

The queen will not come

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Date: 06 June 2021

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[0:00] Thank you. So I've got a PowerPoint so hopefully this will work and as I said afterwards we can have a discussion if that's okay.

! I'm just going to press continue here. Tell me if this is working by the way or not. I've got a share screen, haven't I Steve? Can you see that? Yes.

Can you see that? Yeah. So here we have Esther I presume.

Yeah, I'm not too sure about her headdress. But yeah, each one to their own.

So the message of Esther. And it's lovely to hear actually how the ladies have been studying Esther on Friday evening. So Niddies, I'm sure you've got insights and help in terms of discussion afterwards because you've been studying this book.

[1:11] So chapter one is an introduction. It's not the main meat, as it were, not the center of the story. It's just giving an introduction to the message of Esther.

To be honest, it's been quite difficult for me to think how I can fit other bits of the Bible in and what we can get actually from it. But I have actually got some things and the Lord's used that, which is great.

So I put God's people endangered. Chapter one, because they are they are endangered in a kingdom, which is very, very powerful, as we see.

So let's go to the opening scene. Christopher, actually, his book says it's like a camera, like a video cinema and you go in and out, pan in and out.

And here we see powerful pump versus one to nine powerful pump. Oh, I hope you can see this.

[2:17] This is the setting of Esther and King Xerxes, as we read. Sorry if it's mispronounced. I'm not good at pronouncing foreign names, but you know who I mean.

Or Ahazurus in the ESV. That's his Hebrew name. The Xerxes is from the Greek, I think. He's the chief protagonist.

I did actually read one book which suggested it wasn't him. It was Arta Xerxes later on. But I think we'll go with Xerxes.

And you can see on the timeline there, he reigned from 486 B.C. to 465 B.C.

His father was Darius, as you can see on the timeline. And his grandfather was Cyrus, who was the founder of the kingdom of Persia and Media.

[3:19] That's when the Jews went back to the temple to rebuild the walls. And as you can see on the graph, the temple was rebuilt at the bottom there, 520 to 516 B.C.

when Darius was in charge. So a bit about this character, we do have extra biblical sources. A guy called Herodotus, if that's his right name, a Greek guy, wrote about King Xerxes.

So we know that he was a tyrant. He would be a violent man, tempestuous.

We see that actually in verse 12. If you look at verse 12, he actually became furious and burned with anger when Vashti didn't come to him.

So we know that he was whimsical, capricious. So he is very changeable, like the weather, mercurial. He would. Yeah.

[4:25] It was dangerous for the people of God in those times. You didn't know what was going to happen. And apparently he was a womanizer as well. So he's not a very nice character, to say the least.

But I think Herodotus said he at times he was wise. So he had some wisdom there. So the context of this is 483 BC.

So three years after he's been in power. We can see it on the graph as well. The New Year's festival, Queen Vashti rejected.

So the context, as I said, God's people are dispersed in this kingdom of Persia and media. Some are back in Jerusalem, but not many.

And it's just that's just that small pocket in Judah. So that's the situation as we come into Esther. So it's tough. It's tough. It's God's people living under exile again, like in Egypt, under a dangerous ruler.

[5:35] There are relatively small beleaguered people and they couldn't escape. Christopher Ash talks about this, how they didn't have a helicopter or planes to fly out of the kingdom or buses.

They just only could walk. Of course, we have cars and we can drive and go different places these days. I hope it stopped that from certain to a certain extent.

But they couldn't escape. They were in the kingdom of Persia and media. They couldn't just go anywhere else. That was the known world was Persia and media. There was a there was a pocket in Greece that hadn't been occupied that the Greeks had.

So that's the situation under a powerful man in the empire. In the first one, it says that, doesn't it? There's a lot of ruling the royal throne.

So. Yeah, not a nice guy. So this is a picture map, sorry, of the Persian Empire as it was.

[6:42] So as we see from verse one, it said it stretched from India to Kush. I think it's I read in present day Pakistan actually to North Sudan.

So it was a massive empire. You can even have an empire within an empire, really, because it was so big, though it wasn't it hasn't.

It wasn't the biggest has ever been the British Empire. Apparently, it's the biggest empire that's ever been. But at that time, it was the empire.

Yeah, of the known world. And we see that the king has this banquet. We don't know why, but historians have said, well, he did prepare to invade Greece at this time.

