

The Book of Esther – Part Three

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

1). In the past two weeks of our study, we have established the historical setting for the events in Esther.

a). We have seen that Esther is set during the time of the nation of Israel's captivity while under the rule of the Gentiles, specifically King Ahasuerus/Xerxes of the Medo-Persian kingdom. Within this there is a particular reference to the southern two tribes of Judah.

1Chronicles 6:15

Jehozadak went into captivity when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem into captivity by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

i/ The northern ten tribes had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians slightly over one hundred years before Judah.

b). Remember that the Babylonian empire had been replaced by that of the Medes and Persians in the days of Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar –

c). Daniel 5:30

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

d). This Medo-Persian empire is represented by the second part of Daniel's image, in Daniel Chapter 2 – the chest and arms of silver –

Daniel 2:38

"and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all-you are this head of gold. 39 "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours..."

e). We can also know, historically that the events in Esther take place some 1000 years after Israel's deliverance from Egypt under Moses, placing them at a midway point between that pictured by the actions of Moses and the fulfillment of that picture by the One greater than Moses leading into the Millennial Kingdom.

f). And again, the events in Esther occur some 700 years after the events recorded in Ruth – not an insignificant number.

2). And we have also established the Book of Esther's scriptural context within the overall scope of the prophetic word.

a). We have seen that the events in Esther present (in type) the complete history of Israel: from their calling, to their being set aside, to their restoration. The Book of Esther focuses primarily on the events that will occur during Daniel's seventieth week –

Daniel 9:24

"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

b). We also studied the four parts of Daniel's image, and how the events of Esther can be seen from additional perspectives in Exodus, Ruth, Daniel and Revelation – to mention just a few.

3). So as we now come to our study of the Book itself, let's just spend a moment familiarizing ourselves with the way the Book is structured. And this is particularly helpful for us to understand because this structure is quite common in scripture. Understanding this will help us understand many other portions of scripture as well.

a). Basically what we see is that in the first two chapters of Esther the complete panoramic picture of the subject of the Book is presented.

b). To sum up quickly, we have in Chapter 1 the making of a feast by the King, in relation to a period of 7 days, and we have a call for the queen to attend this feast on the 7th day. The queen refuses to attend this feast.

c). Her refusal to attend His feast brings the King's anger and resulting judgment, whereby Queen Vashti is rejected as queen.

d). Then in Chapter 2 a search is made for someone to replace Vashti and become queen in her place. Esther, a Jew, is the one chosen and she ascends to a position of regality with the King.

e). And to complete the picture, at the end of Chapter 2, we find Esther's cousin, Mordecai sitting in the King's gate.

f). We see in these two opening chapters the complete presentation of the history of Israel – from Israel’s calling, to her being set aside, to her restoration and exultation.

g). The remaining Chapters, 3-10, then go back to give commentary on that which is presented in skeletal form in the first two chapters.

4). And, as we have said, this is a means of presenting the details of scripture that God has used time and again.

a). The first and simplest place to see this is in Genesis Chapter 1 in connection with the creation of the Man and the Woman.

b). In Chapter 1 this statement is made –

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

c). Then in Chapter 2, God drops back to give commentary on that stated in Chapter 1-

d). Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

e). Genesis 2:21

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

f). And this structure of a skeletal framework followed by the giving of details to fill in the skeletal framework can be seen in a more general sense in the opening details of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3. These verses form the foundation on which the whole of the rest of scripture gives commentary: God takes 6 days followed by a 7th day of rest when He restores His ruined creations.

i). Revelation Chapter 12 provides another excellent example of this structure. The first 6 verses of this chapter give us the complete sequence of events, and then verses 7-17 provide the commentary for what has already been said. Let’s look at it –

Firstly the complete sequence of events –

Revelation 12:1

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

j). And now the commentary –

(remember, what we are about to read provides the details for that which we have just read – keep that in mind as we look at it) –

Revelation 12:7

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 ¶ "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with

the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

k). And as we have said, this is exactly the way things are presented in the Book of Esther.

4). Esther 1:1

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, 3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants-the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him- 4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all. 5 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

a). Chapter 1 of Esther begins with the ruler of the world empire of that day, Ahasuerus, engaged in certain activities in connection with his position of rulership.

b). We note in verse 2 that he 'sat on the throne of his kingdom.' Whilst in this position 'he made a feast' [verse 3] and he 'showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty.'

c). And all of this happens in relation to specifically set times - 'the third year of his reign' [veres 3]; 'one hundred and eighty days' = 6 months [verse 4]; and 'seven days' [verse 5]

d). I am sure the numbers here are not lost on us.

e). And then, in connection with the conclusion of these events of the feast, we this -

Esther 1:10

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.

f). Notice the timing of this? 'On the seventh day.' It is on the seventh day that the King summons Queen Vashti to come before the King, 'wearing her royal crown' in order that the King could 'show her beauty to the people and the officials'.

g). And note that the command to come into the King's presence is given by the 'seven eunuchs' who served in his presence.

5). Then following the issue of the command with regards to the seventh day we have Vashti's response -

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.

a). All events, pictured through times associated with the numbers 3, 6 and 7, are moving to a concluding point on the seventh day when the wife of the King, wearing her royal crown, is to be presented to all in her position of regality.

b). But the Queen refuses to come.

