

The Decadence of the King

Esther 1: 1-9

The opening chapter of Esther reveals the ungodly condition of the society in which God's people were dwelling. It was a culture that possessed and promoted unbridled lusts and insatiable appetites. The people within Media and Persia had one goal in life: satisfy the flesh at all costs.

This is the environment Esther, Mordecai, and the Jewish captives found themselves trying to survive and maintain their devotion to God. It is from such an environment that God would prove Himself mighty in their midst, preserving them against unmeasurable odds. Although the culture was contrary to a godly lifestyle, the Lord enabled His people to flourish.

As we examine our text today, you will discover many similarities to the modern culture within America. While we are forced to live within the world, we must remember that we are not of the world. We must resist the urges promoted by society, strive to maintain spiritual purity, while leaning on the Lord for strength and guidance. The Jews would have never survived their captivity apart from the divine provision of God. We stand in desperate need of His grace and power today. As we will discover as we move through this precious book, we do not have to conform to the dictates of society. Just as God provided the means of escape from our bondage in sin prior to salvation, He continues to provide the means of escape from the temptations we face.

Let's consider the [details](#) of the text as we think on: [The Decadence of the King](#).

I. The Authority of Ahasuerus (1-2) – Here we have information regarding the reign of the king. Notice:

A. His Dominion (1) – [Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, \(this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:\)](#) Ahasuerus reigned over a vast kingdom, totaling 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. The palace was located in Shushan, located 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, 250 miles east of ancient Babylon and 275 miles southeast of Baghdad, in modern day Iran. There were other palaces, but this was the primary palace and residence for the king.

- Ruling such a vast empire, covering such a large geographic area, Ahasuerus had dominion and influence over countless people. Their lives were influenced and dictated by his desires. He ruled over much of the known world. The enemy stands as the god of this world, dominating and influencing the lives of billions today.

B. His Dynasty – These verses don't specifically mention the dynasty of which Ahasuerus was a part, but he stood among a long line of kings. His grandfather was King Cyrus (550-530 BC,) who conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, [Ezra 1:1-4](#). His father, King Darius reigned from 520-486 BC. Ahasuerus reigned from 486-465 BC, followed by his son, King Artaxerxes, who reigned during the days of Nehemiah from 465-425 BC. The family of Ahasuerus enjoyed a long reign in Persia.

II. The Agenda of Ahasuerus (3-4) – These verses describe the great feast Ahasuerus held in Shushan for all the princes, servants, and nobles. The feast was held fairly early in the reign of Ahasuerus, during his third year as king. This was not just a good will gesture by the king for his servants; Ahasuerus had an agenda for this feast. It was:

A. Prompted by Arrogance (4) – [When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days](#). Being lifted up with pride, Ahasuerus called the princes and nobles from all the provinces to show off the great wealth and riches the family dynasty had amassed. He desired their recognition and submission as the excellent majesty of the kingdom. Unlike his father and grandfather, it appears Ahasuerus was more interested in promoting himself and receiving the praise of men than helping those within the kingdom. He sought to make a name for himself among the rulers of the world.

- Sadly, much of the suffering and mistreatment of people within the world today is the result of arrogance. Many are more interested in promoting themselves and their agenda than helping others in need. We live in an arrogant, self-centered society that cares little for the needs of others. This is one of the great characteristics of the enemy. His fall was the result of pride and arrogance, desiring to be like God and receive the worship He alone was worthy of. Christ our Lord came to earth as the eternal God-Man. If anyone deserved to be worshiped and treated as royalty, He did. He was despised and rejected of His own, and yet He set the example of humility and service for all to follow. He willingly went to the cross, bearing the sin of the world, and enduring the righteous judgment He did not deserve. Those who deny Christ and walk according to the flesh are often filled with pride and arrogance.

B. Presented for Allegiance – Ahasuerus appears to have another motive for the great feast as well; one that went beyond his desire for recognition through pride. Historians tell us that Ahasuerus wanted to invade Greece, seeking to expand the kingdom even further. This was largely unpopular because his father had tried unsuccessfully to do the same years earlier. They believe Ahasuerus was seeking to build a coalition of support for his invasion.

- The wicked of this world who promote a secular agenda are never satisfied. The enemy seeks to deceive and destroy all he can. Those who support his agenda are constantly seeking those whom they can conquer and force to submit to their ideology. We face a determined adversary whose ranks are increasing day by day. The wicked continue to grow in number and the righteous continue to decline. This should come as no surprise. Paul spoke of a great “falling away” as we near the return of our Lord.

