

Vashti Refuses the King: Esther 1:10-22 Explained

Scriptures for Today:

***Esther 1:10-22** On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. 12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. 13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: 14 And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) 15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? 16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. 17 For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. 18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. 19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. 20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. 21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: 22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.*

Introduction

We are back in the book of Esther. This is an awesome book that is filled with amazing truths. This is a very exciting story and it's really fun to read. Way more exciting than any TV show or video game.

This book has 10 chapters and takes less than 30 minutes to read. Next time you're about to sit in front of the TV, instead, pull out your Bible and read through this entire book. You will gain so much more. You will actually add value to your life that will last forever.

In this book we see what true courage looks like. *(This world does not know what true courage is. For example, people will say when a man who thinks he is a woman comes out and says "I am no longer a man. I am now a woman" people call the courage. "She is so brave". That is not courage, that is called being deceived by satan and being lifted up with pride. Making yourself your own god. Despising your Creator.)*

True courage is standing for the truth. Standing for what's right in the eyes of God, no matter the consequences. We see that in this book. We see what happens when people are lifted up with pride. We also see God's providence and preservation at work.

It's important to understand where this Book of Esther falls within the Biblical timeline. Remember there are 66 books in the Bible. And what is the entire Bible about as a whole? It's about Jesus. Esther is the 17th book of the Bible, so let's think about what led up to this point.

Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus:

- Creation of all things. Fall of man. The promise of a coming Seed by which all nations will be blessed.
- The Passover and the great exodus of God's people being delivered out of Egypt.
- God's Law is presented to the people, revealing their iniquity and need for sacrifices as an atonement.

Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua:

- Israel wanders in the wilderness because of sin and unbelief.
- God still leads, and keeps His people.
- Joshua brings them into the promised land.

Judges, Ruth:

- Cycle of sin → bondage → deliverance → repeat.
- God keeps the promised line moving forward, even through famine, death, and uncertainty.

1 – 2 Samuel, 1 – 2 Kings, 1 – 2 Chronicles:

- Kings are established in Israel. Saul, David, Solomon.
- Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem, but his heart turns and idolatry spreads.
- The kingdom splits, and generations of kings lead the people **further from God**, while prophets warn and call for repentance.
- God brings judgment and captivity. Israel falls to **Assyria**, Judah falls to **Babylon**

Ezra, Nehemiah:

- After 70 years of captivity and desolation, Persia replaces Babylon as the world power and God allows a remnant of the Jews to return to Jerusalem.
- The temple is rebuilt, and later the walls are rebuilt (as we were studying in Nehemiah).
- **But not every Jew returned. Many stayed scattered throughout the Persian Empire.**

So that brings us to the book of Esther which fits in Chronologically after the temple is rebuilt in Ezra, but before the walls are rebuilt in Nehemiah.

This shows us what God was doing for His people that were still in exile—not in Jerusalem.

Recap of Esther 1:1-9

Last time we were in the book of Esther we covered chapter 1, verses 1 – 9

You can go back to the website and watch that sermon if you missed it. But let's do a quick recap of what we learned last time.

- The story opens in the Persian Empire under King Ahasuerus, ruling 127 provinces. This was **one of the greatest world empires of that time**—stretching from India to Ethiopia
- The King puts on a display of power and wealth. He hosts a major feast for his princes and nobles that lasts 6 months. Showing off the riches of the kingdom. All stemmed in pride and boastfulness.
- After that 6 month feast, he holds a second seven-day feast for all the people in the palace where they had the freedom to drink according to every man's pleasure. This was riotous living. Drinking wine in excess and indulging with no restraints.

At the same time we see Queen Vashti holds her own feast for the women in the royal house.

The king and queen were having their own parties. Here we see separation. There is no unity. Husband and wife are to be together and united in all things. But King Ahasuerus and Vashti were not together. The more you separate in your decisions, in your routines, in your everyday life, the easier it becomes for the devil to drive a wedge between you.

That's why in your life, God needs to be the foundation in your marriage. You must be unified in Jesus Christ. God's Word needs to be the final authority that determines everything in your relationships. That goes for relationships between Parents and children, husband and wife, employee and employer.