So he wanted to get his as you see there, verse three, the princes, nobles and provinces to be on his side for an invasion. We don't know for certain from the text, but from history, he did that and he failed.

[7:54] So the camera pans into Sousa. Do you see Sousa in the middle of your screen, more or less? Not far from Babylon is in present day Iran. And it zooms into the citadel.

So you have to be careful. It wasn't just it's not just a whole city like Brighton at home. It's it's right into the the fortified parts. Christopher Ash talks about how it would be, for example, in London, it would be Buckingham Palace, MI5, MI6, the House of Parliament surrounded by a big fence walls. So this is where the power base is for the Persian Empire. Sousa was the capital in the winter. So the the king would winter there and it was so hot in the summer that some he he had a different city elsewhere.

I'm not too sure where, but that's what you did if you were a king. You traveled. Whether you wanted. So there were different cities in different places, different times.

So that's where I'm Sousa. So let's get into the text. What was the empire like?

[9:21] Well, we see from verse four that he puts on this banquet for 180 days. Oh, my.

That's six months. What a banquet. Surely they didn't eat every day. I mean, that would be extreme gourmandizing, wouldn't it?

Can you imagine the problems with health after six months of eating and feasting? You know, the you'd be so large, wouldn't you?

And I don't know what sort of health complaints you would have. So I've never heard of a banquet going on for six months. And imagine the cost to the empire.

You must be very rich. And it's for his show, isn't it? Verse four. We see that to display the vast wealthiest kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

[10:24] So there's a lot of ego here. Pomposity at his greatest, really. It's the glory of him and his kingdom. Very self-centered, King Xerxes.

And it's laughably opulent, isn't it? I don't know if you laughed when Christopher read it, but it's incredible. Verse six and seven in particular.

You've got these this this lovely garden with blue and white linen. These materials, some silver rings, marble pillars, couches of gold and silver.

Mosaic pavement of porphyry. Porphyry, by the way, is was an ancient precious stone in Egypt. And there are other ones, marble, mother of pearl, costly stones.

Not only that, but each goblets of gold is different from another. I mean, how many goblets did they have? How many people came to this party? I mean, that's just incredible how the mind boggles, really.

[11:28] How on earth did did they do this? And he's so liberal, the wine is flowing. What comes close, really, in terms of the beautiful deco, I guess the temple in which we've been thinking about in Jerusalem would be near in terms of the.

The gold and the silver, etc. Perhaps perhaps Babylon is similar. Babylon became came before the Persian Empire, perhaps Buckingham Palace today, you would see all this amazing costly stones, etc.

You'd be wowed by it. But I think we're meant to laugh. The writer. He's telling us and how he shows off and even to the least of the greatest, it says in the text in verse five.

So everybody could see this. What a show off. And then verse nine, Queen Vashti enters the sea and she also gives a banquet for the women in the royal palace.

Apparently, this is a bit strange for the time. This would not happen. Normally you have women and men together, but this is a bit bizarre.

[12:54] So from us, for us, from a Christian perspective, a few things. I can't see my writing here.

Oh. The world attracts, doesn't it? It can suck us in wealth. Possessions.

Power status, sexual pleasure, being seen with the crowds. I think this empire represents the world that we live in.

It promises much, but gives little. Only true satisfaction as a believer is through Christ, through through knowing him.

He gives us unending pleasures. Only he can satisfy us. And I've been reading Hebrews and I like to read Hebrews 11, 24 to 26, talking about Moses, the hall of faith.

[14:04] Moses is a good example for us. Because it says, by faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He chose to be ill treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as a greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his rewards.

And. Yeah, he was looking forward to a better rewards. So I think he's a good example for us as believers.

To realize that the world's pleasures are fleeting. We can enjoy them, but they are here and then they're gone. We've got to have a right Christian perspective.

And there's nothing wrong with them, Richard, but they do fade, as I said, and we need to get this perspective.

[15:13] We need to be looking forward to the new heaven and the new earth where there'll be unending bliss. And in Matthew six, I read that famous passage.

Matthew six, 19 to 21. Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

For where your treasure is there, your heart will be also.

That's a challenging word for us, isn't it? Where are our treasures? Where are we storing up? Hopefully treasures in heaven.

And we have to remember there's going to be a great wedding feast, isn't it? Isn't there at the end of time? And this is a much better eternal banquet.

