

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

### CONSEQUENCES (ESTHER 2:1-7)

#### DECISIONS

At least four years have passed since chapter 1, and Ahasuerus is found regretting his past decisions. But somehow, he finds a way to remove himself from responsibility.

- When we make decisions in anger or haste, it often leads to remorse.
- **We will live with regret until we admit our responsibility and repent.**

#### ADVICE

As an answer to the king's depression, he turned again to his young, trusted counselors.

- With no concern for the families and lives that would be destroyed, they recommended the king satisfy his desires with young virgins until he chose a new queen.
- Again, the king issues a decree that destroys the weak and protects those in power.

We all need counsel for our lives. We must be careful to **listen to those that would build our faith, rather than feed our flesh.**

- It's good to have peers, but **we need experience/wisdom to speak into our lives**, especially when we're dealing with consequences of past choices.

#### DISCIPLINE FROM GOD

We are introduced to the Jewish cousins, Esther (Hadassah) and Mordecai. Their names indicate that they had, at least, surrendered to their pagan names. The real question is: Why are they in Persia?

- In Daniel chapter 1, we discover that God had allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Jerusalem around 600 BC.

#### DELIVERANCE

King Nebby brought some of the Israelites back to Babylon, where they were taught Babylonian culture. This is called the "Babylonian Exile." Read Daniel.

- Around 540 BC, the Persian King, Cyrus, conquered Babylon and, within a year, allowed all the Jews to return to Jerusalem, but some didn't leave (Ezra 1:2-3).

#### DISOBEDIENCE

That disobedience caused conflict in the lives of Mordecai and Esther.

- **We should live in obedience so those that come behind us find peace instead of problems.**
- **Even when we are in what seems to be impossible circumstances, God is with us.**

### HIDDEN TRUTH (ESTHER 2:8-11)

#### CAPTIVE

We learn that Esther was living in Susa, the winter capital of the Persian Empire.

- Notice that she was *taken* to the palace.
- The author doesn't reveal Esther's feelings about this part of her story, but many have taken aim at her character.
- What we know is that a young, beautiful, Jewish girl was taken to the king's harem.

#### COMPROMISE

Esther and Mordecai may have been faced with a life-or-death choice.

- When we consider our own decisions, we tend to compromise with the world with far fewer personal threats.
- **Compromising our convictions to have peace will leave us with no peace at all.**

#### CONCEALING

Mordecai tells Esther to hide her ethnicity. We don't know if it was to protect her or him.

- He checked on her daily "to see how she was doing and what was happening."
- Esther was hiding the truth and still smiling at everyone around her while her future appeared to be a **NO-WIN** situation.
- **What are we concealing and why?**

### PROGRESS (ESTHER 2:12-18)

#### FINDING FAVOR

In the middle of the darkness of this story, Esther won the favor of Hegai and received the best care in the kingdom.

- 12 months of preparations for one night with the king, followed by a "walk of shame."
- Each girl was taken by the king and just as quickly discarded, except for Esther, who found favor with the king.

#### POSITION

For her night with the king, Esther was given the crown of the queen. It was not the way any woman would want to become queen.

- Still, God protected and provided for Esther.
- **Even when we find ourselves in the darkest place, not seeking God, we may find Him seeking us.**

### PROTECTION

The king decides no other virgins need to be considered. He slashed taxes and gave gifts to the kingdom.

- **As God opens our eyes to His providence, we should surrender to service, even if we don't know the whole plan.**
- The king doesn't know she's a Jew. They don't know they need her. God knows what He is doing.

### REWARDS (ESTHER 2:19-23)

#### THE PLOT THICKENS

Two men plot to kill the pagan, self-glorifying, woman-abusing king. Mordecai overhears them talking and shares the information with Esther.

- The king investigates, finds the accusation credible, and has the men executed.
- Why would Mordecai and Esther protect the king that had brought so much pain?

#### DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

The author doesn't make clear their motives, but we should remember our responsibility to do what is right.

- **Romans 12:14-20**
- **What makes our community special is not just how we treat other believers, but how we treat those that hate us because of Christ.**

#### RECOGNITION

For their life-saving intervention, a simple notation was made in the king's journal.

- We want people to recognize what we do, especially when it's "good."
- We even get mad at God when we do a good thing, and something bad still happens.
- **Life isn't a scorecard. We deserve wrath, but God gives us grace!**

#### AUTHORITY

- The king used his authority to satisfy himself; **Jesus uses His authority for our good.** Selfish rulers preserve their lives at all costs; **Jesus presented His life for us.**
- Jesus does not have to use His authority for our good. We do not deserve it. But **grace is never about what we deserve.**

#### CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

- Mordecai could only check on Esther's situation, but Jesus can change ours.
- **He has both the desire and ability to accomplish all of His holy will.**
- He is not just full of hope for us; **He has chosen to save us at great cost to Himself.**

#### A PURE BRIDE

- The king sought a pure bride, but Jesus makes us into one.
- **The gospel is a pure Groom choosing to love and purify a bride that has given herself to the world.**
- The king left women with shame, but **Jesus has taken our shame away!**