

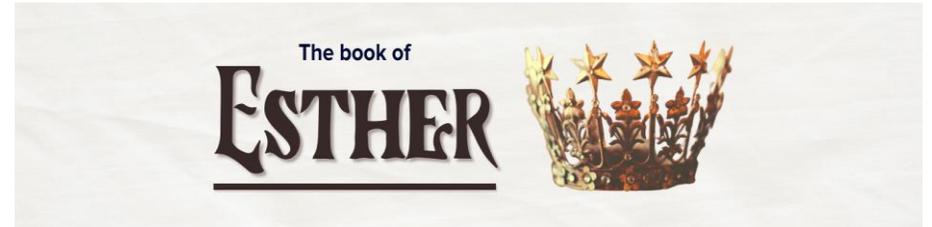


Pray

What verses or phrases from this passage can lead you to begin to see God's involvement and activity?

How can this passage and its prominent characters impact the way you pray for yourself and others?

Considering this passage, how will you pray for our church?



Evil Empire Crumbling and a Divine Opening | Esther 1

Study Guide 1 for sermon on 9/27/2020



Introduction

Kings and queens are not something that we dwell on in modern life in the United States unless you are an avid chess player or are a student of history.

What famous queens can you think of? Queen Cleopatra, Queen Nefertiti of Egypt, and Queen Elizabeth are three that may come to mind. Now, what famous queens in Scripture can you think of? Perhaps, you think of the Queen of Sheba. More than likely, your mind goes to Queen Vashti and Queen Esther. They are prominent figures in the book we are about to study. Despite their prominence, God is the central figure of Esther, who is mysteriously ruling over Jewish affairs, ultimately protecting his people, and fulfilling his promises through the continuation of Abraham's descendants.

While there are a few themes present in the 17th book of the Bible, God's providence is on display through the care and protection of his children.

Did you know? God is not mentioned by name in the book of Esther. Despite this fact, God is not silent as he rules over kingdoms and works to carry out his plan despite vivid wickedness (1:12, 10:3).



Overview

Context: Chapter 1 sets the stage with a lot of history by our anonymous author. While you may not know King Ahasuerus or the area of Susa in Western Persia, the feasts and the attention to detail in the palace cause us to focus in on the narrative unfolding.

Structure:

- I. Scene 1: Royal Banquets (vv. 1-9)
- II. Scene 2: Royal Refusal leads to a Royal Order (vv. 10-22)



Engage

1. The author shows us the lavish living of King Ahasuerus (King Xerxes is his Greek name) through extended feasts. What is the purpose of these feasts in verse 4?
2. King Ahasuerus was a big deal. The Scriptures tell us that he ruled 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. That is quite an empire. He did not lack in power and wealth. Rather, he lacked in wisdom. Where do you see his desire for control in this passage?
3. What does verse 11 teach us about the heart of the king? How does the fear of man and the desire to be a “people-pleaser” impact the way you live?
4. Is there a reason given for why Queen Vashti does not come when the king commands for her? She stands up to the king’s command and the king is left powerless. We do not have to guess how he felt. The second half of verse 12 describes his demeanor.
5. Fill in blanks. The king became _____ and his _____ burned within him (CSB translation). How does the second half of verse 12 relate to Proverbs 16:32, Ecclesiastes 7:9, and Ephesians 4:31-32?
6. In verses 13-15, we read of wise men who are advisors to the king. These individuals are well informed in the laws of the land and quote the law back to the king as it relates to the Queen’s actions. The advisors are very concerned with the Queen’s actions. Why are they concerned? (*Hint* → *verses 16-17*)
7. There is an assumption that even the noble women will be affected by Queen Vashti’s behavior and there will be contempt and fury infiltrating the King’s empire (v. 18). It is interesting that the focus is on the Queen’s behavior and yet, the King gets a pass. How should we respond to rulers and regimes like the King’s?
8. So, a royal decree is made that affects the royal line in verse 19. What is the decree and how does it impact Vashti? What are the far-reaching goals for this decree found in verse 20?
9. How does the first chapter impact your view of God? Your understanding of the book of Esther?
10. What do we learn from the opening chapter of Esther as we seek to walk in a broken world?