

The Defiance of the Queen

Esther 1: 10-22

As we consider our text today, we must do so in light of the preceding verses. King Ahasuerus had thrown a six month long party, culminating with a seven day finale. He had provided an elaborate escapade for all the princes and servants within the provinces, complete with all the flesh could desire. As the week long finale came to a close, the king made an unusual and demanding request of the queen. Her response will infuriate the king and lead to her demise as queen over the kingdom.

While the characters and events of this passage are far removed from us in time, the attitudes and expectations of many remain the same. Many today are influenced by the passions of the flesh and ignore common sense and decency in regard to their actions and decisions. While the actions of Ahasuerus were not beyond the sovereignty of God, we can in no way insinuate they were pleasing to the Lord. Our world is filled with those who live and behave much like Ahasuerus. They are determined to have their way, satisfying their desires, regardless of the cost or embarrassment to others. There is little, if any desire to please the Lord or live in light of His holiness. Most live with one goal in mind: satisfying their own desires.

Let's examine the [factors](#) involved in this tragic situation as we consider: [The Defiance of the Queen](#).

I. The Command of Ahasuerus (10-12) – As the drunken party comes to a close, Ahasuerus makes a controversial and undesirable request. Notice:

A. The Setting (10) – The text reveals that Ahasuerus and those around him were not in a proper frame of mind. Their state of existence had been altered by the consumption of alcohol. We must also bear in mind, this was not just one night of casual drinking. The king and those with him had been partying together for six months. During that time they had indulged the flesh and had grown accustomed to continual pleasure. This is a dangerous setting that lends itself to a disastrous end.

- As we discussed last week, I have never known alcohol or other mind altering drugs to have a positive influence on individuals or society. Strong drink and intoxicating substances lead people to actions they would otherwise avoid. When one combines the effects of these substances with continual pleasure, tragedy is often the result.

B. The Summons (11) – To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. The drunken state of Ahasuerus caused him to make an unusual and degrading request. He summoned his wife, queen Vashti, to come before the princes so they might look upon her beauty. Most scholars agree that he desired her to appear unclothed before a gathering of drunk men.

- Not taking into consideration moral decency, common sense would discourage such activity. What man in his right mind would want to parade his wife before others in a provocative and lustful manner? This was also contrary to the accepted customs of the day. Their society did not approve of such behavior, and yet Ahasuerus was determined to impress his guests, even at the expense of his wife's dignity.
- This is the kind of activity drunkenness and debauchery promotes. I know we don't like to discuss it, but we live in a "sex crazed" society. Common morality and decency are no longer promoted by many in main stream society. Clearly such behavior is displeasing to the Lord.

C. The Scandal (12) – But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. We don't know a lot about Vashti, but one must admire her determination here. Surely she was aware of the impending consequences of her refusal to obey the king's command, and yet she chose to do the right thing regardless of his command. Her refusal infuriated the king.

- We must do as Vashti and determine to maintain a godly lifestyle in the face of a depraved culture. Society promotes such immorality and scoffs at our refusal to participate, but we must seek to maintain purity before the Lord. He purchased our redemption on the cross. We have been bought with a price and no longer have the right to live as we please. We have been brought out of the life of sin and are expected to live in light of the righteousness of Christ.
- Many are like Ahasuerus. He should have been ashamed and remorseful for such a sinful and demeaning request, but he wasn't. Instead, he was angered at the queen for refusing his request. He blamed her for the situation instead of seeing the iniquity within his own heart.

II. The Concern of Ahasuerus (13-15) – Here we discover the concern the king had. Tragically his concern was not for the reputation or integrity of his wife. Consider:

A. The Customs (13) – Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment. The king discussed the matter with those who were

familiar with the laws and customs of the day. He was more concerned with adhering to the accepted customs and expectations of the day than providing for his wife.

- Sadly that is true of many today. They are more concerned with how they are perceived by society than doing what is right in the eyes of God. They had rather abandon truth and right than be viewed as out of step with accepted culture. Many today are much more concerned with fitting in with the world than living for the Lord and preparing for the life to come.

B. The Counselors (14) – The king spoke with his trusted advisors in regard to this matter. The king needed these men to support his agenda if his desires for the kingdom were to be fulfilled. He sought counsel from the wise men of the day, but there is no mention of anyone seeking the Lord or biblical counsel in regard to the matter.

