

Esther: The Bible's Beauty and the Beast (part 1)

The Background:

1. What is the "antilogmena"?

- "Antilogmena" means "books **spoken against**" and speaks of the books of the Bible whose inspiration was questioned such as:
 - ✓ **Ecclesiastes** (due to its pessimistic nature)
 - ✓ **Song of Solomon** (due to its content on physical love)
 - ✓ **Ezekiel**
 - ✓ **Proverbs**
 - ✓ **Esther**

2. Why was the book of Esther part of this "antilogmena"?

- Esther is not **quoted** in the New Testament
- No part of Esther was found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**
- **Prayer** is never mentioned in the book of Esther
- Esther is the **only** Bible book that never mentions the name of **God**
 - ✓ **The name of God is never mentioned in the book and there is no title or pronoun referring to God in the book**
 - ✓ **Song of Solomon** does not mention the name of God either but does have at least one pronoun referring to Him
 - ✓ Though not mentioning God's name, the theme of the book is the **providential** care of God.
 - ✓ God's name may not be mentioned but his actions, thoughts, plans and **fingerprints** can be seen on every page

3. Who wrote the book of Esther?

- It may have been **Ezra**
- It may have been **Nehemiah**
- It may have been **Mordecai**
- It may have been a younger contemporary of Mordecai

4. Who was the book of Esther written to?

- The book fits in between **Ezra** chapters 6 and 7
- It was written to Jews who did not return after the **exile**

The Beauty: Esther 1:1-4

1. The **FEAST** of the King (1:1-9)

- The Persian King, Ahasuerus (Xerxes), who was in the 3rd year of his 21 year reign, put all of his **riches** on display for 180 days (v3-4)
- After 180 days, the king declared a **feast** lasting for 7 days (v4, v10)
 - ✓ The feast was open to all in his kingdom (v5)
 - ✓ No expense was spared and drinking was abundant (v6-8)
 - ✓ Queen Vashti held a banquet for the women (v9)

➤ **Vashti means "the best"; She was beautiful (1:11)**

2. 1:5-6; 1:7-; 1:10-12- The **FAILURE** of the Queen

- ✓ On the final day of the feast, the drunken king sends for his **queen** with her royal crown to show off her beauty (v10-11)
- ✓ The queen **refuses** the command, greatly angering the king (v12)
 - Her motive for refusing the king was probably not pride but fear knowing the drunken state of all of the men
 - Some commentators suggest the King wanted her to come without clothes (only wearing her royal crown)
- ✓ **1:13-15; 1:16-18 The king seeks council as to what to do**
 - The issue in question was what to do with the Queen (v15)
 - Mermucan, one of the king's legal advisors, shows the severity of the queen's actions saying that all women will despise their husbands after learning of her disobedience
- ✓ **1:19-21 - The king deposes Vashti of her royal estate**
 - This being written in the law of the Medes and Persians meant that it could not be changed
 - It is obvious that the intent of the advisors was to enhance their own positions as husbands
 - The **Divine working** behind this is seen in the words, "**And let the king give her royal position to another...**" (v19)