

For Such a Time as This

A study in the book of Esther

Lesson Two

“A STAR is Born, Chosen & Favored”

Prayerfully read through Esther, chapter two.

If we look at verse 16 of Esther, chapter two, we find that **four years have passed** since the events of chapter one. During this time the king had unsuccessfully invaded Greece and had returned home in defeat. I'm sure he was feeling downtrodden and discouraged, with no queen waiting for him to help comfort him. And so, our chapter begins with King Ahasuerus “**remembering**” Queen Vashti and what she had done, as well as what had been decreed against her. We strongly sense a note of regret over what has taken place. His personal attendants obviously notice his loneliness and his despondent state, so they devise a plan to help lift his spirits.

- 1) Looking at **verses 2-4**, what is the plan the king's servants come up with to present to the king?
- 2) What does **verse 4** tell us about the king's response to this plan?
- 3) In verses 5 and 6, we are introduced to Mordecai, a Benjamite man whose great grandfather, Kish, had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar's reign. They were part of a large group of Jews that decided not to return to Judah with the prophet, Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem, but chose instead to stay in what was now Persia. What else do we learn about **Mordecai** from **verse 7**?

Verse 7 also introduces us to Mordecai's niece, Hadassah. This is the only time the name Hadassah is mentioned in the Bible. There is no mention of the name anywhere else or of anyone else having that name. Hadassah's name means "Myrtle" or "Myrtle Tree." The myrtle tree has many healthy characteristics, such as being loaded with antioxidants. It is also known for having a very pleasant smell, often used in the making of perfume.

4) Looking at **verse 7**, jot down some of the characteristics the verse reveals to us about Hadassah, as well as any other important information.

5) In **verse 8**, write down what happens to Hadassah.

Note: Although some Bible scholars have suggested this was a "beauty contest," that Hadassah and the other women "voluntarily" entered, or even that it was one her uncle Mordecai had entered her in, we see no indication in the text of anything like that taking place. In fact, we have nothing that would indicate that these young virgin girls had any say in the matter at all. The decree in **verse 3** says that the king's officers were to "**gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan, the citadel, and place them in the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who was the custodian of the women.**"

6) There are **four steps** in this plan to lift the king's spirits and to replace Vashti with a new queen. They are found in verses 2 through 4. Each of the four steps begin with the word, "**let...**" Go back through these verses and list each step.

Step one (*verse 2*):

Step two (*verse 3*):

Step three (*verse 3*):

Step four (*verse 4*):

7) Can you imagine what these women must have been feeling like? What kind of things do you think might have been going through their minds? Do you think they were excited about becoming part of the king's harem, and the fact that one of them would be chosen as the new queen? What are some of the negatives they may have been thinking about? Share your thoughts.

8) This is one of those times where Hadassah might have been thinking, **“This can’t possibly be God’s will for me!”** Are you perhaps in one of those places where you find yourself, through no fault of your own, in a place you can’t imagine is where the Lord would want you to be? Are you in a place where the only recourse you have is to trust in God’s faithfulness, even though the present circumstances don’t make sense and you do not understand how any good can come out of your situation? Stop and lift a prayer to the Lord, asking Him to take this heavy burden of doubt and fear from off your shoulders, and to help you to hold onto your trust in His never-ending love and faithfulness, even when nothing is making sense to you.

9) **Verse 9** tells us that Hegai, the king's eunuch, was immediately "pleased" with Esther and that she had won his favor. She was introduced to us as Hadassah in verse 7, but in verse 8 and throughout the rest of the book, she will be called Esther. The name means **STAR**. Many have suggested that Mordecai gave her this new name and asked her to use it to hide her Jewish identity. Others have suggested that her name was changed by Hegai when she arrived in the women's quarters. Regardless, this is where we see her as "**a star,**" shining brightly above all the rest. Record **Proverbs 31:29** below:

10) There were, no doubt, many beautiful women the officers had gathered throughout the land. What do you think might have been the reason that Hegai was so taken with her? What qualities do you think she may have possessed to gain such favor? Share your thoughts and what drew you to your conclusions.

11) Look up the following verses from **Proverbs 31** and record the qualities listed. Underline the main quality being highlighted in each.

