

Esther: The Bible's Beauty and the Beast (part 2)

A. 2:1-4 - The CONTEST of the King

- “After these things” suggests a **four** year period in between chapters 1 and 2 during which King Xerxes had been severely beaten trying to invade Greece (v1)
 - ✓ 1:3 = The third year of the king’s reign
 - ✓ 2:16 = The seventh year of the king’s reign
- The king **remembering** Vashti shows his having second thoughts in the decision he had made (v1)
- His advisors planned for all the **finest** young virgins (unmarried women) to be taken before the king and given extensive beauty treatments so he could pick one as his queen (v2-4)

B. 2:5-7 - The CAPTIVE of the King (2:5-11)

- We are now introduced to **Mordecai**, a Jew whose family had been brought into captivity under King Nebuchadnezzar (v5-6)
- Mordecai had raised his younger **orphan** cousin (v7)
 - ✓ Her Hebrew name was Hadasah and her Persian name was Esther, meaning “star”
 - ✓ She was extremely beautiful (v7)
- **2:8-9** - **Esther was selected as one of the virgins** to appear before the king and was put in charge of a eunuch named Hegai
 - ✓ The words “was taken” in 2:8 suggest a reluctance on her part (can be translated “taken by force”)
 - ✓ Esther found grace in the eyes of Hegai (much like Joseph did in prison) and was given seven maidens to wait on her (literally reads, “she lifted up grace before his face”)
 - ✓ This was due to the work of God behind the scenes
- **2:10-11** - Upon Mordecai’s advice, Esther was teachable and obedient and did not **reveal** her Jewish heritage (v10)

C. 2:12-14; 2:15-16 - The CHOICE of the King (2:12-18)

- After a 12-month purification process, each virgin (Josephus says up to 400 women were involved) was given whatever she requested to **wear** and spent the evening with the king (v12-14)
- When it came Esther’s turn to be with the king, she requested **nothing** but what was given to her by Hegai (v15-16)
- It appears that upon their first meeting the king falls in **love** with Esther and instantly makes her his queen, declaring a holiday and a feast to be held in her honor (**v17-18**)

D. 2:19-22 - The CHALLENGE to the King (2:19-23)

- Even as Queen of Persia, Esther still **listened** to the advice of Mordecai (v19-20)
- At his position as a gate-keeper, Mordecai hears of a plot to **kill** the king and he warns Esther of what he has learned (v21-22)
- The plot is found to be true and the culprits are **executed** [gallows equals pole...they were most likely impaled] (v23)
- The full events, including Mordecai’s saving of the king’s life, were recorded in writing (which will play a large role later - sometimes events that seem insignificant can turn the entire course of a person’s life) [**v23**]

E. 3:1-3; 3:4-6 - The COUNCIL to the King (3:1-6)

- “After these events” = **five** more years pass between chapters 2 and 3 (12th year, v7)
- **Haman is promoted to second highest position in the land**
- The position carried a decree from the king that all who passed Haman must **bow** down before him (an act of worship, v2)
- Mordecai **refused** to bow before Haman because as a Jew, Mordecai only worshipped the God of Israel (v2-4)
- Mordecai’s refusal **angered** Haman to the point of wanting to kill every Jew in the land (v6) [**Haman is an Agagite coming from the descendants of Agag, king of the Amalekites, that Saul failed to kill as God commanded (1 Sam 15:1-3) [15:5-9]**]