III. The Appetites of Ahasuerus (5-9) – In our closing verses, we discover the insatiable appetites of Ahasuerus and those who attended his feast. Consider:

A. The Display (5-6) – Those who were called to the feast were not asked to stay in meager accommodations. Ahasuerus hosted them at the palace, with all the finest tapestries and pleasures it offered. He brought them into a place that appealed to the flesh and the lusts of the eyes.

- The enemy has appealed to the fleshly appetites of humanity since the fall of Adam and Eve. He tempted her with the fruit. David fell due to the lust of the eyes and the flesh. Satan tempted our Lord with the same approach, although he was unsuccessful. He has not changed in our day. The enemy continues to offer that which appeals to the flesh in an effort to draw us away from the Lord. Human nature craves that which appeals to the flesh and the pleasure it brings.

B. The Duration (4-5) – The people enjoyed a week long finale, but this all began six months earlier. Ahasuerus was determined to appeal to the desires of the princes and nobles. He didn't offer a sampling of pleasure; he offered a six month escapade of pleasure, culminated by a week-long sensual finale. He knew the longer he kept them indulged in pleasure, the more likely he was to influence their decisions.

- Is that not how the enemy operates today? How many lives have suffered ruin, only to afterward admit they never intended for things to get so out of hand? They never intended to get addicted to their vices and pleasures, but the enemy kept it readily available. He drew them in subtly and consistently, until he had dominated their senses and self-control. It is always dangerous to dabble in sin. It will grab you and pull you in, taking you farther than you ever intended to go, keeping you much longer than you ever intended to stay, and cost you much more than you wanted to pay!

C. The Depravity (6-8) – Here we discover the decadence provided and promoted by Ahasuerus, leading to utter depravity. He promoted and provided:

- **Immorality (6b)** – *the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.* It is evident that Ahasuerus promoted promiscuity, providing an elaborate setting in which to indulge their sinful desires. This has been one of the most favored tactics of the enemy throughout history and it continues to dominate society, ruining countless homes and marriages.
- **Indulgence (7)** – *And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.* Ahasuerus didn't just encourage wholesale drunkenness, he provided the wine for them to drink in abundance. This was just another avenue to appeal to the flesh and gain the favor of the princes. Along with immorality, alcohol and drug indulgence have permeated our society. It is encouraged and promoted on a large scale. People are told to drink responsibly, but never encouraged to leave it alone. I have never known any good to come from the sale and consumption of alcohol. It is another tool of the enemy to destroy and devastate lives, often affecting the innocent.
- **Indiscretion (8)** – *And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.* There was no restraint within this drunken debauchery. The king encouraged them to fulfill their pleasures according to every man's desire. Nothing was considered off limits, or unacceptable. Have we not reached that place in America? If anyone dares to question the actions of another, he is condemned as being intolerant and judgmental. We are taught to believe that everything is acceptable now and we must embrace any type of behavior lest we offend someone. It is clearly accepted practice in modern society, but it is not pleasing to the Lord and He will have the final say. Those who deny Him and strive only to please the flesh will stand before the holy God in judgment. I pray the church remains strong in such wholesale immortality and indulgence.

D. The Disgrace (9) – *Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.* History teaches that Persian men and women did not associate together in public. Vashti was given a place in the royal house for the women to eat, drink, and party inside while the men did outside. This reveals the disgraceful environment Ahasuerus promoted. He should have provided a godly example for his wife and the other women, but his actions promoted indulgence among the women as well.

- Overall women typically practice more restraint than men. They usually hold out longer when it comes to sin and indulgence. You can tell a lot about a culture by the way women carry themselves. I hate to admit it, but we are seeing an increasing number of women initiating

immorality and sinful practices in American culture. This points to a dramatic failure in the leadership and example the men are setting. May God have mercy on us!

Conclusion: We may not like to admit it, but the verses we've discussed resemble the current culture in America. All have not abandoned the Lord, having denied the faith, but a large percentage have. We need an awakening among the church that will stir our hearts to live righteously, setting a godly example, while striving to reach those who are apart from Christ.

Thankfully, as we will see, God still has some Esther's and Mordecai's for such a day as this. I pray we will remain strong and committed to the cause of Christ. He alone is our help and our hope. If there are needs in your life, seek the Lord. He is willing and able to provide for your need.