

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Esther

No 2

Esther is Chosen
Reading Esther Chapter 2

We are identifying Ahasuerus with Xerxes who left Susa (Sushan) in 481 B.C. with two million men to defeat the kingdom of Greece. The great banquet rally to gain support for this venture had been held in the third year of his reign, or in 483/2. The events of which we are reading in chapter two begin in this period. It may reasonably be assumed that the events of and following v18 occurred after Xerxes return from Greece in 478 when he gave attention to affairs of state and also his harem. The book of Esther does not in any way concern itself with or reference international affairs. They were only a side-show to the big event with which the book contends, that of the extermination of the Kingdom of God and His chosen peoples by agents of the enemy of the ages.

Ahasuerus: React in haste. Repent at leisure. We deliberately misquote William Congreve's 1693 proverb in 'The Old Batchelour: '

Thus grief still treads upon the heels of pleasure:

Married in haste, we may repent at leisure.

Wikipedia tells us the saying applies in many settings, and caution is a good principle to adopt in so many of the questions of life. Of course one can wait too long as, time and tide wait for no man.

Ahasuerus in drunken rage and a fit of injured pride had banished his Queen from his presence with a royal decree, published throughout the kingdom Esther 1:19, and thus by a law that could not be altered, even by himself.

And now he was sorry for himself Esther 2:1. He had been used again, but there was no going back. In Esther you will see more overt instances of Ahasuerus being set up by his courtiers and ministers of state. Thus the search was made from Ethiopia in the South West, to India in the North East for the most exquisite young women who would be taken permanently from their families, to join the royal harem as potential royal wives.

According to custom, all of them who were brought into sexual union with the king were considered to be a wife (concubine) of the king, and thereafter

lived isolated in separate quarters Esther 2:14. He would choose one from these to be the new Queen. All this took time. Personal preparation occupied twelve months. Ahasuerus was also preparing resumption of war against Greece. Esther, the cousin of Mordecai, was chosen.

Mordecai: A Wiley Old Bird.

Mordecai's forebear had with king Jeconiah (also known as Jehoiachin,) been transported to Babylonia by king Nebuchadnezzar. See 2 Chronicles 36:8-10. Mordecai, probably aged 50¹ in 483 B.C., had adopted Esther. Esther 2:15. Esther is a Persian name meaning 'star' Her Jewish name was Hadassah, adapted from the Hebrew word for the Myrtle.

Bible scholars consider that Mordecai was a eunuch as he had no known wife and had access to the court of the royal Harem, which was off limits to whole men. His name is derived from that of the Babylonian Akkadian god, Marduk, suggesting that he was as a Jewish lad, accommodated to the requirements of the Babylonian court.

Despite the limitation of such considerations Mordecai held a staunch commitment to the Jewish people. He nevertheless did not allow Esther to present herself before Ahasuerus as a

Hebrew v10&20. As we shall shortly see, Mordecai was willing to be counted when the time of testing came, but we observe him here:

- a. not making an overt show, and
- b. strategically placing an ally in a place of influence against inevitable challenge, for he knew the nature of the intrigue surrounding the throne.

Mordecai was following a policy of wisdom from Proverbs²:

Take away the wicked before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. Do not claim honour in the presence of the king. And do not stand in the place of great men; for it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen. Proverbs 25:5-7.

Esther: Called, Chosen, Crowned.

Here is a precious cameo. Esther is a type of the believer as the bride of Christ, called from the world to be holy unto Him, chosen to be one with Him, crowned to share His royal throne and endowed with the riches of His inheritance.

The Queen's royal crown (v17) consisted of a purple ribband, streaked with white, bound around her forehead. It signified

royal favour and assignation³. This was followed by a feast of coronation when she was presented to the empire v18.

The Queen enjoyed a derived royal estate from the provinces of the empire which contributed to the cost of her maintenance. On accession an abatement (Heb. 'rest' or, 'release') of these taxes was made at the expense of the king v18. This word is also translated to mean a holiday in some versions⁴. It may read like that in your Bible.

It is now the seventh year of the reign of Ahasuerus. Esther 2:16. Accession was in the year 486 B.C. and the feast was held in 483 the seventh year would be 479 give or take a few months⁴

The intervening years is the time when Ahasuerus, known to the Greeks as Xerxes, fought against them and was defeated. It was a watershed year. It taught the world that the Babylonians could be beaten. The vessel had been cracked and shortly would fall apart. It was all in God's time and part of His plan, and prophesied by Him in Daniel 11:1-3.

ENDNOTES: 1. Mordecai's age. The estimate of 50 years is from the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia. Working from known dates, the captivity of Jehoiachin under Nebuchadnezzar was in 598. The third year of Xerxes reign was 483. If he was a toddler aged 1, then he would be about 116 years of age if he were the one who was exiled. However the answer is in the list being his forebears, Jair, Shimei and Kish. The Hebrew is a listing, literally, "Mordecai son Jair son Shimei son Kish." Ellicott comments of the phrase "*who had been taken into exile*" that the antecedent is obviously Kish, though as far as mere grammar goes it might have been Mordecai p517." Thus, if as we are assuming Ahasuerus is Xerxes, the one who was transported was Kish and Mordecai is his great grandson which is quite possible in 115 years. The estimate of his age then is based on the assumption of generations and Mordecai's logical age given his occupation in the affairs of state. 2. There is an undated cuneiform document which was uncovered near Babylon mentioning a Matakas, a high official, a counsellor in Xerxes' court. Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia p1149. 3. Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, p304&305. 4. Years in antiquity are almost always counted from accession of the reigning monarch. Our dating is counted from the nominal birth of Christ. As accessions do not coincide with a new year by modern counting we must allow for this overlap or shortfall when considering the timing of events. Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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