

Intro: Remember when you were in HS and there was a play? Or perhaps you have been to the theatre and seen this:

Cast of Characters Description

That is what we are going to do this morning...Look at the Cast of Characters in Esther: Before we unpack story

Include the Time, The Place, and The Setting

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1. The Time, Place and Setting of Esther.

1:1

- **Time:** Date of Esther: During the Captivity of the Jewish nation: 486-465 BC (500 years before Jesus)
- **Place Susa** (One of 3 Capital cities of the Babylonian Empire ruled by Xerxes)
- **Setting:** The Royal palace...Full of drama, intrigue and fast moving changes (Elevated and set down quickly)

Applic: Interesting when you think about it...it is VERY much like the environment in which WE live!

No longer a religious culture, (Captivity) In the power center of the world (Fast moving and changing environment!)

There are some things we can learn from Esther if we are willing to pay attention and listen to God, watch Him at work

2. The Cast Of Characters Of Esther.

- **Xerxes:** King and Monarch of the Babylonian Empire: His word is law. Once spoken not changed:
 - ~Absolute authority, not to be challenged: 1:19 (Cannot be repealed)
 - ~Quick tempered: 1:12 (He was furious and burned with anger)
 - ~Easily led by others: 1:13, 16 (What must be done with her?) 2:2 (Make a plan for queen)
 - ~Doesn't pay attention to details: 2:10 (Esther didn't reveal nationality, didn't ask of his new queen!) 2:23 (No Reward Mordecai) 3:9-10 (Didn't bother to find out about 3-4 million to be killed!)

Lesson #1: *If you are called to lead...LEAD!* Don't abdicate your responsibility to others!

This is true in your job. This is true in your family. It is true in your church, It is true at school, on sports team

- Eph 5:25 "Husbands love your wives" Wives Respect husband, Children Obey your parents
- 1 Cor Whatever you do...Do it unto the Lord:

- **Vashti:** The Queen that was deposed and set aside because she refused to be disrespected by husband
 - ~We don't see a lot of her...she is on the scene...and gone before you hardly know it. Bit character: BUT
 - ~Woman of principle: Though she wasn't a follower of God, certainly not a part of the Jewish faith, Principles
 - ~Don't discount what we learn from her...It is a very important lesson. One we can't overlook

Lesson #2: *Sometimes you suffer for doing the RIGHT thing!* We often overlook this at our own peril

~W mistakenly think: "If I do the RIGHT thing, God will protect me, keep bad from coming my way"

~He will make the path smooth...easy...and everything will fall in place

~When we think that way we set ourselves up for disappointment...and Spiritual turmoil

~1Peter 3:15-18

~1Peter 4:16-19

- **Esther:** The new Queen selected to replace Vashti, and raised up by God for His purposes!
Here is what you want to see when you look at Esther. She is a woman with a choice to make!
And...that choice is highlighted by the way she is named when she is introduced to the story
 - ~Two Names: She has a Jewish name, AND she has a Babylonian name
 - ~Names in the bible are always important...they tell us something about the CHARACTER of the person
 - ~Peter: The Rock!
 - ~Jesus: Yawah (God) is Salvation
 - ~Esther: Babylonian name: Lit = Myrtle tree
 - ~Hadassah: Jewish name: Lit = Compassion, or the Lord has compassion
 - ~Here is the point I want you to see: Esther, JUST like you and I...had to CHOOSE what kind of person she would be
Is she going to be a woman of Babylon...Just another queen...Or is she going to be a woman of God!
 - ~I think she had two names for a reason: Until the time comes...Until the pressure is on...she could walk the line
 - ~But...when the fate of her people hangs in the balance...she had to decide. What would her path be?

Lesson #3: *Choose what kind of a man/woman are YOU going to be?* We make that choice every day, don't we?

When a decision point comes: Am I going to choose the path of God? Or the path of this world?

Am I going to try to walk a very fine line...and like Esther did at first, Not let anyone know what I am

Illus: Watching moving Fri night with my wife: Unbroken: Story of Louis Zamperini Billy Graham

Message was so clear, so compelling, so simple

Jesus transforms lives, Jesus rescues, Jesus can reach you wherever you are, forgive your sin

Thought...we are missing that today

Try to be so acceptable, so innocuous, so watered down that we don't offend

Here is the message: You need Jesus! He can do what no one else can do: Requires surrender: Knees

If you are here today, and life is falling apart...Jesus is the answer: Unapologetically: Out or Through

- **Mordecai:** Esther's Cousin, older man who took her in when her parents died, raised her as his child 2:5ff
 ~Man of honor and integrity: 2:7 Adopted Esther, raised her: Didn't have to, but chose to do so
 2:11 Checked on her every day! Took time to seek to find out what going on
 2:21 Reported on conspiracy to assassinate Xerxes, never complained no reward
 3:1-2 Refused to bow down to Haman, (OT this was false worship!)
 4:12-14 Challenges Esther to act...even at the cost of her own life...for her people

Lesson#4: *Take a stand for spiritual truth: Even when it costs you something!*

Mordecai had to choose...over and over again he had to choose the RIGHT path!

~Take responsibility for Esther...or turn his back and busy himself with his own life

~Check on Esther...or Release her...let her make her own way in the palace

~Be silent about the assassination plan: He probably put his own life at risk by reporting it: Friends/Family

~Take a spiritual stand and NOT bow down...at the cost of His very life!

~Risk speaking to Esther: She is incredibly powerful: (Approaches Xerxes: Up to half kingdom!) SPEAK

Our world NEEDS men and women like Mordecai and Esther right now. We are in place where Christians silent

Many times our goal is to simply blend in, silently stand by and hope we aren't put on the spot

Instead, what needs to happen is, we need to take a stand for spiritual truth: Do it well, right, in love...But stand!

- **Haman:** A noble elevated by the King, to a place of honor and power...Goes to his head!
 Villain in the story! He is the bad guy! He is the one that everything hinges on. One you love to hate!
 3:5: Proud: Gets mad over this "slight" from Mordecai (Religious principles)
 5:11 Calls everyone together and brags the king is going to honor him!
 3:5: Quick tempered: Enraged: *Hot indignation, poison, wrath, anger, furious!*
 3:6: Cruel and capricious: Scorned killing only Mordecai!
 Scorned: Lit = to disdain at killing on Mordecai, utterly destroy all the Jews!!!
 3:8: Manipulative: Makes a plan to convince Xerxes to destroy all Jews...Pays for it

Lesson#5: Avoid pride at ALL costs: God OPPOSES the proud!

Proverbs and James: God opposes the proud! Never put yourself in the position of be opposed by God!

Pr 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

- **God:** Never seen, Never mentioned, always at work to bring about His desired end!
Lesson#6: Never discount God's presence and work in your life....even when you don't see Him.

CONCL: Esther is a marvelous story...it is FULL of things we need to learn: Which of them is for you today?

- Are you Leading the way you should? Unlike Xerxes: Do you need to stand up...stop being spiritually passive
- Are you willing to suffer to do the right thing? Vashti: If you are, don't despair...praise God being like Jesus
- Have you made the choice of Esther to be a man or woman of God? Or you trying to live in both worlds?
- Do you need to take a stand for Spiritual truth like Mordecai? Even at the cost of your life?
- Have you let pride creep in? are you living with God opposed to you...? If so...repentance is the solution

If you are in any of those places...what you need is a reset with Jesus! Time to come...seek Him, ask him for help!