

Message #5

Esther 2:12-18

Typically speaking, nations that are physically oriented are not truly spiritually oriented. There seems to be a distinct connection to a focus on the physical as opposed to a focus on the spiritual. Those who get all caught up with a focus on the physical are not those with a focus on God.

The more we focus on the temporal and the physical, the further we move away from God.

The Persian Empire was not dedicated to a righteous worship of God. King Ahasuerus was a man who loved wine and women. His exploits are legendary. He brought the most beautiful women in the world to Susa, and one by one, night after night, he indulged himself in sensual pleasures that are certainly anti-righteous and anti-God.

Certainly there is nothing about this part of the story that is heroic or God-honoring. Yet God was still sovereignly in this story working out a remarkable plan in order to care for His people.

EVEN WHEN A BELIEVER HAS NOT OBEYED GOD AND FINDS HIMSELF IN COMPROMISING SITUATIONS, WHICH DO NOT PLEASE GOD, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN AND HE WILL ALWAYS WORK OUT HIS PROGRAM IN ORDER TO CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Esther is clearly a book that features the “triumph of God’s sovereignty.”

SEGMENT #1 – The preparation of the women. 2:12-13

The Persian world is known for its cosmetics and cosmetic treatment of women. Joyce Baldwin says, “Persia and India, together with Arabia, were famous for their aromatic perfumes which they exported...” (Joyce Baldwin, *Esther*, p. 68).

Each virgin spent six months bathing in oils and another six months being fumigated with perfumes. Just before she was to appear before the king, she was given anything she wanted or needed, which would have included access to beautiful clothing and jewelry.

Every woman was given a full year to beautify herself for the king.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee observed that pagan cultures always place a major emphasis on physical beauty. In fact, he said several years before he died in 1988 that the further America gets away from God, the more emphasis we will see on the physical and the more we will see counters in stores filled with cosmetics and beauty aids (J. Vernon McGee, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, p. 195).

Some have argued that the book of Esther supports the idea that God is favorable to beauty pageants. It is the conclusion of me and other commentators that beauty pageants which feature a great deal of emphasis on the cosmetic and the physical, are strictly of pagan origin and are not biblical.

God, in His amazing grace will use Esther to spare His people; but to assume from this that God sanctions beauty pageants is a gross misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Word of God, which is clearly supported by the Apostle Peter (I Pet. 3:2-5), who specifically names Sarah, who was one of the most beautiful women in the world.

SEGMENT #2 – The procedure of the king.

Every night a new virgin would go in and be with the king. As Roberts says, no doubt she was providing “sexual favors” for him (Mark Roberts, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, p. 354).

If the woman “delighted” the king, she would be summoned to go be with him again. If she didn’t, she would spend her time waiting as nothing more than another used concubine. The compensation for spending the night with the king was being able to live in his palace. Truth is for most, he didn’t remember their name.

The lure of luxury and wealth can cause many a person to sell out their morals and sell out their God. Many a young lady and many a young man have lowered their standards to have a chance at fame and fortune.

SETMENT #3 – The presentation of Esther. **2:15-16**

In **verse 15**, we learn the name of Esther’s father, Abihail.

Hegai was the chief eunuch in charge of all these women (2:3, 8). He was particularly favorable in his perspective of Esther (2:9). Esther consulted with Hegai before she went to appear before the king. Esther had her own beauty, which found the favor in the eyes of all who saw her. She apparently did not need much makeup, expensive clothing or jewelry to be beautiful. Hegai, having supplied hundreds of women for the king certainly knew his likes and dislikes, and he apparently advised Esther to appear just as she was.

Verse 16 informs us that Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus in the tenth month of the seventh year of his reign. What this means is the king had been looking for a new queen for at least four years. One commentator writes: “It is likely that Ahasuerus consorted with over 1,000 virgins prior to his meeting with Esther” (Mark Roberts, p. 355). From a human standpoint, she was just another in a line of many. But from a sovereign standpoint, she was the one God wanted in power so that He could protect and preserve His people.

SEGMENT #4 – The promotion of Esther. **2:17-18**

God does not tell us what Esther said or did the night she spent with the king, but **verse 17** does tell us she won. King Ahasuerus loved Esther more than all the women he had previously been with and he crowned her the new queen.

Chapters 1-2 introduce us to pagan banquets, drunken parties, lustful desires and an orgy-type atmosphere. It is the last place you would ever expect to find God working out His providential plan. But this is exactly where God was working out His will and He turned people's minds to favor His chosen instrument, Esther.

He made a national holiday for all 127 provinces and gave all the people some type of financial gift. (Herodotus says one king gave the people three years exemption from taxes and military service.)

It also seems that Mordecai may have been promoted at this time, for in **verse 19** we find him sitting at the king's gate, which would be a place of high honor and privilege.

There is no question that Mordecai and Esther had compromised their testimonies and themselves. They were living in a foreign land rather than in Jerusalem. They were not witnessing or testifying of their nationality or their relationship with God (2:10). They were in attendance at pagan parties which featured heavy drinking and immorality. Esther had entered a pagan, immoral pageant which cost her, her virginity. The story is, in many ways, the story of a believer not obeying the righteous Word or will of God. But God was still behind the scenes carefully watching, monitoring and controlling all things, moving and directing according to His sovereign plan.

If the book of Esther is designed to teach us anything at all, it is designed to teach us that God is always sovereignly working out His program no matter how wild or bizarre the circumstances or leadership. God is God. He will accomplish His will and for His name's sake, He will preserve His people.