

# It's Time - Living For Jesus

Sunday, November 17, 2019

## OVERVIEW

### VIDEO: The Bible Project - Esther

The book of Esther is set during the era when the Persians ruled over Judah, in the reign of King Xerxes (Hebrew "Ahasuerus"). The Jews became subjects of the Persian Empire when Cyrus the Great, king of Media and Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 BC. (Babylon had taken over Judah in 605 BC, and many Jews were deported to Babylon as captives from 605 to 586 BC.) Even though Cyrus had issued a decree allowing the Jewish captives to return to their homeland, many had chosen to remain in Babylon. After living there for almost half a century, they had become well settled and prosperous. The thought of returning to the ruined and isolated land of Judah had little appeal to them. Some of these Jews made their way even farther east, to the new seat of power in the Eastern world: Susa, the capital of Persia. There they again found that ambitious and capable individuals could attain positions of affluence and influence, as the case of Nehemiah, cupbearer for King Artaxerxes I, demonstrates. Esther's story is set in this community of Persian Jews — far from their homeland, yet true to their heritage.

As we begin this series on Esther, I want to pull from a message that I preached 4 years ago on the Book of Esther when we were working our way through the entire Bible in our series Our Incredible, Amazing Bible. In that message I outlined the book of Esther and presented the following summary of the book's meaning

### What We Learn:

While there is certainly no doubt as to the historical authenticity of the events of Esther and their record bearing witness as such, one might look at Esther as a beautiful picture (an allegory if you will much like C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia) of many of the components of God's plan of salvation. It is with this thought in mind that I want us to take a look at what we learn from the story of Esther.

**NOTE:** I am not trying to directly relate each and every character to a corresponding character in God's plan of salvation but rather see some related ideas which help me perceive the awesome gift of God's salvation.

- The picture of two kingdoms - God's Glorious Kingdom to which nothing can compare (though implied by its absence and perhaps by the reality of the Jewish homeland which had been restored) to which nothing can compare and the kingdom of this world that tries to regain what God had prepared for us, but

through inadequate means. Even the most elaborate kingdom on earth cannot compare to that of God's

- The picture of a beautiful creation, that through rebellion, loses her position of relationship with the King
- The picture of the beautifying transformation of salvation which prepares us as a bride without spot or wrinkle, worthy of being in the presence of The King
- The picture of an orphan whose beauty is desired by the King
- The picture of the providence, provision and protection of God - The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- The picture of an eternal enemy bent on our destruction
- The picture of a King who never forgets
- The picture of a King who delights to give his beloved anything she asks for
- The picture of the battle for and cost of our salvation
- The picture of the triumph of good over evil
- The picture of remembering and celebrating our salvation

### **Esther 1 New International Version (NIV)**

**1** This is what happened during the time of Xerxes,<sup>[a]</sup> the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush<sup>[b]</sup>: **2** At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, **3** and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

**4** For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. **5** When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. **6** The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble,

mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. **7** Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. **8** By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

**9** Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

**10** On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas— **11** to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. **12** But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

**13** Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times **14** and were closest to the king—Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memukan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

**15** “According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.”

**16** Then Memukan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. **17** For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’ **18** This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

**19** “Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. **20** Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.”

**21** The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memukan proposed. **22** He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household, using his native tongue.

## Series Key Text:

### **Esther 4:14 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup>For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

## It's Time to Stop Swimming In Cultural Currents

Perhaps part of the message within this book is a call for God's people to remember who they were, that they were different than the world and that they were called to be separate. Perhaps it was a testimony to the fact that some had forgotten their God (thus his conspicuous absence from the story), they had forgotten their identity and taken on the identity of the world.

What cultural currents are represented in this passage...?

- The Obvious Carnality of the World
  - Indulgence, Drunkenness, Partying, and possibly Sexual Immorality
- Power
- Greed
- Excess
- Materialism
- A desire to impress others
- Everyone for themselves
- Powerplays
- Lack of respect and humility
- Tit for Tat

### 1. Cultural Currents pull us in the wrong direction

#### **1 John 2:15 New International Version (NIV)**

**15** Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

#### **2 Timothy 4:10 New International Version (NIV)**

**10** for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

## 2. Cultural Currents entangle us and keep us from being productive for God

### **2 Timothy 2:4 New International Version (NIV)**

4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

### **Romans 12:2 New International Version (NIV)**

2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### **2 Peter 1:5-9 New International Version (NIV)**

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

## 3. Cultural Currents can sweep us away

### **Genesis 19:15-16 New International Version (NIV)**

15 With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished."

16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

### **2 Corinthians 6:17 New International Version (NIV)**

17 Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

## Conclusion

Somehow, Mordecai and Esther found a way to live differently than the cultural currents of their day. They were in the world but not of the world. Likewise, you and I must find a way to stop swimming in cultural currents living in the world but not of the world

As Jesus prayed regarding his disciples, so may it be said of us.

**John 17:14 New International Version (NIV)**

**14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

Billy Graham said it this way...

*Christians are like the gulf stream, which is in the ocean and yet not part of it. This mysterious current defies the mighty Atlantic, ignores its tides, and flows steadily upon its course. Its color is different, being a deeper blue. Its temperature is different, being warmer. Its direction is different, being from south to north. It is in the ocean, and yet it is not part of it.*

*So we as Christians are in the world. We come in contact with the world, and yet we retain our distinctive kingdom character and refuse to let the world press us into its mold.*