

The Book of Esther – Part Five

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Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Ralph Alley

1). Last week we saw that Vashti's refusal to appear in Ahasuerus's presence on the 7th day wearing her royal crown pictured for us centuries of unfaithfulness and disobedience on the part of Israel. This represents the Nation's refusal to embrace its calling, thereby also refusing to assume its regal position with regards to the 7th Day.

a). Esther 1:12

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

b). We also saw that the anti-type picture of Vashti can be seen beginning for Israel at Sinai with the first generation coming out of Egypt. It continued throughout the nation's history – although, of course, there were always individuals within the nation who did remain faithful – and that Israel's national unfaithfulness was looked upon by God as harlotry -

c). Isaiah 1:21

How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

And-

d). Ezekiel 23:17

"Then the Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their immorality; so she was defiled by them, and alienated herself from them. 18 She revealed her harlotry and uncovered her nakedness. Then I alienated Myself from her, as I had alienated Myself from her sister. 19 Yet she multiplied her harlotry."

e). The nation's harlotry reached an all-time high at the time of Christ's first coming, when the nation declared this –

John 19:15

But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"

f). We know that the harlotry will reach its zenith during the opening years of Daniel's 70th week (the beginning of the Tribulation) when Israel, after a similar fashion seen

2000 years ago with respect to Rome, will be completely entangled with the most corrupt Gentile world power that the world has ever known – that which is represented by the fourth part of Daniel’s image, the final form of the Babylonian Kingdom under Antichrist-

Revelation 17:1

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." 3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

2). As a result of Israel’s past harlotry, the nation now finds itself rejected by God and in the place of death, as pictured by the experience of Jonah and that of Lazarus –

a). Jeremiah 3:8

Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce;

And-

b). Matthew 21:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

And-

c). Luke 13:34

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

3). Israel’s refusal to fulfill her calling has had a detrimental effect, not only on the nation itself, but also on all other nations of the earth because of what God promised Abraham in –

Genesis 12:3

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

a). Instead of receiving the blessings of God through Israel, with Israel at the head of the nations, the Gentile nations find themselves 'lording it over' Israel, during the "times of the Gentiles," completely alienated from the promised blessings and in a state of chaos. This is exactly what is presented to us in the picture given through Vashti -

Esther 1:16

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

b). Therefore, currently, the rulership over the earth is out of place, both on the earth and in the heavens.

c). And God will use the Gentile nations to bring persecution on Israel to bring the nation to repentance, and then will punish those same Gentile nations for doing so completely in accord with the first part of Genesis 12:3.

4). Now, what is particularly interesting for us this week is not so much the action taken by Ahasuerus in response to Vashti's refusal to appear, but the reason given for taking the action. Let's look at it again -

Esther 1:17

"For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' 18 "This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. 19 "If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. 20 "When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small." 21 And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. 22 Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

a). Let's note that the action taken by King Ahasuerus, stated very simply as, 'Vashti shall come no more before king Ahasuerus', is in reality far from simple. And although it is not the focus of our study today, I think we can remember the intensity of Israel's persecution amongst the Gentile nations that we read in Leviticus Chapter 26 last week. This is a very serious business.

b). So going back to our scripture, note verse 17 -

"For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes..."

c). Vashti's behavior is seen as presenting a model to all women in Ahasuerus's kingdom that would lead them to treat their own husbands in the same way. And continuing in verse 18 -

"This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath."

d). Here's the picture - if the queen is able to refuse the king's command with impunity, then no wife need be subject to her husband, as there would be no consequence.

e). The action suggested by Memucan and acted upon by the king was to ensure that the correct roles be maintained within the marriage relationship.

f). Which can take us back to the first marriage, that of Adam and the Woman -

Genesis 3:16

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow [in] your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

g). The marriage relationship between Adam and the Woman, the foundation for all thereafter, is inextricably linked to regality. And it is quite impossible to view marriage then, or now, or anywhere in between, apart from a regal context.

h). As we consider these things, we will see that what is dealt with here in the king's decree can be seen on a variety of levels.

