



Esther Becomes Queen



In the incredible life story of Esther, we see that God is in control of all things. This week our story begins with a proud king and some poor advice. In the weeks to come, we will see how God used an obedient Jewish girl to keep the promises that He made long ago.

Day #1: Wrong Place

The Israelites had turned away from God over and over again. Because they turned their backs on God, God stopped protecting them. In time, they were captured and taken to Babylon. The Babylonians also destroyed God's temple in Jerusalem. God's people no longer had their own land and they could no longer worship God in His temple. But God did not forget His promises to Abraham.

Sixty years later, a new king took over Babylon. The Lord gave a message to the new king. God wanted the Israelites to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem in the Promised Land. He wanted them to rebuild His Temple that had been destroyed. The king listened to God and allowed the Israelites to return to their own land. Many Israelites went home, but many chose not to leave Babylon.

Babylon was a city full of great buildings and beautiful gardens. It was surrounded by spectacular gates. Babylon was a very advanced city for its time. It was considered one of the wonders of the ancient world. This may explain why some of the Israelites did not want to leave Babylon. They chose to be in a city that was very wealthy and popular instead of obeying and worshipping God.

The Bible tells us it is far better to be with God than to be anywhere without Him.

+ *A single day in Your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.* - Psalm 84:10 NLT

***** On a sheet of paper, list things around you that people think are "cool." (Examples may include: having expensive clothes, going to a certain school, having popular friends, being great at sports.) Now look at your list. Know that not one of the things on your list can compare to spending time with God.

Day #2: Show Off

What is the fanciest home you have ever seen? Maybe it was a mansion on television, or a castle in a history book. Today we will learn about a party given in the fanciest home in all of the Persian Empire - the king's palace.

When the book of Esther opens, it has been over 70 years since the Lord commanded the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. The Israelites were also known as "Jews" at that time. Still, thousands of Jews remained in or near Babylon.

There was a new king over Babylon and the Persian Empire. His name was Xerxes. King Xerxes threw a **huge** party for all of the important people in the empire. It lasted for six months!

+ *Every day for 180 days he showed his guests the great wealth of his kingdom. He also showed them how glorious his kingdom was.* - Esther 1:4

After that party was over, he threw *another* party. This time he invited every man in the city of Susa! The Bible says every man from the least important to the most important was invited. The king spared no expense. The palace was decorated with fine linen and special wall hangings. The guests sat on couches made of gold and silver. Every man could eat and drink as much as he wanted. King Xerxes wanted people to know he was very rich and very important.

The Bible has many verses that warn us about wanting people to think we are really great or really cool. Isaiah 2:11 says, "A man who brags will be brought low. Men who are proud will be put to shame." But, just the opposite, people who value others and do not think too highly of themselves will be honored by God. 1 Peter 5:6 says, "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor."

***** Play the "I" game. Make a necklace of yarn or string for each person in your family. (Use about 3 feet of yarn per necklace, so it is easy to put on and take off.) Each time a player says the word **I**, **me**, or **my**, he must give up his necklace to the person who catches him saying it. If a player has several necklaces on, he must give up all of his necklaces when he is caught saying the forbidden words. Play the game for a set amount of time (perhaps for one hour, beginning with family dinner). The person who ends the game with the most necklaces is the winner. After you play, discuss how it felt trying not to talk about yourself.

Day #3: Vashti Vanishes

At the same time that all the men in the city were feasting with the king, the queen was having her own party. King Xerxes' wife, Queen Vashti, was holding a banquet for the women. On the seventh day, King Xerxes sent an order

Day #3 continued:

for Queen Vashti to come to his feast wearing her royal crown. Xerxes wanted to show all the men how beautiful his wife was.

+ *The attendants told Queen Vashti what the king had ordered her to do. But she refused to come. So the king became very angry. In fact, he burned with anger. - Esther 1:12*

When the queen refused to come, King Xerxes was embarrassed in front of all the men of the city. The king went to his officials and asked what the law said that he should do to Vashti. The king's advisors told him that when the women of the kingdom heard what Vashti did, they would all become disrespectful to their own husbands. The men told the king that he must send Vashti away. So the king sent out an order stating that Vashti could never see him again. A royal order from the king can never be changed.

