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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**VASHTI’S VIRTUE**

**Esther 1:1-22**

The book of Esther is an unusual book in that it seems to stand alone. It is not connected to historical chronology of the Hebrews. This is a beautiful story of how a young Jewish girl saves her people. It is unknown who penned the book of Esther. Many scholars do not like to include the book of Esther in the Bible, because it does not directly mention the name of God. In this book, however, we see the hand of God at work to save his people in a foreign land. The setting for this is Persia. It happens during the years of captivity of the Israelites. One of the lessons to be learned in this is "you reap what you sow". The feast of Purim is instituted in this little book. In my opinion, this is a very spiritual book. It causes us to see God, even though it does not call His name.

***Esther 1:1 "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this [is] Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, [over] an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)"***

Ahasuerus name in Greek is Xerxes. He is the Persian king mentioned in Ezra who reigned from 486 or 465 B.C.

***Ezra 4:6***

***And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.***

A province, at this time, was an area that had its own governor. We can see that this ruler had great world power. This would have included India, Ethiopia and Judaea.

***Esther 1:2 "[That] in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which [was] in Shushan the palace,"***

Shushan, the palace, sat on a hill. It was in the area of Shushan the city but was separate. Daniel was once carried there in a vision, and Nehemiah served there as Artaxerxes’ cupbearer.

***Esther 1:3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, [being] before him:"***

This was like a diplomatic dinner. This dinner, probably, included as many as 15,000 people. The governors of the various provinces had gathered for this feast. It appears from the verse above, that his servants were included in this celebration. The nobles, mentioned, were, possibly, some of the Medes who held high favor with Persia, even though they were a captured nation, as well.

***Esther 1:4 "When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, [even] an hundred and fourscore days."***

This 180 days is a lengthy time of festivity in their land. Possibly, a few of the governors and nobles would come, and when they left, another group would come. We are not told for sure but 180 days is a long time for one party to last. He was showing off his wealth and power to the subordinate rulers of his provinces.

***Esther 1:5 "And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;"***

It was not unusual for a feast of this kind to last for 7 days. This court was estimated to be about 350 feet long by 250 feet wide. It seems, there was a building setting in the middle of it. To accommodate the large numbers of people, it would have been necessary for it to be this large. This feast was for everyone. The servants of the king and all the people, small and great, joined in the feast.

***Esther 1:6 "[Where were] white, green, and blue, [hangings], fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds [were of] gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble."***

This court was magnificent. The hangings could have been used as a type of awning to shade the people from the heat, since the court, probably, had no roof. The beds, mentioned, were actually couches where the people reclined. They were, probably, made of the precious metals, silver and gold, because there was so much wealth. The pillars of marble were, possibly, limestone blue. The floors were of the same material as the pillars, and some other colors that made a mosaic design. There were 4 different mosaics mixed and matched to make a beautiful floor.

***Esther 1:7 "And they gave [them] drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king."***

The fact that the drinking cups were of gold, just showed the extreme wealth of the Persian king. It is interesting, to me, that the cups were different. Perhaps, it would have been easier for each one to keep up with his cup that way. It certainly would have been more expensive to make them different. This would have taken many barrels of wine to have enough to furnish so large a party.

***Esther 1:8 "And the drinking [was] according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure."***

It was usually understood that the officers must all drink. This generally led to many getting drunk. It is interesting, to me, that the edict of the king, here, allowed each person to decide for himself whether he would drink, or not. It appears, the king wanted to treat all of these people as guests, and not as his subjects.

***Esther 1:9 "Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women [in] the royal house which [belonged] to king Ahasuerus."***

This shows that the men and women had separate feasts. We mentioned before, that the feast was like a diplomatic dinner. Vashti was the wife of the king. She was queen, because she was married to the king. It was in his royal house that Vashti held the feast for the women. "Vashti" means beautiful. This was, probably, a name the king gave her, after they were married. Many believe her real name was Amestris.

