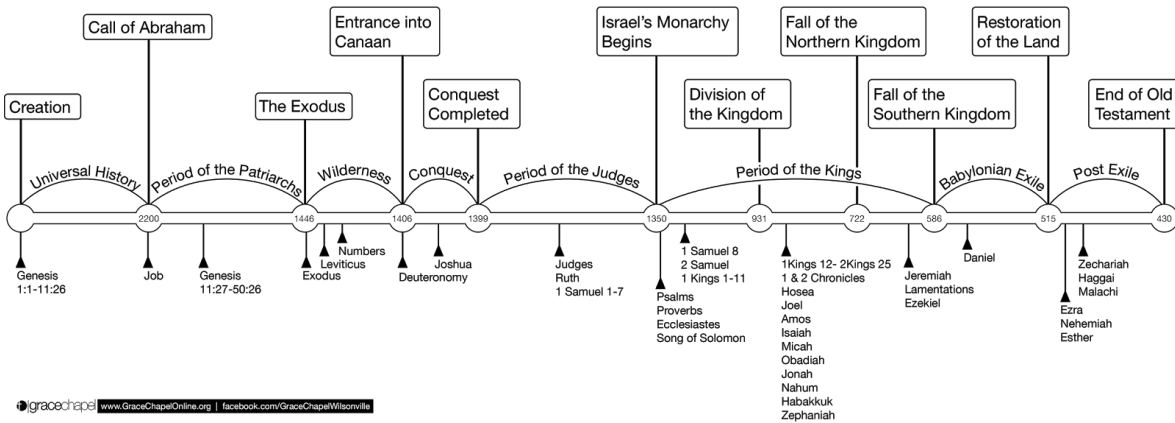




**Who Has Power?
Esther 1:1-12**

- Takes place in the Persian Empire. Esther becomes queen around 480 B.C.
- Main characters: Vashti, Esther, King Ahasuerus (Xerxes 1), Mordecai.

OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE



History:

- Post Exile Period.
- Esther is the last of the historical books of the Bible.
- King Ahasuerus: well known to history, more commonly under the name Xerxes. Inherited the vast Persian Empire from his father, Darius I (Ezra 4:24, 5:5-7, 6:1-15; Daniel 6:1 and 6:25; Haggai 1:15 and 2:10).
- Israel is in exile because of punishment.

What can we learn from this story today?

- God, who is not named, moves through plots, wickedness, as well as selfish and pompous people to accomplish His will.

Esther 1:1-2 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel,

- Ahasuerus was planning for a doomed invasion of Greece, which would take place several years later.
- The Persian Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonians, which had replaced Assyria as the dominant world power.



- In 40 years, under the successor of Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes I--Vashti's son), Nehemiah would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.

Esther 1:3-9 In the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. 5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. 7 Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. 8 And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. 9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

Three feasts given:

- First: For all government officials and servants. 180 days, but not each of those days. Bragging and showing off.
- Second: 7 days for everyone in the capital of Susa. Show of pride.

Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them."

- Normally you drank only if the King drank. The King relaxes the rule for this party.
- Third: Queen Vashti gives a feast for the palace women.

Power corrupts. Absolutely.

- No mention of God.
- God in his sovereignty will bring it to an end.

Esther 1:10-12 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

- The king is drunk.
- It is implied that the King wanted her to dance suggestively, improperly, perhaps unclothed.
- Vashti is not a believer, but has enough sense of modesty to not come and undignify herself in front of a bunch of drunk men.

What will the book of Esther teach us?

Power comes from God, and is to be used for God.

- Power has always been given, and man can and does greatly misuse it.
- Rabbinical literature says of Xerxes, "He was wicked from the beginning to the end of his reign."
- Mordecai: prominent in rank, able to care for his people.

Trust God in His distribution of power and wealth.

Psalms 73:3-6 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have

no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.

- Is this you? “God, why do the wicked (my boss/neighbor/sorority sister...) prosper? And I don't?”

Psalms 73:27-28 For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God. I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

Our God takes care of His own!

- God is sovereign over all.

Ezra 4:6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

- Man cannot stop Almighty God in His declaration of His glory and His protection of His people!

Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many should be kept alive, as they are today.