






Day 1


-  Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

-  Conventions of these StudySheets:
 - † Pencil icon () indicates commentary or notes. Since commentary is not Scripture, comments are purposely less prominent (i.e., font-size is smaller).

 - † “Christ Jesus:” we in the United States are traditionally given birth names with a first, middle, and surname (last-name or family-name). Back in the time of Jesus, people were called ‘first-name, son of father’s first-name’ (e.g., Jesus, son of Joseph). Because “Christ” is Jesus’ title, these StudySheets will frequently refer to Jesus as ‘Christ Jesus’. The purpose is to avoid the American naming convention that might indicate “Christ” is Jesus’ last name (surname). By the way the Apostle Paul uses Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ interchangeably.

-  The best analogy I have heard to describe the Godhead of God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, and the Holy spirit is to envision a three-fingered hand (or a three-leaf clover). Each finger has a separate name, but the three-fingers are all part of the same hand – the Godhead. The Jewish faith is unfalteringly monotheistic (belief in one God), so the concept of Christ Jesus the Son is blasphemous to them. That said, a Jewish commentator in his verse-by-verse expository of the Book of Genesis conveniently explained-away (or ignored) the plural pronouns of “us” and “we” that refer to God and occur in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:7 (©2019 by Dennis Prager, *The Rational Bible Genesis*, published by Regenero Faith. Pages 24-25, 59, & 150).

-  We should be on-guard against wrong teachings. We do well to remember the praise recorded in Acts 17:11: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” The Bereans verified Paul’s preaching against the foundation of Scripture and found Paul’s teachings to be in harmony with what we now call the Old Testament. We, too, should verify sermons, teachings, and even these StudySheets against Scripture. The Holy Bible must be our rock, and our foundation of Biblical knowledge, of God’s character, of Jesus’ Gospel message and His servant-examples, and of our behavior in the world and with other Believers.

-  One last thought, if it takes a great deal of effort (i.e., convoluted explanation) to reach a certain Biblical conclusion, then it is probably false. I pray that this concept is readily apparent as you work through these StudySheet lessons. The Bible is a wonderfully written historical narrative. The Bible also provides us with words that describe God’s character: His desire for all humanity, His agapé love for all, and His abhorrence of sin. Sin is the barrier between God and humankind; Jesus destroys the barrier for those who believe in His saving grace.

Esther: Introduction

There are two books in the Bible named for the heroines: Ruth and Esther. Esther was written about 470 B.C. which was about nine years after Esther was named Queen. The author is unknown, but speculation names Mordecai, Ezra, or Nehemiah. Both Ezra and Nehemiah are suggested because scholars observe that the writing style of Esther is similar to their books. However, it should be noted that due to the detail included in descriptions, the writer must have been an eye-witness.

The Book of Esther is unique because God is not specifically named. However, there is an implied reference in 4:14, and the reader will see the Hand of God throughout the Book.

“Drama, power, romance, intrigue – this is the stuff of which best-selling novels are made. But far from a modern piece of fiction, those words describe a true story, lived and written centuries ago. More than entertaining reading, it is a

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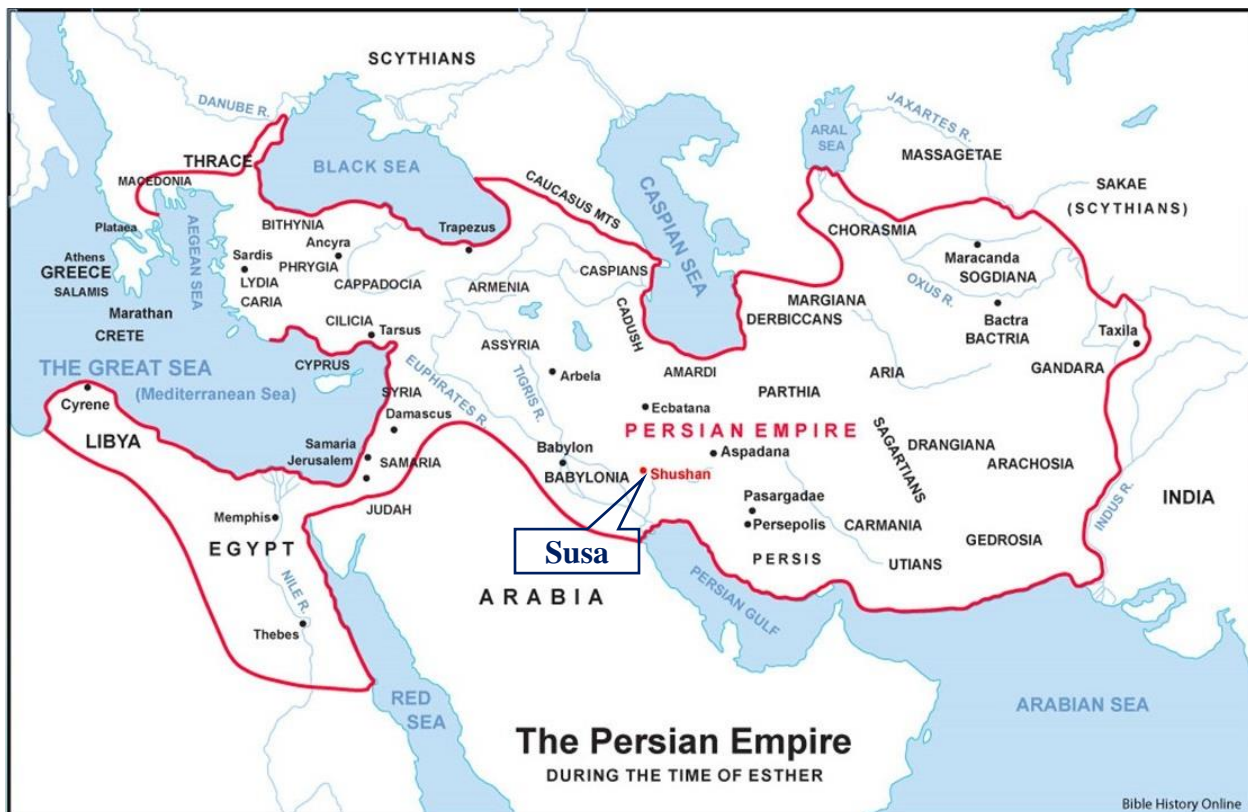
story of the profound interplay of God’s sovereignty [and] human will. God prepared the place and the opportunity, and his people, Esther and Mordecai, chose to act.” [©1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, *The Life Application® Bible*, published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved. Page 821]

