

January 19, 2020 - Esther 1:12-22 - “Queen Vashti choses Deposition”

Introduction

Today is Sanctity of Life Sunday and we observe it because on January 22, 1973 the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade. Nine Supreme Court justice determined that every state had the duty to give women unencumbered access to abortion up until the birth of the child. Since that time 61,628,584 babies have been murdered in the womb with the full protection of the state and the knowledge of the church. God forgive us!

Exodus 20:13 is based on the divine truth that human life is sacred and that we must protect and preserve it. Every human being bears God’s image. Even an embryo is marked with a unique identity from the moment of conception. Life is God’s most precious gift, and only He has the right to take it. Abortion, euthanasia, and genocide must all be viewed in the light of God’s right to our life. The book of Esther speaks to God’s providential care to usurp the plans of men to save a race of people; human lives, that of the Hebrew people.

I. The King Banishes the Queen vv. 12-22

1. Ahasuerus who we know is King Xerxes heeded advice from Memucan his chief advisor. It was the practice of the king in times of making edicts to consult with his trusted seers, stargazers and astrologers, “those who supposedly understood the times”. We see this is the book of Daniel 4:7. The king asked them, “What shall we do unto the Queen?” The issue was troubling to him and others. His ego was damaged because his biggest prize of all refused him.

2. They concluded that she had publicly disgraced the king. Memucan then made a recommendation for the king that he make another binding decree that couldn’t be altered. He would give Vashti’s royal position to “another who is better than she.” God opens the door to place His chosen woman to serve His purposes, unknown to her and to all. This law would be circulated throughout the kingdom as a means to have wives respect their husbands. This was a fabrication of the truth so that the King would save face.

3. Vashti chose deposition rather than dishonor by refusal to obey the king. Her refusal to unveil herself was met with “a severe punishment to be ousted of the Kingdom. She then was dethroned. She appears in the opening chapter of the book of Esther just to be deposed as Queen, paving the way for Esther, the heroine of the book, to become the new Queen. God’s plan is at work to save a people from genocide.

4. If she obeyed, she would have allowed the king to degrade and dis-respect her. As we will learn from history she had dealt with this disrespect many times before. She refused. Vashti didn’t want to compromise her character by being reduced to a piece of property. Her desire for respect led to her banishment. We have no record that Vashti feared the Lord. But her courage shows that she understood the God-given dignity afforded to every human being. Since she defied his royal decree, she was breaking the Law of the Medes and Persians.

Application:

The world and the crowd will often disapprove when we try to do the right thing. And there can be a high price to pay for doing what is right. We have learned before that it is never right to do wrong to do right. Vashti can actually teach us important lessons about our walk with Christ, both individually and in a marriage relationship. What I personally learned from the character of Vashti is that anyone, great or small, has a role to play in the story that God has written. I trust that we all can look at any person in the Bible with the same lens and value their contributions in God's design. Making the right choice does not always come with rewards.

Choices have consequences and those choices can chart the course of a lifetime. It is very important that we learn how to make the right choices in life because they may have grave consequences for us and others. Frank Borham said, "We make our decisions and then our decisions make us." God always awards the right choices in His time but don't expect a sinful wicked world to reward you for doing what is moral and right. --- (Examples)

II. What Happen to Queen Vashti?

1. To understand this one must be able to identify Queen Vashti from history. The bible account uses her honorary title which means "desire one". So that is where Herodotus comes in. He was an ancient Greek historian who was born during the Persian Empire. He is known for having written the book of "The Histories". He writes that Darius commonly known as Darius the Great, before he died in 486 BC gave his son Xerxes the crown prince, Amestris in marriage. Herodotus describes Amestris (A miss tress) in his Histories 7.114 as a cruel authoritarian and she was known to have been poorly regarded by ancient Greek historians; most likely because of being shame and deposed. She died in 424 BC.

2. According to Herodotus, Xerxes' lust for other women and lack of restraint led to his pursuit of his own brother wife. When she refused him, he had his son Darius marry the daughter of Masistes. Her name was Artaynte, that, by this union, he could get closer to his brother's wife and manage to seduce her. Now you see what Vashtis was dealing with! When he saw Artaynte, however, he desired her more than the mother and, when he approached her, she agreed to an affair. Of course this was one of many but this was the proverbial straw...within the family!

3. When his wife the queen, Amestris found out, she did not seek revenge against Artaynte, but against her mother, because she believed that it was her involvement that produced the affair. On Xerxes' birthday, Amestris sent for Xerxes' guards and had her mutilated by cutting off her nose, ears, lips and cutting out her tongue and threw them to dogs. So she was no saint.

3. Xerxes himself did not fare well after her demise from the throne. Esther 2:16 indicates that there was a four-year span before the contest of finding a new queen. During that time the King made his great but unsuccessful invasion of Greece and he came home a defeated man. The Battle of Salamis, was a disaster for the Persian fleet and cost Xerxes dearly. His army and was forced to eat bark, weeds, and leaves because there was no food left in the regions they traveled through. The men were ravaged by disease and many died of dysentery and so, by the time Xerxes reached Sardis, he had hardly any army left to speak of. His staff wanting to cheer his

heart through sensual diversions thus began the replacement contest for a queen.

III A Replacement Plan for a new Queen 2:1-4)

1. Chapter two opens with King Xerxes sobered up and calmed down. He then remembered that he had banished his queen. According to Herodotus He regretted what he had done but there was no turning back. It was final. The next verse falls almost four years later (2:16). Three minus seven is four. The King did not come up with a plan by himself. Large harems and political queens were royal status symbols in ancient West Asia. If she was beautiful that added to the king's status.

The Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus was a first-century Romano-Jewish historian who was born in Jerusalem. Josephus wrote around 93-94 AD, he recorded the number of Xerxes' harem at about four hundred." That is small compared to King Solomon who had 600 royal wives and 300 concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). This advice from his servant to replace Vashti pleased the king, so he accepted it.

2. The plan was to assemble a harem from the most beautiful women of the land; to bring them into a harem for the king, and to choose the most favored woman to be his queen from that group. This was sort of a "Miss Persian Empire" contest, and the winner would be queen. The Jewish historian Josephus says the Xerxes had a total of 400 women selected.

Conclusion:

The main point of this text that we have studied so far is really not about these flawed human characters. One of the great mysteries of our heavenly Father is how someone can do an evil deed toward another, and yet God can in concert work whatever it is for the good of his providential plan. One of the clearest examples of this is found in the actions of Joseph's brothers (Gen 37). When Joseph considered what his brothers did and how God's used their betrayal, he said, "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people" (Gen 50:20).

God did not put an evil plan into the hearts of Joseph's brothers, but he used their choices to accomplish his purposes. In Esther 1:12-2:4 God uses a series of decisions made by Vashti and Xerxes that he neither initiated nor prevented. He did not cause or stop Ahasuerus's drunkenness, which led to the king's desire not to honor his wife. God did not cause or stop Ahasuerus's angry reaction, which led to his seeking bad counsel. God did not cause or stop the king's decision based on foolish counsel or his disastrous decree. God turned these events to bringing Esther to a place where she could save the Jewish remnant. God's providential care usurped the plans of men to save a race of people. God still works that way today.