

St. Matthew AME Church  
Orange, New Jersey

Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor  
Rev. Leslie Wilson, Minister to Women  
Sis. Ruth Deas, Bible Study Presenter

Women's Bible Study

May 9, 2026

**“It Is Time To Celebrate Me”**

“And who knows that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this.” Esther 4:14b

**The Book of Esther**

- The book of Esther demonstrates God's promises and the purposes in the lives of His people.
- The book of Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named for women (Ruth is the other).
- The book of Esther is unique because it is the only book in Scripture that does not mention the name of God directly.
- The book of Esther is a 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.
- Esther's story begins in 483B.C., 103 years after King Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews into captivity, 54 years after Zerubbabel led the first groups of exiles back to Jerusalem, and 25 years before Ezra led the second group to Jerusalem.
- Esther lived in the kingdom of Persia, the dominant kingdom in the Middle East, after Babylon's fall in 539 B.C. This is because God wanted to use the book to show how His providence (that is, His invisible hand works behind the scenes to bring about His purposes in history. So even though God is not on the front page of the book of Esther, His fingerprints are all throughout the book.
- Esther's parents must have been among those exiles who chose not to return to Jerusalem, even though Cyrus, the Persian king, had issued a decree allowing them to do so.
- The Jewish exiles had great freedom in Persia, and many remained because they had established themselves there, or they were fearful of the dangerous journey going back to the homeland.
- Persia is the historical name for modern-day Iran.

**How Did All of This Get Started?**

The events that would completely surround two Jews, Esther and Mordecai, began when King Xerxes decided to hold a feast for all the officials. But this was no ordinary party. This party was to last 180 days,

six months. The real purpose of the party was to plan a battle strategy. Persian kings often held great banquets before going to war. Esther 1:4

At the conclusion of the 180-day banquet, the king held a week-long banquet, where his glory and wealth were on full display for his guests. Esther 1:5-6

The royal wine flowed freely, meaning there was no limit to the potential for drunkenness. Esther 1:7-8

Meanwhile, in another location, Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women. Esther 1:9

\*Royal women rarely mixed socially with male guests other than the king's immediate family.

\*Archaeological findings show separate reception halls for male envoys and for the harem. Such segregation preserved both modesty and dynamic security.

\* A queen's public appearance among drunken men would have violated court etiquette.

\* Scripture consistently comments on the appropriate separation to avoid lust and exploitation.

“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” Job 31:1

Job had not only avoided committing the great sin of adultery; he had not even taken the first step toward that sin by looking at a woman with lust.

On the final day of the banquet, the king was feeling good from wine; that is, he was quite intoxicated. He decided to show off his beautiful wife (Queen Vashti) to all of his drunken friends. He made a rash, half-drunk decision based purely on feelings. His self-restraint and practical wisdom were weakened by too much wine. Esther 1:11

Remember: Poor decisions are made when people don't think clearly. Base your decisions on careful thinking, not on the emotions of the moment. An impulsive decision may lead to severe complications.

When the king sent for Queen Vashti, she refused to parade before her husband's all-male party.

Esther 4:12

Some scholars speculate it was because King Xerxes wanted Queen Vashti to parade naked in front of the men wearing nothing except her crown. Others say she refused to be objectified or that Xerxes' drunkenness angered her.

### **“MEN ARE SEEN, AND WOMEN ARE LOOKED AT”**

We must remember that we are made in the image of God. God made both man and woman in His image. Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning, the Bible places man and woman at the pinnacle of God's creation. Neither man nor woman is exalted, and neither is depreciated. I Corinthians 1:11-12 says in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman, for as woman came from man, so also man is from a woman.

## The King's Reaction

- When Vashti refused to honor the king's request, the king went from feeling good to becoming furious. Esther 1:12
- The king consulted wise men and experts in law because what happened wasn't considered a mere marital dispute but a legal matter. A queen has refused to obey the king publicly.
- King Xerxes needed his legal team to advise him about what he should do with his wife according to the law. Esther 1:13-16
- Eventually, Queen Vashti was removed. Esther 1:19,2:4
- The king agreed with his personal attendants to hold a kingdom-wide beauty contest.  
Esther 2:2-4

## The Chain Reaction

Everything in the book of Esther to this point had nothing to do with the people of God. An arrogant king threw a six-month party, he got drunk, he had marital problems, and then he sent a search party to find him a beautiful bride. These events started a chain reaction that would lead to the potential destruction of God's people.

In the fortress of Susa, the location of the king's throne, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai. He had been taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, and Mordecai was the legal guardian of his cousin, a young woman named Esther. Esther was extremely good-looking. Esther and Mordecai entered the picture of events related to the palace because of Esther's beauty. Her beauty would give them important roles to play in upcoming events regarding the Jewish people.

Esther entered the kingdom-wide beauty contest. The man who supervised the contest liked Esther, so she received a spa package unlike any other woman had ever seen. But at no time did Esther reveal her ethnicity, because her cousin, Mordecai, had ordered her not to. Esther 2:8-10

When Esther was taken to the king, he loved her more than all the other women, and he placed the royal crown on her head. Esther was now queen, Esther 2:7

Esther was honored by the king, and so was Haman, who was promoted to a seat of honor (higher than all the other nobles). Haman was an Agagite, a hater of Jews. For Mordecai, to honor (bow down) to this hater of Jews would have been an unthinkable insult to God. Esther 3:2

Haman learned that Mordecai wouldn't bow; his fragile ego couldn't handle it. He was filled with rage. But when Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he was determined to do more than simply kill him. He planned to destroy all of the Jews throughout the kingdom. Genocide was the only thing that would satisfy his hatred. Esther 3:8-10

Haman wanted a royal order to exterminate all the Jews, and the king agreed. Esther 3:10-11

Previously, Mordecai had warned Esther to keep her ethnicity under wraps, but now Mordecai insisted that she go public. “Mordecai said, for if you remain silent, at this time, relief and deliverance, for the Jews will arrive, from another place, but you and your Father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this.

The time had come for God to use Esther for her ultimate purpose. Esther was fortunate to be in a position to use her influence for God’s kingdom purpose.

Esther interceded for the Jews. She begged the king to revoke Haman’s wicked plot, and the king showed her favor. Esther was more than a beauty queen. She was a woman willing to fulfill God’s divine assignment for her life.

Esther is often celebrated as a woman of beauty and courage. What about Vashti? There would be no Esther without a Vashti. Vashti was also beautiful and courageous.

As strong women of God, we all need to be encouraged and celebrated. If no one celebrates you, it is time for you to learn to celebrate yourself!