Proverbs 31:10-

Proverbs 31:11-

Proverbs 31:12-

Proverbs 31:26-

Proverbs 31:30-

12) What did Hegai do for Esther according to **verse 9**?

13) Mordecai must have been fearful of it being discovered that Hadassah was a Jew, and in the instruction he gives to her in **verse 10**, we see that he was concerned about protecting her. What other indication do we see from **verse 11** about the care and concern her uncle had for her?

14) The beauty treatments the women were to obtain were very lengthy and complex. Write down from **verse 12** the beauty treatments each of these women had to go through.

Note: David Guzik suggests that the long preparation time was to assure that none of these “virgins” were pregnant when they entered into the harem, so that the king could not be charged with fathering a child that was not his.

15) As each of these women waited their turn, their lives were about to be forever changed. Read **verses 13 and 14** and record all that awaited these young women.

That one night may be the **one and only** night she would share with this man who was now her husband; a husband she shared with a large group of concubines in the same predicament. It was possible that she would never be called into his presence again. All her hopes and dreams for love and marriage, even possibly for bearing children and raising a family had been snatched from her, and in many cases her life became much like a lonely spinster, outside of the obvious glitz and glamour of the palace.

16) I wonder how many of these thoughts were going through Esther's mind as she stood in waiting. We will never know, but we can only imagine. In **verse 15**, we read that Esther's turn has finally come to go into the king. What does **verse 15** tell us about Esther's choices as she prepared to go into him, and what do you think this says about her character? Do her choices hint at her state of mind?

17) According to **verses 17 & 18** what happens when Esther goes into the king

18) As we look at the events that have unfolded in Esther's life, we see how God has taken a young orphan girl and placed her in the highest position she could hold in the land of Persia. Read **Psalms 75:6-7**. How does this confirm to you God's sovereign authority over all the details concerning our world, our government, our nation, and our individual lives? Share your thoughts. Is there something here that the Lord wants to personally speak to your heart?

- 19) Looking at **verse 19**, it appears that perhaps there was a second gathering of virgins that had taken place. From **verse 19** record where Mordecai was and what he was doing?
- 20) What does **Verse 20** reveal to us about Esther's relationship and her respect and affection for her uncle Mordecai?
- 21) In **verse 21**, we again see Mordecai sitting at the king's gate, where he obviously holds a position in the king's service. The gates were the entrance into the city, and the "king's gate" was the entrance into his palace courtyard. The "gates" are always associated with a position of power and influence. We see that "the gates" were also the place where the elders of the city gathered together to judge matters and make decisions (see Proverbs 31:23, and Zechariah 8:16). The fact that not only had the Lord placed Esther in a place of prominence, but also Mordecai, is further evidence of His sovereign power behind the scenes, working through every detail to fulfill His plan and purpose. Record the following Scriptures below:

Psalms 103:19 -

Proverbs 16:9 -

Proverbs 16:33 -

Isaiah 46:9-11 -

22) Read the remaining verses of our chapter, beginning at **verse 21 through verse 23**. We see here that God, unbeknownst to Esther and Mordecai, was putting a plan in place that would set up the details for His ultimate plan and purpose ahead. From these verses, what did Mordecai's position give him access to and what did it accomplish?

23) What is your greatest take-away from this second lesson of our study in Esther?

The following is an excellent prayer I found that goes right along with all that we have studied in Esther, chapter two:

Dear Father God, thank You for this incredible picture of Your ability to turn even the darkest of situations into good things for Your children and glory for Yourself. Forgive me when I have chosen to wallow in my own misery and discontent rather than trusting you. Please help me to remember that all Your ways are good, You know the end from the beginning, and You are faithful to work all things together for good for those who love You and are called according to Your purpose. Lord, we want to offer You our lives. We ask You to mold our character and our personalities in such a way that we might reflect Christ and grow in favor. Place us in those positions where You may use us for your kingdom purposes. Forgive us when we have sought our own glory and gain and help us to truly seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness.

We love You and thank you for the opportunity to see the miracles that spring from Your sovereign plan. Amen. *(Author anonymous)*