

The Book of Esther

Lesson 2

Chapter 1 of the book of Esther provides the background and setting for the story and fate of God's people remaining in exile during the reign of King Xerxes of Persia. Presiding over the vast Media-Persia empire, the King is a ruler who is arrogant and yet gracious, strong and yet weak, foolish and yet wise, while Queen Vashti is portrayed as both beautiful and principled. Her refusal to be "displayed" at a banquet before the King and his nobles, who were in high spirits from wine, leads to her banishment as Queen. Chapter 2 introduces Mordecai and Esther into the narrative.

As you begin, would you take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to give you insight and understanding into His precious written word?

Esther Made Queen

1. Read Esther 2:1 along with Esther 1:19. Describe the thoughts, feelings and emotions King Xerxes might have had as he remembered Queen Vashti, what she had done, and what he had decreed about her.

2. Read Proverbs 15:22
 - A. What is a good principle to follow when you are about to make an important decision in life?

 - B. For personal reflection: Have you ever followed this principle in your life? If so, describe the situation, what decision was reached and what the results of that decision were.

3. Read Esther 2:2-4. Did the King follow the principle outlined in Proverbs 15:22? What was proposed by his personal attendants and what was the King's response?

4. In Esther 2:5-6, a new person is introduced into the historical narrative.

A. What is his name?

B. Describe his background.

C. I Samuel 8:10-21; 9:1-2; 10:17-24; 15:1-35 and Philippians 3:4-10 describe two other prominent individuals from the tribe of Benjamin. From these passages, as well as your general knowledge of the scriptures, compare and contrast these two individuals.

5. Read Esther 2:7-11.

A. Describe the outward appearance and the implied inward qualities of the heart of Hadassah (Esther), the fourth major character in the story.

- B. As a young girl how might she have suffered?
- C. From verses 8 and 9, what kind of initial impression does Esther make with the King's eunuch Hegai? How does Hegai respond to her?
- D. From verses 10 and 11, describe the likely relationship between Mordecai and Esther.
- (1) What specifically had Mordecai directed Esther not to do?
 - (2) From Daniel 1:1-17 and referring back to verse 9, what similarities and differences do you note between the situation facing Esther and Daniel?

(3) What do you glean and learn about the sovereignty and providence of God in these situations?

E. From verse 11 and James 1:27, what does Mordecai do? How does he fulfill a principle of religion that “God our Father accepts as pure and faultless”?

6. Read Esther 2:12-14.

A. What was the process by which a woman made herself ready to see the King?

B. Where would she go after her “visit’ with the King?

- (1) Define “concubine.”

- (2) Does this change your perception of Esther as a person?
Why or why not?

C. Under what condition could she return to the King?

D. The principle of being summoned (or called) by name by a sovereign is clearly established in the Old Testament book of Esther. This principle is restated and confirmed many times in the New Testament, including the gospel of John, where Jesus in a heated debate with His detractors, uses figures of speech to make His point. Read John 10: 1-18 and 22-30.

- (1) Who is the Good Shepherd?

- (2) Who are the strangers, thieves and robbers?

- (3) Who are the sheep?

- (4) In what manner are the sheep called?

- (5) What does the Good Shepherd do for the sheep?

- (6) How do the sheep respond to the Good Shepherd? Why?

- (7) If you are one of the sheep in the Good Shepherd's fold, how do you feel?

- (8) From this passage as well as from your overall understanding of the scriptures, what does the Bible teach regarding definite atonement? For whom did Jesus die?

7. While polygamy was part of the culture of Esther's time, it should be remembered that God described something different for the marriage relationship. Read Genesis 2:18-24, Deuteronomy 7:1-4, Matthew 19:1-6 and I Timothy 3:1-2. What is the ideal attitude and relationship that God desires between a man and a woman in marriage?

8. Read Esther 2:15-18.

A. From verse 15, what did Esther do when it came time for her to go to the King?

B. What additional character trait does Esther's decision to follow the recommendation of Hegai suggest to you?

C. Read verses 15 and 17. What kind of impression did Esther make in the court of King Xerxes and in her visit with the King?

D. Review Esther 1. What comparisons and contrasts can you make? between

(1) the banquets of Queen Vashti and Esther

(2) the attitudes, reactions and responses of King Xerxes to Queen Vashti and Esther?

9. Compare Esther 2:16 with Esther 1:3. How much time has elapsed from the events recorded in chapter one with those in chapter two?

10. Read verses 19-23.

A. How does Esther, now Queen, continue to show respect and honor for Mordecai?

B. What happens during the time Mordecai is sitting at the King's gate? What does Mordecai do?

C. What does Esther do? What is the result of her action and what additionally do you learn about her?