“The ‘Ahasuerus’ of the book of Esther is recognized by scholars as the same king who was called ‘Xerxes (I)’ by the Greeks. He reigned over the Persian Empire from 485–465 BC. An earlier ‘Ahasuerus’ is mentioned in Daniel 9:1 [Daniel was likely written around 530 B.C.], and therefore Esther 1:1 distinguishes this Ahasuerus from the other by specifying that this one ruled over a vast empire. Xerxes [I] inherited this great empire from his father Darius I (aka Darius the Great).” [<https://www.bibleplaces.com/esther1/>]

This Book shows that, while God’s judgment can be swift, it is always just. This Book could have also been named: Judgment; You reap, what you sow; What goes around, comes around; Just desserts; An action always has a reaction; Do not test God.

The story takes place in the Persian capitol city of Susa (or Shushan), which is located today in what we know as south-west Iran, in the lower Zagros Mountains. “The modern Iranian town of Shush is located on the site of ancient Susa” [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susa>]. Susa was “the winter residence of the kings of Persia” [<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13621-shushan>].

Note: I have attempted to add pronunciation ‘helps’ to the text. I am not attempting to provide a pronunciation key to the ancient dialect. However, I am hopeful the ‘helps’ will provide common pronunciation when reading some of these more difficult names.



<https://chasingthewind.net/2014/12/07/esther-1-3-deliverance-is-needed/>

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The King's Banquets

¹ This is what happened during the time of Xerxes [Zerk-zees], the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:




Kingdom of Kush by Ducksters

Source: https://www.ducksters.com/history/africa/kingdom_of_kush.php

 “The Kingdom of Kush was an ancient civilization in Africa. It is often referred to as Nubia and had close ties to Ancient Egypt. . . The Kingdom of Kush was located in Northeast Africa just south of Ancient Egypt. The main cities of Kush were situated along the Nile River, the White Nile River, and the Blue Nile River. Today, the land of Kush is the country of Sudan.” [Ducksters. "Ancient Africa for Kids: Kingdom of Kush (Nubia)." Ducksters, Technological Solutions, Inc. (TSI), www.ducksters.com/history/africa/kingdom_of_kush.php. Accessed 6 August 2023]

² At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa [Sue-sah], ³ and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

Q1. Does the list of invitees seem to be a short list? Or long?


 “This will be 483 B.C., when Xerxes held a meeting at Susa of his princes to make arrangements for invading Greece. At so important a gathering, the feasting was a very obvious adjunct; and besides the coming campaign, a successful war had just been concluded in Egypt, and rejoicings for the past might have mingled with high hopes for the future, when the whole strength of the empire should be put forth to crush the presumptuous foe [Greece] who had dared to measure swords with the ‘king of kings.’ [the former king, Xerxes’ father: ‘Xerxes succeeded his father, Darius Hystaspes, in the year 485 B.C., five years after the momentous battle of Marathon, in which Greece won and the Persians lost’.]” [©about 1880, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, edited by Charles J Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/1-3.htm>]

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⁴ For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

Q2. Why would a king want to show-off his wealth, his power to his subordinates?


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⁵ When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa.

Q3. What purpose might the banquet serve?

Q4. Speculation requested. What does “when these days were over” mean to you?

 Was the purpose of this half-year to reassure the king's subordinates that the king was infallible? Militarily powerful? Tempting his subordinates with wealth? And planning to take the battle again to Greece and atone for his father's humiliation and loss on the battlefield at Marathon?

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⁶ The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones. ⁷ Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. ⁸ By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

Q5. Based on the detail included in the description, might the author of this Book of Esther be an eye-witness? Thoughts?

