

## Sermon Discussion

### 18 July 2021

Read Esther 2:1-18

#### **Dig Deeper**

According to v. 6, Mordecai was deported by Nebuchadnezzar along with Jeconiah (or Jehoiachin) in 597 B.C. But this would mean that Mordecai would have been **about 115 years old** by the time of Xerxes' third year and Esther **would have been 80**. It is better to understand that Kish, Mordecai's great-grandfather, was the one who was carried away in the 597 deportation.

**"Hadasseh"** (v. 7) is a Jewish name that means myrtle, a beautiful fragrant tree. The Jews still sometimes carry myrtle branches, which signify peace and thanksgiving, in procession during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Esther kept her Jewish nationality a secret by not telling Hegai, her maids, or anyone else because Mordecai had told her not to. From this and other statements in the book, it is clear the author was making the point that God protected and used Esther and Mordecai **in spite of** the fact that they were not living according to the Law commanded by God to the people of Israel.

By law Esther was not to marry a pagan (*Deut. 7:1-4*) or have sexual relations with a man who was not her husband (*Ex. 20:14*), and yet this was the purpose of her being included in the harem. Esther could be **contrasted with Daniel** who refused to eat the things from the king's table (*Dan. 1:5*) because the food would include items considered unclean by Jewish Law. Apparently, Esther had no qualms about the food she ate (v. 9), and she did not set herself apart as Daniel had done.

Esther became queen in the winter of 479-478 B.C., four years after Vashti's deposition (v. 16). During that four-year period the Greeks defeated Ahasuerus in battle. The Hebrew word translated "banquet" in v. 18 means "**a coming to rest.**" This could mean that Ahasuerus released his subjects from some tax burdens or from military service or both temporarily.

1. What part does time play in this passage? How might this passage draw us to trust in God's timing instead of our own?
2. King Ahasuerus used his power for personal pleasure. Where have you seen power misused? Read Philippians 2:3-11. How is Jesus's use of power different than King Ahasuerus?
3. We do not know Esther's or Mordecai's motivations, but we do know that neither's resistance is recorded in Chapter 2. Perhaps they were threatened with loss of life, and they chose to compromise with the world. Why do we tend to compromise for far less serious threats? What would be examples of those compromises?

4. Esther and Mordecai were imperfect and perhaps even disobedient, but the Lord still used them instead of discarding them. How do you feel about this? Is it any less true for us?
5. Think about this: Ahasuerus took the purity of women and left them with shame. What is your response to the idea that Jesus takes our shame and leaves us pure?

### **Application & Prayer**

- We tend not to be patient people. We want things when we want them. But God created time. And as a result, He uses it as He sees fit to complete His ends. We start to panic when things don't happen when we want them to. We lie to ourselves that we have been abandoned by God. Can you think of times when have you found yourself feeling like God has left you hanging this year?

Confess these moments (or season) to God and let Him listen to you. Now, spend a few moments in silence listening to His truth.

- This week, how are you going to respond to this portion of Scripture? Choose one area in your life and share. Encourage one another to repent and turn to the gospel to find forgiveness and the power to change.