

***Providence over Kingdoms and Thrones - Esther 1:1-22***  
**Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

**Notes from the Sermon**

Last week we opened Esther by introducing the main characters in the story and by showing that the events in this story has led to the celebration of holiday remembered to this day by Jewish people called Purim. We also found out that one character is missing in the text of the story, but very present in the events, as God's name is not mentioned. The point of Esther is that it gives us a wonderful story revealing the providence of God, His silent and invisible work in the shadows orchestrating events to accomplish His will as He keeps His promises. The story for us is a reminder that God is sovereign, always at work even when we can't find His hand, and working for His glory and the good of His people.

This week we jump back to the beginning of the story which gives us the setting and introduces one of the main characters, the king Ahasuerus who is also known in history as Xerxes I. Historically, he is one of the most significant figures in world history, ruling the great Persian Empire which ruled, as verse 1 says, everything from northern India to Ethiopia, which is a region in Northern Africa. This means that Persia had already trampled the great Egyptian Empire and their Pharaoh and also reveals that Persia governs over Israel and Jerusalem. As a ruler, Xerxes was known for a few things which are confirmed in our story here. First, he was a ruthless leader who trampled other kingdoms and for the sake of his own power is guilty of incredible atrocities. He also saw himself as a god, a man who ascended to deity to be worshiped. But he is also known for his indulgences, which we also see in the story as he tends to drink and feast quite a bit. Xerxes is also known for the second attempted invasion of the nation of Greece. He was confronted by the various nation states that dwelt in Greece at that time, most notably the Spartans (who fought nobly at the Battle of Thermopylae). Xerxes and his vast army eventually invaded Athens, burning the historic city. Yet, after a series of defeats by the Greeks he had to retreat in fear of getting his army cut off and stuck in Europe. So much for being a god. Based on the time line of the book of Esther, the first chapter happens a couple years before this military campaign, with the rest of the book happening after.

Chapter 1, then, sets the stage for the story. The events happen in the capital city of Susa and are made possible because the king, in a drunken state at a massive party he hosted for his own fame and glory, asked his queen to parade before the men at the party like a party favor. When she refuses, Ahasuerus consults his advisors who gives him ridiculous advice. They see her refusal as a feminist act that could end up with women all over Persia asserting their own individuality and telling their husbands "no". We can see in the story that the motivation behind even the advisors words is the protection of their own little kingdom where they can at least rule the women in their lives. So the king by a lawful decree banishes his queen and creates an edict that men are masters of their houses. The story feels so silly, yet in reality, it rings so true. Of course, we know that eventually it is these insane events that leads to Esther taking the crown, but this week we want to see King Ahasuerus and realize his place in the Biblical narrative.

The Biblical story, in one way of looking at it is nothing more than a story of kings and kingdoms, following the path of world history as the Jews interact with the various kingdoms of this world. Abraham arises out of ancient Babylonian Empire, the Exodus is in Egypt, etc. Even Israel has a long succession of kings who rule over several centuries. On one hand, each king and kingdom we meet in Scripture have their differences. Location, forms and means of ruling, strength of army, how they treat justice and compassion. We see some kings who are utterly wicked, violent, and idolatrous, while others are more gracious and kind to their subjects and slaves. Yet, in other ways every human kingdom we find in the story is exactly the same. We find ruthless men who believe they are ultimate and rule to protect their own power and promote their own greatness. Kings make people slaves and seek to leave behind a legacy of their own fame and glory. As we read the story in Scripture that includes Esther 1, every kingdom should leave us remembering three things. First, all these kingdoms come an go. Even as the present king (in the story) holds parties to his own greatness, we should know that their rule is temporary and no matter who evil they are to God's people, his days are numbered.

Second, the overarching narrative of Scripture reminds us that our God is sovereign over all kings. He raises them up, they ultimately accomplish His purposes, and then He judges them for the wickedness and injustice they perform. Every human king, including Xerxes will one day stand before God who is King of all and give an account for their rule, and they will be judged by the ultimate Ruler of the universe. Third, in the pages of Scripture are prophetic whispers of a True and Better King who will one day come and usher God's Kingdom here on earth. And so we read Esther 1 knowing that he is merely a human ruler over a little kingdom of men. We on the other hand know the true and better eternal King of Kings.

But one other things keeps showing up as we read of these kings and their kingdoms. At every juncture we come to realize that the rule and reign of human kings who revolt against God is illegitimate. Whenever the wrong king is enthroned the outcome is awful. And we have to come face to face with the very true reality that the only difference between me and Ahasuerus is opportunity. We work just as hard to protect any pocket of power and control we have in life and fight to make our own name great. We are even willing to bow our knee to a version of the kingdom that will allow us to keep control over our own lives and will protect our idols. But the message of kingdom leads us to Christ as the True King of the Kingdom of God, and reminds us that the only path to hope in this life is repentance and faith in Him.

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 23	Psalm 24	Psalm 25	Psalm 26	Psalm 27	Psalm 28	Psalm 29

Reading from this past week: Esther 1:1-22

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Nehemiah 4:15-18

**Family Worship**

Song - *All Creatures of our God and King*

[https://youtu.be/hhycL4h64\\_s](https://youtu.be/hhycL4h64_s)

Gospel Project

Story: Before the Throne

Story Point: All people and creatures will worship Jesus

Big Picture Question: What is the hope of the church?

Answer: The church looks forward to Jesus' return when He will make all things new.

Scripture: Revelation 24-5

New City Catechism

Question #34: Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?

Answer: Yes, so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ

Verse: 1 Peter 2:9-12

Scripture

Esther 1:1-22

- What are some of the problems you see in the way Ahasuerus ruling as king?
- If you were honest, is Jesus really the King ruling your life, or do you seek to fight for your own authority and greatness?
- Why is Jesus a better King than Ahasuerus (and me)?

Prayer

\*Pray that you would glory in Christ as your True King and repent of any places you fail to bow your knee and trust Him as King.

\*Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in Haiti and Afghanistan.