

Pride, Power, and Providence

The book of Esther opens not with the heroine herself, but with the empire into which she would soon be thrust—a stage set with grandeur, indulgence, and political posturing. Yet, behind the velvet curtains of Persian opulence, God was already orchestrating redemption in quiet, unseen ways.

1. A Kingdom on Display

“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus... who reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia...” (v. 1)

King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes I of secular history) ruled the most powerful empire on earth at the time. His wealth, authority, and military strength were unmatched. To showcase his glory, he held a lavish, six-month banquet for nobles and officials, followed by an additional seven-day feast for everyone in the capital city.

This wasn’t just a party—it was a carefully crafted PR campaign. The king was displaying his greatness to bolster political loyalty and probably to secure backing for his upcoming invasion of Greece.

Personal Application: We live in a culture obsessed with image. Social media, resumes, curated lifestyles—we too want to “display our glory.” But God’s kingdom isn’t built on human showmanship. It’s built on humility, quiet obedience, and faithfulness in the hidden places. Ask yourself: Am I building a life to impress people or to please God?

2. A Queen Who Would Not Be Put on Display

“He commanded... to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty... But Queen Vashti refused to come...” (vv. 11–12)

The king, drunk with wine and ego, summoned Queen Vashti to appear before a room full of intoxicated men. The implication is that he wanted to parade her beauty—perhaps even indecently. But Vashti refused. In a culture that treated women as ornaments and possessions, Vashti’s “no” was bold, and dangerous.

Personal Application: Sometimes doing what’s right means refusing to go along with the crowd—even when it costs us something. Vashti may not have been perfect, but in that moment, she had dignity. Do we have the courage to say “no” to pressure, even if it means standing alone? Can we refuse to compromise our integrity, even when others expect us to comply?

3. The Backlash of Insecurity

“What shall we do to Queen Vashti... for she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus?” (v. 15)

The king’s advisors panicked. If word got out that the queen disobeyed the king, what would happen in their own homes? What if women everywhere began to speak up or resist? To them, Vashti wasn’t

a person—she was a precedent. So they recommended a royal decree: strip her of her title, and make sure every woman in the kingdom learns to honor and obey her husband.

Personal Application: Insecurity often masks itself as control. We see it in homes, workplaces, and even churches. People lash out or issue ultimatums when their ego feels threatened. But godly leadership isn't about domination—it's about humility and service. Husbands, fathers, leaders—are we leading with character, or demanding respect without earning it?

4. God Is at Work—Even When He's Not Named

“The decree was published throughout all the king’s provinces...” (v. 22)

Notably, **God's name is never mentioned** in the entire book of Esther. And yet, His fingerprints are all over it. Vashti's removal created a vacancy—a vacancy that would open the door for a young Jewish woman named Esther. What looked like palace drama was actually divine setup.

Personal Application: You may be in a season where God feels silent. Maybe nothing around you looks “spiritual.” Maybe your workplace, school, or family environment seems far from God's presence. But that doesn't mean He's absent. Just because His name isn't mentioned doesn't mean He isn't moving. Trust His providence. What seems like chaos may be the very stage He's preparing for your calling.

Final Reflection: God's Sovereignty Over Empire and Ego

Esther 1 is not just a historical introduction—it's a theological invitation. Even in a world ruled by egotistical kings, manipulative advisors, and unjust systems, **God is still sovereign**. He doesn't need a title to work. He doesn't need to announce Himself. He works through unlikely people and unexpected events.

And sometimes, His work begins with a refusal.

Vashti said no. Esther will later say yes. Both paved the way for God's purpose.

Ask Yourself:

- Where am I tempted to compromise just to keep the peace or protect my image?
- Am I willing to do what's right even when it's costly?
- Do I trust that God is working behind the scenes, even when I can't see it?

Let Esther 1 remind you: God is always working—quietly, patiently, powerfully. Even in exile. Even in silence. Even in Persia.

And He's not finished writing your story.