5). Firstly, let us consider the nation of Israel in the past - the complete nation was looked at by God as His wife, and yet with the divided kingdom that came into existence after Solomon's death, we see the nation looked upon as two sisters.

a). God takes action against the one sister (Israel, the northern kingdom) by giving her a writ of divorce, because of her refusal with regards to regality (her unfaithfulness). God gave this divorce to the northern kingdom to serve as a warning for Judah, the southern kingdom, for her to not act in the same manner as her “treacherous sister.” But such was not the case –

b). Jeremiah 3:6

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. 7 "And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 "Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. 9 "So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. 10 "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the LORD.

c). The refusal of Israel (the northern kingdom) to participate in God’s plans for the nation’s calling was seen by Judah (the southern kingdom) and copied – despite God’s rejection of her sister Israel. In Esther, this is exactly what Memucan sought to avoid as he advised the king to make the decree concerning Queen Vashti and her disobedient behavior.

d). And scripturally we see that God’s total rejection of an unrepentant nation resulted in the entire nation being in the place of death. God’s actions have been, are being, and will yet be abundantly clear to all who will have eyes to see.

6). Then if we go to Israel yet future, during the time of Jacob’s trouble as recorded in the Book of Revelation, we find this –

Revelation 14:1

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are

the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

a). The 144,000 mentioned here are made up of 12,000 Jews from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, who are saved during the ministry of the two witnesses in Jerusalem during the first 3 ½ years of Daniel's 70th week. The 144,000 are seen here completely apart from the nation's harlotry, which is why they are described as virgins. And they are the first fruit of the nation with respect to the nation's calling, awaiting the repentance of the nation as a whole.

b). Once Israel's harlotry is done away with and they are devoted to God in the same way as the 144,000, then they will appear in God's presence in a regal capacity on the 7th Day, within a correctly organized marriage relationship, no longer despising their Husband.

c). And this will have been brought to pass as a direct result of the action taken by God because of His wife's previous refusal. In this respect, the decree issued by Ahasuerus, depicting the action taken by God, has the desired effect.

7). Now, when we are talking about regality within a marriage relationship and the tension between faithfulness and unfaithfulness, it would be hard not to see application here for ourselves as Christians, as we see another woman called to regality in the 7th Day - the Bride of Christ.

a). As Christians, we should take note of the practical application for us presented here in this decree given to the unfaithful wife of the king, 'that Vashti shall come no more before king Ahasuerus.' This can be seen as a direct warning to those who would be the Bride - and subsequently the wife of Christ - not to despise their Husband as Vashti did.

b). Implicit in the decree itself is that a similar action would produce a similar consequence. And we do see Scripture teach us this explicitly in numerous other places.

8). Now on that same note, so that we have no confusion, let us remember that Esther is a Book that concerns Israel alone and the Church does not enter into that which is depicted in the Book. Although the events of Israel and the events of the Church are inextricably connected, the Book of Esther simply gives one facet of the picture, that of Israel alone. This is the same as the Book of Ruth, which gives us one facet of the picture, that of the faithful Christian alone.

a). Although we read that Vashti's royal position is to be , 'given to another better than she', this is not a reference to those who will be the Bride of Christ, but to a repentant and restored Israel – a subject we shall deal with in a subsequent study.

b). As just one example in this respect, please note that Esther is a Jew, whereas the Bride pictured for us in Ruth is a Gentile.

c). Although, as we have said, the Church does not appear within Esther, that depicted by Ahasuerus's decree and the implicit warning of its consequence can be brought over to the Bride of Christ as a secondary application. Scripture, as we know, is multi-layered, and teaches us to do this sort of thing.

9). Note the following scripture passage in respect of this very thing –

a). 1Corinthians 10:1

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

b). Our scripture here in 1 Corinthians is pretty clear – all that happened to Israel with respect to their refusal to embrace their regal calling are examples/types for us and are written to bring correction to us, upon whom the end of the ages have come.

c). Again the implication is abundantly obvious – if we follow the example set by Israel, if we follow Vashti despising her husband – the same outcome awaits us – we shall come no more into the King's presence during the 7th Day.

d). According to the scripture we should 'not lust after evil things as they also lusted', thereby becoming idolaters. The quotation given concerning this takes us back to the golden calf incident at Sinai, where a molded image was created that the nation of Israel called 'God' and worshipped as 'God', but it was not God.

c). And then look at what we find in -

2Peter 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;

d). Look at verse 3, "by covetousness they [the false teachers] will exploit you [those they are teaching] with deceptive words." The word "deceptive" is the Greek word - 'plastos', which means molded, i.e. artificial or (figuratively) fictitious (false).

