

ESTHER 1

Esther 1:1-4

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 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.

Esther 1:1-4

- ✓ Herodotus, the Greek Historian, attributes this same number of provinces and vast territory to Xerxes 1
- ✓ Scholars debate the historical accuracy of Esther and Jewish scholars attribute a lot of the Old Testament as morality tales more than actual events, however, the author of Esther seems to prefer places, dates, and names to the “long ago and far away in a magical kingdom” approach to his chronicle
- ✓ Times have changed, but politics have not – even the king needed to garner support for future military campaigns, building projects, and other issues of state

Esther 1:1-4

- ✓ Xerxes' father Darius had suffered a naval defeat in a failed attempt to conquer the Greeks and later died
- ✓ Ahasuerus would attempt to expand his empire and avenge his father's loss, but he needed the support of his nobles
- ✓ The first 180 days were probably a rotation of nobles from all over the empire

Esther 1:5

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.

- ✓ The second feast was made for the people in the capital city of Susa (located in present day Iran and approx. 900 miles due west from Jerusalem)
- ✓ This was the location of the winter palace of Persian kings

Esther 1:6

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.

- ✓ We believe Esther's author to be male as the description of the curtains and other decorating details are called "white stuff", etc. and it does not appear to have the woman's eye for decorum

Esther 1:7-8

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

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.

Esther 1:7-8

- ✓ Ancient mid-eastern culture often required everyone to participate in each round of drinks served unless otherwise stated

Esther 1:9

9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

- ✓ Typically, the men and women dined separately in Persian culture (this will be discussed again when Esther invites Haman to join the king and herself for a feast)
- ✓ Vashti, the queen, is entertaining the king's harem in a separate area of the palace

Esther 1:10-12

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,

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.

Esther 1:10-12

- ✓ There is a lot of debate regarding why Vashti would refuse the king's command to appear
- ✓ Some scholars believe she was commanded to appear immodestly before the king's guests
- ✓ Some scholars agree with the above, but also believe she was pregnant with Artaxerxes who would eventually succeed his father at the time of his assassination almost 20 years later

Esther 1:10-12

- ✓ Jewish rabbinical writings state their belief that Vashti was ready to appear immodestly before the king's guests, but the Lord smote her with leprosy (unlikely)
- ✓ Xerxes means “lord of heroes (men)” in Persian, but her refusal shows him to not be lord over his own home

Esther 1:13-14

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):

Esther 1:15

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?”

- ✓ To be the most power man on earth at this time, Xerxes was servant to his own emotions, appetites, and often, the deceit of his own advisors

Esther 1:16-17

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.’

Esther 1:18-19

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.

Esther 1:16-19

- ✓ Memucan makes a domestic disturbance into a national epidemic from “all women” to the “noble women”
- ✓ Memucan also wanted this decreed by the king’s hand so it could not be altered (someone speaking so boldly against the queen would fear her anger if she and the king were to “mend the relationship”)
- ✓ Mede and Persian kings were revered as deity and, because of this, were above making mistakes and their decrees could not be repealed

Esther 1:20-22

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.

Esther 1:20-22

- ✓ This will be the first of several rash decisions and decrees by the king