[16:17] So we have to have that perspective. There's. There's that great. Wedding supper of the lamb. And I think it's a similar situation for us

living.

Living as we do in this this era. I think we are a marginalized minority in a secular society. A bit like the Jews at that time.

We can feel oppressed. Later, actually, we we can think about that some perhaps in the work setting.

And and God's kingdom is opposite. His glory was shown in weakness. The cross.

The opposite of verse four. When the king. Was. Saying, look, look at me, look at my fantastic kingdom.

[17:19] Aren't I amazing. Well, Jesus didn't come like that. Did he came as a baby in a manger? Dirty, smelly.

Wasn't. There was no pomp. Is very different way. He left the glory of heaven to be to be here and live on earth and lived a homeless life.

Very different. The kingdom of God to the one which we see here in chapter one. Humbleness.

And also another good point is that some these lifeless objects, these inanimate gold goblets versus God's creation. I think God's creation is is more beautiful than lifeless things.

I'm you know, we can see the nature like we did today. Looking out now, see my my garden and it is beautiful. And I think.

[18:23] We have that perspective, don't we? That actually. Yeah. God's creation is far better than these these lifeless objects, though they can be beautiful. And I think it's as I said that I say this, the church is scattered throughout the world.

A similar picture to the one we see in chapter one of the scattered church. The Jews, should I say, in in. In the Persian Empire. So let's move on from the text.

If you could turn back. To Esther. Verses 10 to 22.

I've entitled it not so powerful pomp. So how does the Empire treat its subjects?

Well, he castrate some of them. Did you see that in verse 10? There are seven units, which I don't think is very nice, isn't it, to to treat your subjects like that?

[19:38] Yeah. Yeah. And he treats women as sex objects in verse 11. So the king is in high spirits drunk too much wine.

And I can imagine the the men around him, perhaps boasting about their prowess and perhaps the women they've had. And he says, oh, get Queen Vashti, see my king queen.

She's the best of the best. Look at her. She's so beautiful. And. And. It's funny that he has to send seven people, you next to fetch her.

Yeah. And she. They want. He wants her. To display her beauty to the people and nobles. But she was lovely to look at.

So. Yeah. Yeah. As I said. I think we're supposed to laugh. He doesn't need seven units, does he just needs one.

[20:41] And the king does not have complete control, as we see again, it's laughable, isn't it? He has this vast empire rule.

So many people. So much terrain. And yet his wife doesn't obey him. It's a it's a bit of a facade, isn't it?

The power bit of a hologram. You can see through it now. We don't have to fear so much. And another seven we see in verse 14, the seven advisors this time they come again.

Why does he need seven advisors? But. They. They give him advice about this because his wife doesn't obey him, and they say there will be no end of disrespect and discords in the kingdom.

Because of this. It seems a bit over the top, to be honest, isn't it? Shows his insecurity. And then there's a law set in place that all women should.

[22:01] Respect their husbands from the least of the greatest. Verse 20, there's an edict proclaimed. Again, it seems ridiculous. And ironically, Vashti gets a wish.

He doesn't have to go in and see the queen. King, sorry. That's what she wanted anyway. Anyway. And it sent through the realm.

What must the people have thought receiving this? Is this is this real? Is this king a clown? Yeah.

You can understand why he did it, but it seems. Yeah. Ridiculous that he had to do this. So in application to finish.

I think you can see that God works behind the scenes implicitly through Esther. He works in unbelievers. His advisors. King Xerxes.

[23:08] The law that cannot be repealed leads to Esther coming in in next chapter. Again. It points to a better king. We need a better king. Much better than King Xerxes.

And. Thank God we have the perfect one. And we can praise Christ for his wonderful attributes so different from King Xerxes. We have a benevolent, loving, gracious gods who is not capricious. I think we need divine wisdom in how. We conduct ourselves in a secular society these days. It's not easy. It's not easy. We sometimes make mistakes. It must be difficult for the Jews. Let's think of and pray for those who live in similar different. Dangerous countries like Victor and Judith in Turkey. Living under.

Perhaps an oppressive regime where the leader is fairly capricious. And I think we need we. We could apply a similar situation in the workplace as I said.

[24:15] You know, perhaps you have a capricious boss. That's a very tough to work under a person like that and much wisdom is needed. So. There's some of my thoughts.

So anybody like to. I think perhaps we have a whole. What you call it. Whole church discussion rather than separate rooms.