***Esther 1:10 "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,"***

***Esther 1:11 "To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she [was] fair to look on."***

On the seventh day of the feast, it seems the king had too much to drink, and asked seven of his eunuchs to go and get the queen. He wanted to exhibit her before the men at his party to show her great beauty. We may assume that he wanted her to remove her veil of covering. He was very proud of all his possessions and he counted the queen as part of his possessions. To present the queen in such a manner as this was a breach in Persian etiquette.

***Esther 1:12 "But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by [his] chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."***

Vashti had to realize that it might cost her her life to refuse to obey the command of her king, who was, also, her husband. She, perhaps, would rather lose her life, than become shamed by such an exhibit. This was as if he were showing her off for the envy of the other men. Her refusal to come would greatly shame her husband before his subordinates. He would, possibly, not have asked such a thing, had he not been drinking. She would have to be severely punished, and it had to be known publicly for him to regain his self-respect. Most kings would have had her killed for such an act of disobedience.

***Esther 1:13 "Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so [was] the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:"***

Even in his heated anger, he did not act hastily. He left the judgement of what her punishment should be to the law of the land. The king wanted to do what was right in this case.

***Esther 1:14 "And the next unto him [was] Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, [and] Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, [and] which sat the first in the kingdom;)"***

Carshena and Shethar were his trusted advisers. Next to them, were the seven princes. All of them sat near the king at the table of the feast and were treated with great respect. They had high offices directly under the king. We may assume that some of them were Medes, from the mention of "Persia and Media" here.

***Esther 1:15 "What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?"***

Notice "we" in the verse above. The king did not want to make this decision himself in the heat of the moment of anger. Another thing that speaks highly of the king was that he wanted it to be according to the law.

***Esther 1:16 "And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that [are] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus."***

The public shame that she had brought on the king would affect the entire kingdom. A king could not expect the people to do as he commanded, unless his queen set the example of obedience. The Persians had been so sure this would never happen, that there was no specific law against it. The advisers and the king would have to decide what would be appropriate punishment.

***Esther 1:17 "For [this] deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not."***

The husband was the absolute ruler over his wife and children, in this heathen land. The queen's act might cause all of the women to rebel against their husbands.

***Esther 1:18 "[Likewise] shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus [shall there arise] too much contempt and wrath."***

In the Persia and Media, women were thought to be under the complete rule of their husbands. This act of Vashti's would affect not only the women of the ordinary citizens but would affect the wives of the princes. They thought they might lose control of their family. The queen was an example for all of the women of the land for good, or evil. Whatever she did, the other women did, too. A good lesson is to be learned here. We can see that our lives influence others by the actions we take.

***Esther 1:19 "If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she."***

Generally, the problems in the home between a husband and a wife would have been kept very secret. He would have put her away from him, but it would not have been known publicly. Since she had disgraced him before the entire land, this punishment must be public, as well. We might say, he divorced her, and threw her out. It was not enough to punish her. They wrote a law, so this would not happen again with any of their wives.

***Esther 1:20 "And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small."***

***Esther 1:21 "And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:"***

They wanted this to strike fear into their wives, so that this would not happen again. This was not just for Persia, but for all the provinces, as well. They all decided this was a good solution to a difficult problem. It would, also, let all of the king's subjects know that the king did not let Vashti get away with this.

***Esther 1:22 "For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that [it] should be published according to the language of every people."***

Persia was a country that lived by different rules than our country. The Bible teaches that the father should be the rule of his own house. This does not mean that he is to be a tyrant, however. It, also, is speaking of the family unit. This is not something that should have been a law of the land. Morality cannot be legislated. The family unit, with the father as the head, is symbolic of our heavenly relationship with our Father.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What is unusual about the book of Esther?
2. Who was the penman?
3. The setting for this is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. What feast is instituted in the book of Esther?
5. Where did Ahasuerus reign?
6. What was a province at this time?
7. Where was the palace of the king?
8. There was festivity in the land for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ days.
9. The couches were made of what?
10. Who was the queen?
11. What did the king request Vashti to do?
12. Who would Vashti's disobedience of the king affect?
13. What royal commandment went forth to all the lands the king ruled?
14. How would this help the king?
15. What punishment was inflicted upon Vashti?
16. What was in the letter he sent to all the lands?
17. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cannot be legislated.