In every area of your life, God's Word should have the final say and you are to be together and unified in that.

All of these events so far have set the stage for what was about to take place in the next verses. Understand that God is able to take man, who is imperfect and immoral and still use him to accomplish His will.

Let's see what happens next in verses 10 – 22

Verses 10 – 11

Esther 1:10-11 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, **11** To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

So we see that this was the last day of the seven day feast that was declared earlier in verse 5. Remember everyone was drinking according to their own pleasure. As much as they wanted for an entire week.

At this point the king's heart was merry with wine. That means his judgment and decision making would be affected.

Proverbs 31:4-5 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: **5** Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

The Bible is very clear if you indulge in things like wine, and alcohol your judgment will be perverted. And that goes for a lot of things. Drinking tons of soda, caffeine, eating sugary foods. When you indulge in these things in excess, your heart is made merry, your mood is influenced by the things you put into your body. And it will lead you to make foolish or reckless decisions.

Notice what the king does in this merry state. He commands his seven chamberlains, who were basically royal officials who served in the king's household and carried out his personal commands. He tells them to go bring the queen before him so he can essentially show her off to the people and the princes. It says that she was "fair to look on". She had physical beauty.

And yes, it's good that the king recognized his wife's beauty, but the problem here is that he is objectifying her and using her as a trophy to display to everyone. Just like he had been doing with his kingdom for the past 6 months.

It would be like if I put my wife on display and invited other men to stare and gawk at her. That would be very foolish and disrespectful to her. And it would make her very uncomfortable. But that is what was about happen here...

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

If you objectify your wife and invite men to look at her, don't you think people are going to use that as an opportunity to covet and lust?

Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

I DO NOT want other men looking at or coveting after my wife. Just like Milana DOES NOT want other women looking at me. Milana belongs to me and I belong to Milana. We have righteous jealousy for each other because God made us one flesh. We belong to each other. There is no sharing in marriage. That is God's design. Marriage is between one man and one woman, for life. Not until you get tired and think there is something better out there for you.

So King Ahasuerus, being merry with wine, commands Queen Vashti to come before him so he can show off her beauty to the people and the princes. What happens next?

Verse 12

Esther 1:12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

I want you to notice something important here. Think about the order of how things are playing out. It starts with a prideful king who holds a feast to show off his kingdom. That leads to the king and others indulging and drinking wine in excess. Which leads to the king making perverted decisions and commands for his wife. Which leads to the Queen now defying his command.

Because of one man's pride, many people are caused to sin.

I have mentioned this before, but it shows you that the sin that you commit in your life today does not affect you alone. It ripples and affects everyone around you. Understand that when you sin, you can be causing others to sin in the future.

And yes, everyone is accountable for their own sins, but you don't want to be a stumbling block for others.

Verses 13 – 15

Esther 1:13-15 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: **14** And the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, *and* Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's

face, *and* which sat the first in the kingdom;) **15** What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

So king Ahasuerus is seeking council from these wise men which knew the times.

When it talks about men which **knew the times** you don't want to get that confused with observers of times. An Observer of times is someone who uses divination and enchantments.

These wise men that knew the times were not fortune tellers. They were seasoned advisers who understood what was happening in the empire, and how the people would react. So he turns to these men for advice on what to do regarding the queen not performing the commandment of the king.

Verses 16 – 20

Esther 1:16-20 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. **17** For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. **18** *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

So Memucan was bringing this concern to the king. He was worried that all the women throughout the entire empire would start to rebel. He was worried that the wives would despise their husbands after hearing that the queen disobeyed the king's command. They were afraid that there would be this uprising among the ladies and they would be filled with contempt and wrath.

Many people might equate this uprising of women to modern day feminism. When I refer to feminism I'm talking about what many people mean in conservative circles: a spirit and system that rejects God's created order in the home, treats male leadership as unnecessary or oppressive, and pushes independence and rivalry instead of submission, honor, and unity.

We know that God created men and women with equal worth, but with different roles.

- God created men to work and provide for their families. And to love and nourish their own wives and children.
- God created woman to be a helper to the man. To guide the home, teach their children, and be obedient to their own husbands in the Lord.