- Again, modern society operates much the same way. Most are uninterested in biblical counsel, and seek out those who will tell them what they wish to hear. The majority looks to secular sources when it comes to making important decisions. They seek counsel from those with a like mind and attitude.

C. The Challenge (15) – [What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?](#) Although he knew this was an improper command, the king was determined to have his way. He had to “save face” in front of those he sought to impress. He could have done the right thing and admitted he should never have made such a request, but that would have been viewed as weakness. He was determined to achieve his goals and aspirations regardless of the cost to others.

- Pride and being covetous has destroyed many. They, like Ahasuerus, refuse to admit their wrongs and demand that others be punished. Most cannot see, or at least refuse to admit their sin, but can clearly see the faults in others. Often our desires cloud our vision, and if we aren't careful, we will allow them to stand in the way of walking in a way that pleases the Lord.

III. The Counsel of Ahasuerus (16-22) – In the remaining verses we discover the counsel given to the king. Consider:

A. The Appeal (16-18) – Seeking to appeal to the king and gain his approval, Memucan spoke for the counselors. He urged the king to respond swiftly to this rebellion. He portrayed the actions of Vashti as detrimental to the entire kingdom. This was not an act of rebellion against the king

alone. He declared that Vashti's behavior would negatively impact all the princes and the entire kingdom. Her behavior would encourage rebellion and disobedience throughout the provinces. Nothing was mentioned about the absurdity of the request. The blame was laid solely on Vashti.

- The enemy continues to operate in the same manner. He likes people to get excited and anxious, blowing things out of proportion. He wants us to fixate on the possible impact of a particular situation rather than praying about it and seeking the Lord's counsel. He encourages us to act in haste, never considering our role in the situation. He wants us to quickly find someone or something to blame, quickly condemning without further consideration.

B. The Assertion (19-20) – Memucan portrayed this as an issue that must be dealt with quickly. He wanted the king to believe such rebellion must be sternly punished. If this was not addressed, and Vashti was not removed from the throne as queen, all the women in the provinces would be emboldened to rebel against their husbands. The king was encouraged to act quickly and immediately sign the decree. Again, Vashti was viewed as the problem rather than the victim. No thought was given regarding the degrading nature of the king's request.

- I am not encouraging wives to rebel against their husbands. The Bible teaches that the wife is to submit to the authority of the husband, but we have to view that in its context as well. Along with her responsibility to submit, the husband is expected to love her as Christ loved the church. The actions of Ahasuerus were not loving as Christ loved the church. As believers we must allow the Bible to serve as our guide for faith and daily practice. We must not follow the behavior and practices of the world. Society may be swayed by popular opinion, but we must follow the Word of God and the guidance of the Spirit.

C. The Agreement (21-22) – Ahasuerus agreed with the counselors and sent a decree throughout all the provinces that commanded all men to bear rule in their homes. As far as we know, nothing was mentioned of the king's ridiculous request or the reason for writing the decree. His sinfulness was covered up by what would be viewed as encouragement for a stronger kingdom. The real issue was never addressed and an innocent woman suffered because of the arrogance of the king.

- Satan continues to manipulate in this manner. He always seeks to deceive and destroy. Our culture seeks to blame those who stand opposed to sin for the problems within society, and yet never deal with the root problem: sinfulness within humanity. As long as the enemy can disguise his agenda, and prevent people from embracing truth, he has achieved his goal. We must continue to measure our lives and behaviors according to Scripture, not the dictates of accepted culture. We need to view everything through the lens of Scripture.

Conclusion: As we will see, God, in His sovereignty, would use this situation for the good of His people. However, we must never assume that God was pleased with the actions of Ahasuerus. I am not implying that Vashti lived a sinless life, but she did stand for what was right in this matter. It ended up costing her the throne, but she remained steadfast. We too must remain committed to the cause of Christ and seek to honor Him in every facet of life. He is worthy of nothing less.

Who or what is dictating your existence? Are you striving to please the Lord or following the path of this world according to the desires of the flesh? If there are needs in your life, come before the Lord and seek His guidance and restoration. If there is unconfessed sin, bring that before Him with a repentant heart. If you are unsaved, and do not know Christ as your Savior, respond to His call for salvation. He alone can save from sin and equip us to endure in this sinful world.