King Xerxes took advice from the men who were close to him. Queen Vashti should not have been disrespectful to her husband, but sending her away forever was not a good solution. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and God requires us to forgive one another (Colossians 3:13). The people who advised the King gave him advice that was best for *them* (Esther 1:17-18).

***** The Bible says it is wise to get advice (Proverbs 19:20). But, when you look to others for advice, go to people who follow God and know what the Bible says. They will give you advice from God's word. It is rich in wisdom (Colossians 3:16). It is the very best advice, because it is from God. He knows the past, present, and future, and He wants the very best for you.

List, by name, all of the people who give you godly advice. (Parents, Huddle Group leader, Christian friends) Are you a person who gives godly advice to others?

Day #4: Search for a Queen

Have you ever seen a beauty pageant on television? A group of girls are gathered together, and several judges decide who is the prettiest. Today we will learn about a very similar event in the ancient world of the Persian Empire.

Four years after Queen Vashti was sent away, the king's advisors told the king that he should find a new queen. The advisors suggested a kingdom-wide search for a new queen. It would be like a royal beauty pageant. All the pretty young women who were not married were taken to the palace. For a full year, they would be given beauty treatments (Esther 2:12). After twelve months of perfume baths and make up, each young lady would be brought before the king. The one the king liked best would take Vashti's place as queen.

There was a man named Mordecai who lived in Susa. He was one of the Israelites, or Jews, who remained in Babylon.

Mordecai had a very beautiful cousin named Esther, whose

Day #4 continued:

+ *Hebrew [or Jewish] name was Hadassah. He had raised her as his own daughter, after her father and mother died. When the king ordered the search for beautiful women, many were taken to the king's palace in Susa, and Esther was one of them. - Esther 2:7-8 CEV*

Esther was a young, beautiful, Jewish girl whose parents had died. Esther didn't know what it was like to have a dad, and she didn't have the hugs and kisses of a mom. So God provided her cousin, Mordecai, to care for her. God was about to use this orphaned Jewish girl in a mighty way. Through Esther, He would keep His promise, and save a nation.

***** Not all people written about in the Bible had picture-perfect families. No matter what your family looks like, know that **God uses ALL kinds of people with ALL kinds of families!** Draw a picture of your family and thank God for each person in it.

Day #5: Chosen by the King

When Esther was taken to the palace, Mordecai told her not to tell anyone that she was a Jew. Esther obeyed her cousin and kept her family line a secret.

We have seen several wrong choices. Many Jews chose to stay in a land in which they did not belong, King Xerxes chose to banish his wife, and Mordecai told Esther not to tell anyone she was a Jew. Even when people make wrong decisions, **God can use it for His purposes** (Genesis 50:20). We will see that all these decisions opened the door of opportunity for God to protect His people.

The king's servant who was in charge of the young woman liked Esther very much. He treated her with special care. After a full year at the palace, it was finally Esther's turn to meet with the king.

+ *The king liked Esther more than he liked any of the other women... So he put a royal crown on her head. He made her queen in Vashti's place. - Esther 2:16-17*

Esther was chosen! She was crowned queen in place of Vashti. King Xerxes made the day a holiday and held a big dinner in Esther's honor (Esther 2:18). This seems like a fairytale ending, but trouble lurked just around the corner. We will learn more next week.

***** Esther kept her family line a secret so that she might be chosen by a king. But, Esther had already been chosen by a King - the King of kings! As an Israelite, or Jew, she was one of God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6). If you are a Christian, you too have been chosen by the King of kings! The Bible tells us that God has chosen each believer. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5)

But God chose you to be His people... You are a people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing His praises. He brought you out of darkness into His wonderful light. - 1 Peter 2:9

Sing a praise song to your King.