES

Notice the passive verb: Esther "was taken." This implies that she finds herself in a difficult circumstance out of her control.

- One minute, she is a young woman named Hadassah growing up in a Jewish home. The next minute, she is taken and thrown into a palace where her only hope seems to be for her to become Esther.

## MORDECAI'S COMMAND

Mordecai commands Esther to conceal her "ethnicity or her family background." Perhaps he was concerned that Esther's chances of success with the king would diminish.

- Mordecai cared for Esther. His concern and responsibility for her drove him to walk each day back and forth to find out how Esther was doing.

## SELFISH KING (ESTHER 2:12-18) SELFISHNESS

Hundreds of women spend a night with the king, and they're only evaluated by beauty and sexual performance.

- We can look at this king and say, "how could anyone do this?" When we live a self-centered life and dabble in sin, sin will eventually give birth to death (James 1:15).

- **Do we have authentic accountability?**

## OUR CULTURE TODAY

Esther as a young girl conformed to the Persian culture. The king was a man driven by his appetites.

- **When we remove God from the equation, we become driven by our own appetites.** Our culture is immersed with sexual sin and self-centeredness. Our depravity has devalued humans.

## THE COMPETITION

Esther knows the rules and decides to use them to her advantage. She conceals her faith and wins the favor of the people in charge.

- Esther has embraced the values of the empire, and she has excelled more than any of the other women in becoming what the king is looking for.

## ESTHER IS CROWNED

About four years had passed since Vashti was dethroned; Xerxes spent those years losing against Greece

- Hegai's advice to Esther proved right, and she was crowned queen. Contrary to the opening banquets designed to elevate and display the glories of Xerxes, this banquet was given in honor of his queen.

## COMPLEX SITUATION

Perhaps Esther hated her circumstances. Maybe she wondered how God could have let such a horrible thing happen to her. On the other hand, perhaps she loved life in the harem and enjoyed being with the most powerful man in the empire.

- This is a morally ambiguous and complex situation. This is real life in a fallen world.

## CONSPIRACY (ESTHER 2:19-23) AGAIN?

With Esther as queen, there was no reason to gather women a second time. This shows Xerxes' promiscuous lifestyle.

- The important information is that Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai wasn't lounging at some courtyard gate, but he was busy in an administrative capacity within the palace.

## ESTHER'S FAMILY BACKGROUND

Esther continued to hide her nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do.

- Xerxes and everyone around the royal couple remained unaware of her Jewish background and her relationship to Mordecai.
- Though queen of Persia, Esther continued to submit to her adoptive Jewish father.

## MORDECAI'S REPORT

As an imperial official, Mordecai had access to the queen and other workers in the palace.

- He overheard of a plot. Two of the king's officers became angry and conspired to assassinate the king.
- Mordecai reports this to the queen, and she informs the king. The integrity of both Mordecai and Esther was established.

## FAITH IN GOD OR CULTURE?

- How many of us, like Esther, have concealed our faith in order to avoid being uncomfortable?
- How many of us conceal our faith because we're afraid to lose a friendship? Do we conform to the world just to gain more of it? **We need to stop relying on money, looks, intellect, and worldly success.**

## GOD'S GRACE AND FIERCE LOVE

- Despite Esther's compromise, God didn't give up on her. God pursued her and used her to deliver His people.
- This is the Bible: Abraham lied to protect his wife; Moses murdered someone; David slept with another man's wife; Peter denied Jesus; Paul persecuted the church. **We have similar stories.**

## JESUS' PERFECT EXAMPLE

- All the heroes of the Bible compromised in one way or another except for Christ.
- Satan tempted Jesus three times. Never in the history of the world has there been a greater temptation to compromise. Unlike Esther—and unlike us—Jesus says "No."

## HOW WILL WE STAND FIRM?

- We will face many temptations where identifying as a Christian isn't popular. There are times when it will cost our lives.
- **Do we have an authentic relationship with Christ? Do we have authentic community?**
- When life gets difficult, how will we respond? Will we compromise, or will we respond in worship?

## ALWAYS A WAY OUT

- Esther's story is difficult. Sometimes life and circumstances can seem hopeless.
- God is faithful; He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He also provides a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- **God. Is. Faithful!** When and if we rely on Him, He will provide a way out. **There's always an opportunity to worship Him.**

## MARK 8:34-38

- "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him **deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me...** For **what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?...For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him** when he comes..."