Yes? } Why?
No? }

Q6. Was this a week-long drinking party? (Can you imagine the 'hangover' headaches?)

Yes? } Why?
No? }

Q7. Was this a men-only event? Might this be viewed as a week-long celebration replete with lewd acts and debauchery?




“It was contrary to the law of the Persians, . . . which [proclaimed that] women [should not] be seen in public; and particularly did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, with whom they could behave with more indecency; as for their wives, they were kept out of sight, at home . . .” [©about 1760, *Exposition of the Entire Bible* by John Gill. Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/1-12.htm>]

⁹ Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

Q8. Why might the wives of the king's subordinates attend a separate banquet?

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Day 3

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Queen Vashti's Refusal

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him – Mehuman [May-u-man], Biztha [Biz-tha], Harbona [Har-bō-na], Bigtha [Big-tha], Abagtha [A-bag-tha], Zethar [Zeth-r], and Carcas [Car-cās] - ¹¹ to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at.

Q9. What does “in high spirits from wine” imply?

Q10. Based on the text, does Queen Vashti have any say?



Yes? } Why?
No? }

Q11. Why did King Xerxes want Queen Vashti to appear at the banquet?

¹² But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

Q12. Why might Queen Vashti refuse a command from King Xerxes?

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-  “[King Xerxes] commanded . . . the seven [eunuchs] — These were the eunuchs who had charge of the royal harem. The refusal of Vashti to obey an order which required her to make an indecent exposure of herself before a company of drunken revellers, was [because of] both the modesty of her sex and her rank as queen; for, according to Persian customs, the queen, even more than the wives of other men, was secluded from the public gaze. Had not the king's blood been heated with wine, or his reason overpowered by force of offended pride, he would have perceived that his own honor, as well as hers, was [protected] by her dignified conduct.” [©1882, *A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/1-12.htm>]
-  “It was contrary to the law of the Persians, . . . which . . . did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, . . . and therefore, Vashti might think it an indignity to be treated as a harlot or concubine.” [©about 1760, *Exposition of the Entire Bible* by John Gill. Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/1-12.htm>]

Q13. Why did King Xerxes get so angry?

Q14. This interaction speaks volumes about the relationship between the king and his queen. There seemed to be little mutual respect, let alone love from the king to his queen. You may have previously answered this, but why didn't the king ask, “Why won't she come?”

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¹³ Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times ¹⁴ and were closest to the king – Carshena [Car-she-na], Shethar [Shëth-are], Admatha [Ad-ma-tha], Tarshish [Tar-shish], Meres [Më-r-es], Marsena [Mar-seen-a], and Memucan [Më-mü-can], the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

Q15. What does “who understood the times” mean to you?

Q16. Why did King Xerxes consult those who “were closest to” him?


¹⁵ "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

Q17. What was King Xerxes' concern?

Q18. If Queen Vashti is not reprimanded, will the king's authority and infallibility be affected in the eyes of “all his nobles and officials [verse 3]”


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¹⁶ Then, Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. ¹⁷ For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' ¹⁸ This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord. ¹⁹ Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. ²⁰ Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

Q19. What stands-out to you about Memucan's statements?

 Note: in verse 19 we read, "issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed." The comment "which cannot be repealed" is important for us to remember later in the book.

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 Note: As we read verses 16-20, we can understand the extent of the extreme patriarchy in the culture, in their society. Christ Jesus came into a society in which women had not been able to improve their standing to any great extent. However, He was willing to speak to women (which culturally and traditionally was unacceptable), including the Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4). He admonished the Jewish religious leaders (Matthew 19:1-9 ↓) regarding their concept of divorce, which seemed to be based on whim: “I’m bored; I’ll get someone new.” While Jesus had to teach life concepts that were within the constraints, the culture of His time-on-earth, His views toward women were progressive. Remember, Jesus taught Paul and Paul wrote the passages quoted below in his letters to the Ephesians 5:25-28 (↓) and 2 Corinthians 5:17 (↓).

Matthew 19:1-9 [J.B. Phillips New Testament (PHILLIPS)]

¹ When Jesus had finished talking on these matters, he left Galilee and went on to the district of Judea on the far side of the Jordan. . .

³ Then the Pharisees arrived with a test-question. “Is it right,” they asked, “for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds whatever?”

⁴⁻⁶ “Haven’t you read,” he answered, “that the one who created them from the beginning ‘made them male and female’ and said: ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So, they are no longer two separate people but one. No man therefore must separate what God has joined together.”

⁷ “Then why,” they retorted, “did Moses command us to give a written divorce-notice and dismiss the woman?”

⁸⁻⁹ “It was because you knew so little of the meaning of love that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives! But that was not the original principle. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife on any grounds except her unfaithfulness and marries some other woman commits adultery.”

Ephesians 5:25-28 [The Message (MSG)]


Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church — a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They’re really doing themselves a favor — since they’re already “one” in marriage.

2 Corinthians 5:17 [NIV-2011]

Therefore, if anyone [male or female] is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

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²¹ The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. ²² He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.

Q20. What might be the results of this edict upon the population?

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