When Adam and Eve sinned, part of the curse and judgment that God gave them was that the woman's desire would be to her husband, and he will rule over her.

What that means is, because of sin, tension and power struggle was introduced into marriage. The woman would no longer be naturally content and happy with obeying and submitting... And the man would no longer naturally lead with love and gentleness...

So when people see this account in Esther—the fear that women would start to despise their husbands and rise up in rebellion because of Vashti’s actions—people might quickly conclude, “*That’s feminism.*”

But the Bible helps us to see deeper than that. This is not a modern movement being born in Persia. This is the result of the fall of man.

And I want you to notice something very important in this passage: This problem that is being presented to the king doesn't start with women uprising in the streets. It starts in the palace with a king who won't rule himself. It starts with a king who is merry with wine and driven by pride.

The problem that the men were afraid of, was a problem that they created themselves through lack of good leadership.

And yes, rebellion is a real thing, and it does happen. But the deeper problem is that sinful leadership provokes sinful reactions.

When men lead with selfishness, harshness, or hypocrisy, it creates an environment where women feel the need to resist and push back.

That's why the answer isn't simply "women need to stop rebelling". The answer is first and foremost: men must step up and lead like God commands us to lead — with love, kindness, and integrity.

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

We need to give our wives a reason to follow us. And wives it is your job to submit to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. And some might say "what if my husband isn't a good leader."

1 Peter 3:1-2 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; **2** While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

So when your husband is not leading the way he should, when he does not obey the Word of God, what are you still supposed to do? You still be in subjection so that he may be won by your conversation.

So I just wanted you to see that yes, Vashti disobeyed the command of the king.
And yes, there was a danger of the uprising of the women.
But ultimately all these things were a result of man's failure to lead properly.

Let's continue and see what solution the wise men come up with to deal with the issue at hand...

Esther 1:19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. **20** And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

So the solution that they come up with, is for Vashti to be banished from the presence of the king and to take away her royal estate and give it to another. Her status of queen would be stripped away.

So we see Genesis 3:16 being played out exactly how God described.

Vashti's desire was to her husband, she resisted his authority, and King Ahasuerus ruled over her with power, not with love.

Verses 21 – 22

Esther 1:21-22 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: **22** For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

Instead of going to his wife in meekness and love to figure out what was wrong, he despises her and casts her out as an example. That is not God's design, that is the result of sinful man.

God gives specific instructions in the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: **11** But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

The King saw Vashti's disobedience and essentially said "I'll just get another Queen"

So the letters were sent out throughout all the provinces that every man should bear rule in his own house. Should men rule their houses? Yes, but not as dictators. They should rule in meekness and in fear of the Lord. (Knowing God's commands to love and honor the wife.)

So let's summarize everything that has taken place:

- The king, merry with wine, orders Queen Vashti to be brought in so he can show her off.
- Vashti refuses, and the king becomes furious.
- He consults with his counselors about what to do.
- Memucan warns the refusal will spread and cause wives to disrespect their husbands.
- They recommend banishing Vashti and giving her position to another.
- The king sends a decree across the empire saying husbands should rule in their homes.

Application

1. Individual pride and sin lead to widespread consequences.

In this case, the result of one man's pride rippled throughout the entire empire. The same thing can happen in your life if you're not careful. You don't want to bring down the people around you because of your actions.

2. Worldly counsel will not bring peace.

When you seek advice from the wrong people it will lead to more problems. Seek Godly counsel. Where can you consistently receive Godly counsel every day? In the Word of God.

3. Honor and obedience cannot be forced.

The king and his counselors decided to use laws and power to command respect. True honor and obedience will come when a leader follows God's commands to love with gentleness and humility.

4. God still uses imperfect people and events to accomplish His will.

So even though this was a messy situation, God was still working. God never approves of sin. But He can take what man meant for pride, control, and shame, and turn it into the very setup for His plan.

In Esther 1 the banishing of Vashti and the king's decree look like human foolishness on the outside. But that decision becomes the doorway for Esther to enter the palace. Next time we are in this book, we will see those things begin to come to pass.

Let's Pray