

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 31

Esther 1

INTRODUCTION: The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible where the name of God does not occur one time. However, there are few books in the Bible which show the workings of God any better and more plainly than does the book of Esther. There are four main characters in the book: King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, Queen Esther, and her older cousin, Mordecai. Esther 1, the chapter for our lesson this week, deals with Ahasuerus and Vashti.

(Teacher, in order for the class to understand the first chapter, it would be well to tell a summary of the book of Esther, though our lesson does not deal with Esther herself.) The story is as follows: Ahasuerus was a wicked king who threw a big banquet and drunken party; he invited Queen Vashti to show off her beauty, but she refused and lost her position as queen; Esther was chosen to replace her; and Esther went before the king and risked her life to save her people from total destruction. (Then turn the attention of the class to the sin of Ahasuerus and the admiration that we should have toward Vashti.)

I. AHASUERUS.

1. This is probably King Xerxes. You will notice in Esther 1:1 that he reigned from India to Ethiopia, over 127 provinces.
2. Notice in Esther 1:2-4 his quest for more power. There is no doubt but that he wanted to conquer Greece. In a psychological build-up, he called all his princes, servants, etc. to show them the riches and power of the king. There were perhaps 15,000 or more of them. They came at different times over a period of 180 days, which is six months, and the king tried to build them up to prepare them for the conquest of Greece.
3. Notice what happened at this drunken feast:
 - 1) Pride. See Esther 1:4.
 - 2) Drink. See Esther 1:7.
 - 3) Broad-mindedness. Notice Esther 1:8.
 - 4) Influence on the women. Read Esther 1:9.
 - 5) Drunkness. See Esther 1:10.
 - 6) Disregard for the Sabbath. Notice this in Esther 1:10a.
 - 7) Losing mental competence. Read Esther 1:10b.
 - 8) Sensuality and loose sex. See Esther 1:11.

Above is the progression of many sins. Notice it step by step. First there is pride, haughtiness, etc. Then there is the social drink. Then there is the broad-mindedness of accepting sin, giving every man his choice, whether it is sinful or not; then there is the influence for bad on the lives of the women. Ladies become sinful. This destroys the home, the children, the future generation. Then comes drunkness. Then comes a disrespect for the Lord's Day and things that are holy. Then comes irrationality. Then comes sex sin. It is all a part of the Devil's trick to ruin a society. Ahasuerus followed the Devil's leading perfectly for the destruction of his kingdom and decency. We close his part of the story with his requesting Vashti, the queen, to come and show her beauty. This was disgrace! A woman was certainly not to show herself, or hardly even show up in a public meeting of men. Let us notice Vashti's response.

II. VASHTI. She is certainly an admirable person, as you will find as we study her.

1. The word "Vashti" means "sweet." Actually, it was a nickname which could mean "Sweetie" or "Sweetie Pie."
2. She was beautiful. Notice Esther 1:11. There is certainly nothing wrong with being beautiful, if the beauty is being used for God and if it is true beauty. For one to try to be beautiful is synthetic. Beauty to stir the passions and lust of men is wrong. For one to exhibit her body overly in order to be beautiful is wrong. Sweet, God-given, natural, feminine beauty is good.
3. She was courageous. Notice in Esther 1:12, she refused to show off her body. (Teacher, spend some time here warning girls about the temptation of Satan to show off their bodies for the lewd minds of men to dwell on.)

4. It was a constant temptation for her. Notice in Ester 1:11, the words, “to bring.” Actually, this implies that the king sent again and again and again for her. The temptation was not only once; she had to resist over and over again. Satan does not stop with the first temptation. Don’t let your barrier down when sin has been resisted, for he will attack again and again and again.
5. She was hated by her family because she would not participate. Notice in Esther 1:12b the words, “his anger burned in him.” The Scripture seems to imply that the entire family was burned with anger, but this didn’t matter to Vashti. She was going to do what she thought was right, regardless! This hatred of family spread into society. She was finally hated by society. In truth, she was an outcast. Because she would not do something lewd at her husband’s command, they accused her of being disobedient to her husband. The king thought that this disobedience would spread throughout the entire kingdom, and so the entire society was mad. The fact that “everybody’s doing it” and that “everybody wants you to do it” does not mean that you ought to do it.
6. She lost her family because of her stand.
7. She lost her position because of her stand. She was the top woman in all the land. She gave up this position because she wanted to do right, and right she did at the expense of everything. The truth is, however, she gained everything! She gained honor, purity, peace, satisfaction, the joy of doing the will of God, etc.

CONCLUSION: We find in the life of Ahasuerus, the king, the progression downward in sin. We find in the life of Vashti, the queen, the courage that every Christian should exert in a wicked generation.