

NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH PREP SCHOOL LESSON

Esther- Part 1

We are going to begin a study on an Old Testament book titled Esther. This story occurred in Susa, a capital city in Persia (present day Iran), after the Israelites had been released from Babylonian captivity, in ~480 BC. In this book, we see the term "Jews" used for the first time. When King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, became king, the nation of Israel split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The Southern Kingdom included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They initially stayed faithful to God, worshipping Him alone, but soon strayed and suffered the consequences. When they were captives in Babylon, they were called Jews, since they were from Judah. The Northern Kingdom, made up of the remaining 10 tribes of Israel. They married non-Israelite women and began worshipping foreign gods (ugh). Their kingdom, Israel, came to be called Samaria (the name of its capital) and, since their blood line had become mixed, they were no longer called Israelites, but Samaritans.

Let's meet our characters, shall we?

Esther was a young Jewish woman who lived in Susa with her cousin, Mordechai. He had raised her as his own daughter since her parents died when she was very young. Mordechai worked at the gate of the king's palace. King Xerxes I (also known as King Ahasuerus) was the King of Persia and was known for both his bad temper and for taking bad advice. Not a good mix, right-? LOL! His lead advisor, Haman, was an Amalekite, these people were enemies of the Jews. In fact, the prophet Samuel predicted that God's people would one day destroy them!

Deuteronomy 25:19 "When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!"

The story starts during a huge party thrown by King Xerxes I, which had already lasted 180 days. Wow! The King decides that he wants to show off his beautiful wife, Queen Vashti, to his friends. So, he summons her and she says, "No"! This was unheard of, since no one refused the King's orders for fear of severe punishment. He became very angry with her and asked his advisors what he should do to punish her. They first recommended that a mandate be sent to every home making it the law that men be the masters of their own households. You see, the Queen had set a very bad example for the local women by disobeying the authority in her life, Xerxes I, who was both her husband and her King. Remember, we are commanded by God to honor the authority in our lives, even when they are being unfair or unreasonable.

Romans 13:1-2 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

The King's advisors also suggested that Vashti no longer be queen and that the King should find a new queen from among the young women of Susa. So, he did just that...



Esther was among the women brought to meet the King. Mordechai instructed her to keep the fact that she was Jewish to herself, since the Jews had many enemies (Remember Haman, the Amalekite?). She respected him as the authority in her life, so she obeyed his command. Esther was a humble young woman who was well-liked by all of the people working in the King's palace. Once the King got to know Esther, he liked her, as well, and chose her to be his queen!

Esther 2:16-17 "And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

One important fact to know about this story so far is that the King's edicts (orders/commands) were final—they could not be changed or taken back. So, even if he had wanted to keep Vashti as his queen, he could not, as he had already made an official command. The finality of the King's orders will come up again a little bit later in the story.

The book does not end with Esther becoming Queen of Persia, though. She did not know it at the time, but Queen Esther had a very important part to play in God's salvation plan. Our lives also have a unique purpose. If we live our lives for Him, obeying His commands, God will show us how we, too, can be a blessing to others.

Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."