And according to Colossians, covetousness (which is the reason behind these deceptive words these teachers are trying to teach) is equal to idolatry. And idolatry is equal to adultery.

i/ Colossians 3:5

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

e). What we see at Sinai is exactly what we see as a result of the work of the false teachers - they, through the 'molding' of words, have created something called 'God', and worshipped as 'God', but is not God. Because of this, the way of truth is blasphemed. And the result is idolatry.

f). Going back to the I Corinthians passage, notice verse 8 - "Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did..." As we have seen in past weeks, Israel's sexual immorality is to be seen in terms of the nations' assimilation into the Gentile nations around them ---- Taking as their own these nations' practices within the present world system under Satan.

g). And of course the same could be true for us if we choose to ignore the scriptures -

1John 2:15

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

And-

2Timothy 2:4

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

h). And again from I Corinthians 10:9 - "nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents..."

i). This takes us to Israel in the wilderness again -

Numbers 21:5

And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." 6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

j). This whole incident has to do with Israel's rejection of the manna in favor of something they considered more palatable. And from our perspective, we would have to see this relating to our attitude to the manna given to us, the Bread of Life - the Living Word through the written word, the word of the Kingdom on which we are to feast -

John 6:53

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

i/ Again, we go back to the false teachers who, within Christianity (because that is the context of our previous Peter passage) offer "cucumbers, leeks and onions" rather than that which is necessary to sustain life for the age to come -

2Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers...

ii/ We can add to the list of dangers to us: complacency, carelessness with the Word, and presumption. These are just as dangerous as the deceptive words of the false teachers –

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,

k). And then take note of 1Corinthians 10:10, “nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”

l). Israel complained almost incessantly from the time of their deliverance from Egypt onwards, so obviously complaining is not looked upon with favor. There is, however, one complaint that we should take particular note of within our present context –

Numbers 14:2

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness"!

m). It is the complaining that comes at their refusal to enter the Land of Promise at Kadesh Barnea – a complaining that denotes their unbelief, unfaithfulness and lack of trust in God. And please note that with respect to ourselves, this is something that we find an explicit warning about in the Book of Hebrews –

n). Hebrews 3:16

For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

o). We are warned that what happened to Israel can also happen to Kingdom believing Christians, if we should choose to follow Israel's example. God's rejection of unfaithful

Israel, as Ahasuerus's rejection of Vashti, is the warning for all those who would be a wife in a regal capacity NOT to despise their husband.

10). Now let's look in Romans at what is recorded concerning Israel and the Church -

Romans 11:16

For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

a). This really speaks for itself, doesn't it?

b). The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the wedding guest, and the parable of the dragnet all provide us with additional facets of the same picture – that of a warning. And so this is all underscored by the warnings that we find in the Book of Hebrews.

c). And then if we take this to the very conclusion of the matter, where the final form of the Church present on the earth at the time of the rapture appears before Christ at His Judgment Seat (with a view to regality and marriage), represented in scripture by the church of Laodicea, we find the same thing again -

Revelation 3:14

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- 18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 "Behold, I stand at the door and

knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""

d). We see here the Church (in a general sense) in a completely lukewarm condition with respect to its heavenly calling. There is complete indifference to the prophetic word concerning the 7th Day – and as such this would parallel Israel's unfaithfulness, and by extension, Vashti's refusal to appear before the king wearing her royal crown.

e). The only solution to indifference is repentance – to turn away from an attitude of despising the One who would be our Husband and to hear His voice and be obedient to His commands, thus placing ourselves within the correct scriptural perspective for marriage.

f). If the correct perspective is embraced, then the promise is given in verse 21 –

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

g). If not, then that Christian will have been overcome rather than having been an overcomer, and will experience the same outcome as Israel in the past, and like Vashti, will not be allowed before the king and will not wear a royal crown during the 7th Day.