**Lesson 2**

**Esther 2**

**The New Queen**

**Memory verse:** “Evil pursues sinners, but to the righteous, good shall be repaid” (Prov. 13:21 NKJV).

God is preparing His heroes,” said A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, “and when the opportunity comes, He can fit them into their places in a moment, and the world will wonder where they came from.”

Dr. Simpson might have added that God also prepares His *heroines,* for certainly Esther was divinely prepared for her role as the new queen. *God is never surprised by circumstances or at a loss for prepared servants.* He had Joseph ready in Egypt (Ps. 105:17), Ezekiel and Daniel in Babylon, and Nehemiah in Susa, and He had Esther ready for her ministry to the Jews in the Persian Empire.

The story continues and four years passed between Vashti’s removal and Esther’s election as queen (Esther 1:3 – 4; 2: 12. 16). During this time, Xerxes, in the year 481, attacked Greece. Xerxes gets together to get vengeance on Greece for what they did during his father’s reign. He gets together an army of 250 thousand men. They’re stacked in modern-day Turkey, and they’re waiting for orders to cross into Greece. Now, in order to cross into Greece, they’re going to have to have a means to get across. They’re making all the plans for that and they do it. Things, however, didn’t go as Xerxes expected, and his armies reached Athens, they sack the city but the Greeks ultimately defeat the Persians and drive them back out of Greece.

Four years pass and there’s no queen. According to Esther chapter 2, verse 16, four years pass before he gets around to selecting a new queen. Why four years? The answer is found in his two-year, unsuccessful invasion of Greece. The invasion of Greece happens in that two years and it occupies him so that he can’t deal with the issue of establishing a queen. Persia’s two-year, unsuccessful invasion of Greece historically fits right between Vashti’s demotion in 483 or 482 and Esther’s coronation in 479 or 478.

He finally is so frustrated by his inability to conquer Greece that he comes back home after two years of effort. And he decides that since the war is going so terribly badly, he needs a distraction. And the distraction will be selecting a new queen. Look at chapter 2, verses 1 to 4: “After these things when the wrath of King Xerxes subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done and what had been decreed against her. Then the king’s servants who attended him said, ‘Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Susa the citadel into the women’s quarters, under the custody of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, custodian of the women.’” That’s a harem, in case you were wondering. “‘And let beauty preparations be given them. And then let the young woman who pleases the queen [be queen] instead of Vashti.’ This thing pleased the king and he did so.” Okay, this is going to be an empire-wide beauty contest and we could make sort of a general assumption that if there are 50 million people in the Persian Empire, there are 25 million women to pick from - 25 million. That’s the scene

3 point summary on evidence of God’s hand working in the affairs of the people:

1) the king’s agreement 2) choice of queen 3) Mordecai’s intervention

**Discussion questions:**

Q1 What would have caused the king’s decision in selecting a new queen instead of restoring Vashti (verses 1 – 4)?

Q2 What factors should we consider in determining that God’s hand was behind the appointment of Esther as the new Queen (verses 5 – 18)?

Q3 Mordecai nor Esther had revealed their true nationality which is not God honouring. Mordecai rose to an important position but was not rewarded when the king’s assassination was thwarted by his intervention. What makes you think that God will still achieve His purposes for the Jews in spite of the circumstances?