6). And we see in verse 12 that 'the king was furious, and his anger burned within him'.

a). And this refusal of the queen to appear in the King's presence at the concluding point to which all else is moving *had to be addressed* -

Esther 1:13

Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, 14 those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked highest in the kingdom): 15 "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?"

b). We will note that the king consults 'the seven princes of Persia and Media' - those who are closest to him 'who knew law and justice'.

c). And Memucan, who speaks on their behalf, points out something very interesting -

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. 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.

d). Not only did Vashti's actions wrong the King, but also wronged all the princes and all the people of the King's provinces.

e). And the concern is that her behavior will cause all the other women in the King's provinces to behave in a like manner towards their own husbands, resulting in 'excessive contempt and wrath'.

f). Now the implications of this are very interesting, but this is something that we will need to come back to at a later time.

g). So, in order to deal with Vashti and deal with the potential consequences of her actions within the King's provinces, the following action is taken -

Esther 1:19

"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.

h). Let's note what we just read. A 'royal decree' is to go out from the King which would be 'recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered,' determining that 'Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus,' and that the king will 'give her royal position to another who is better than she'.

i). And within the empire, as a result of the decree, 'all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small' [verse 20]

j). And 'each man should be master in his own house' [verse 22].

7). Within the type-antitype framework presented to us here in the first Chapter of Esther, we can see that the type of Ahasuerus has to do with God ruling over a particular province in His Kingdom, i.e. God ruling over the earth.

a). And within God's dealings with this province –dealing with the earth– His actions are connected to set periods of time...we would understand these in relation to 6 days, 7 days, 3 days and the 7th day itself. And we can see that all of God's actions and determinations move toward the concluding point of the 7th Day – the Millennial Kingdom.

b). This is the pattern laid out at the beginning of Genesis, and is the focus of all of scripture.

8). God's dealings with the earth have to do solely with issues of regality, specifically in connection with the replacement of the disqualified ruler Satan, with the being created specifically for that purpose – Man.

a). We need to always keep this in the forefront of our thinking so that we realize that God's calling of Israel (from the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob) has always been with a view to Israel appearing in His presence on the 7th Day in a position of regality. REPEAT.

b). Vasti, as Esther, is a type of Israel in this respect.

c). Israel, as well as the Church, is only going to find herself in a position of regality, exercising rulership over the earth, within the 7th Day *exclusively*.

d). And because regality and rulership within a husband / wife relationship as King and Queen is to be the end result of God's eternal plans and purposes –the very thing to which all human history irrevocably moves – God takes the attitude of those invited to be a part of it very seriously.

e). And we can surely see this in relation to God's dealings with Israel even to the present day.

9). Within the antitype, God has and is showing 'the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty' throughout the period of 6 days / 6000 years. This is all leading up to the Millennial Kingdom. This is, in the antitype of Ahasuerus doing the same thing over a period of 180 days, or 6 months –

Psalm 19:1

<<To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.>>

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

10). Within the framework of the 6 days / 6000 years, God waited for 2 days / 2000 years before working through Abraham, who was a descendant of Shem, the only one of Noah's sons with a God. And it would be through the lineage of this man that God would bless the nations of the earth -

Genesis 12:1

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 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). Genesis 21:12b.....for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

b). Then there is another 500 years before God begins to fulfill His promise to Abraham, through a nation that is his seed -

Exodus 6:2

And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. 3 "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. 4 "I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

c). And so, some 2500 years after the creation of Adam, during the days of Moses, the nation that comes from the seed of Abraham found itself in exactly the same place that it finds itself today -in a Gentile nation, Egypt (a type of the world) ruled over and persecuted by a Gentile power. And today Israel finds itself in the greater majority scattered amongst the Gentile nations of the world having continually, throughout history experienced persecution at the hands of those nations... with an even greater persecution to come during the time of Jacob's trouble.

d). But, as we have previously seen, it has always been God's intention that Israel would appear in His presence in a place of regality, in the 7th Day.

e). And this intention is of such a serious nature that God gave to Israel the sign of the Sabbath to always keep this before them. And within the Law of Moses, anyone who transgressed the Sabbath would be stoned to death.

11). God, through Moses, delivered Israel out of Egypt in order for them to dwell in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob within a theocracy. And this was done with the purpose of rulership.

a). Although the intention was for Israel to rule on the earth, at the time they would not have exercised regal authority within the present world system under Satan because Israel is not under the power of a fallen angel, as is the rest of the Gentile nations, but under Michael who is their prince -

Daniel 10:21

"But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

c). This is the same Michael we see fighting against Satan and his angels in Revelation Chapter 12.

d). Numbers 23:9

For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

e). And in order to fulfill this high calling God had adopted Israel as His firstborn son because only *firstborn* sons have the right to rule in their father's household-

Exodus 4:22

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

f). Within the land they were to be a holy nation and hold the ultimate position of honor at the head of the nations -

Exodus 19:5

'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

g). Not only do we see Israel presented as God's firstborn son, but also, in complete accord with rulership within a marriage relationship - a King and His queen - we see Israel as God's wife, adorned in regal splendor.

h). Ezekiel 16:7

"I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. 8 "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD. 9 "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. 10 "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. 12 "And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. 14 "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD.

i). This is exactly what we saw in the type in queen Vashti -

Esther 1:11

...to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.

j). And just as in the type where queen Vashti refused to appear before the King in the festivities connected to the 7th day, so Israel in the antitype. They refused to appear in God's presence in connection with the 7th Day, the Sabbath rest. This refusal took the form of unfaithfulness and disobedience, portrayed in scripture as harlotry.

k). Which is exactly what we see if we read a little further in Ezekiel -

Ezekiel 16:15

"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. 16 "You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be. 17 "You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them. 18 "You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. 19 "Also My food which I gave you-the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you-you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was," says the Lord GOD. 20 "Moreover you took your

sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, 21 "that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? 22 "And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood. 23 "Then it was so, after all your wickedness-'Woe, woe to you!' says the Lord GOD- 24 "that you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street. 25 "You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry.

12). Next week we will explore Israel's refusal a bit more fully, and we'll take a look at the consequences of that refusal.

a). Let me just leave you with a few verses from Esther to ponder -

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.'