Esther

Chapters 1 - 5

Bible Survey 2

Esther

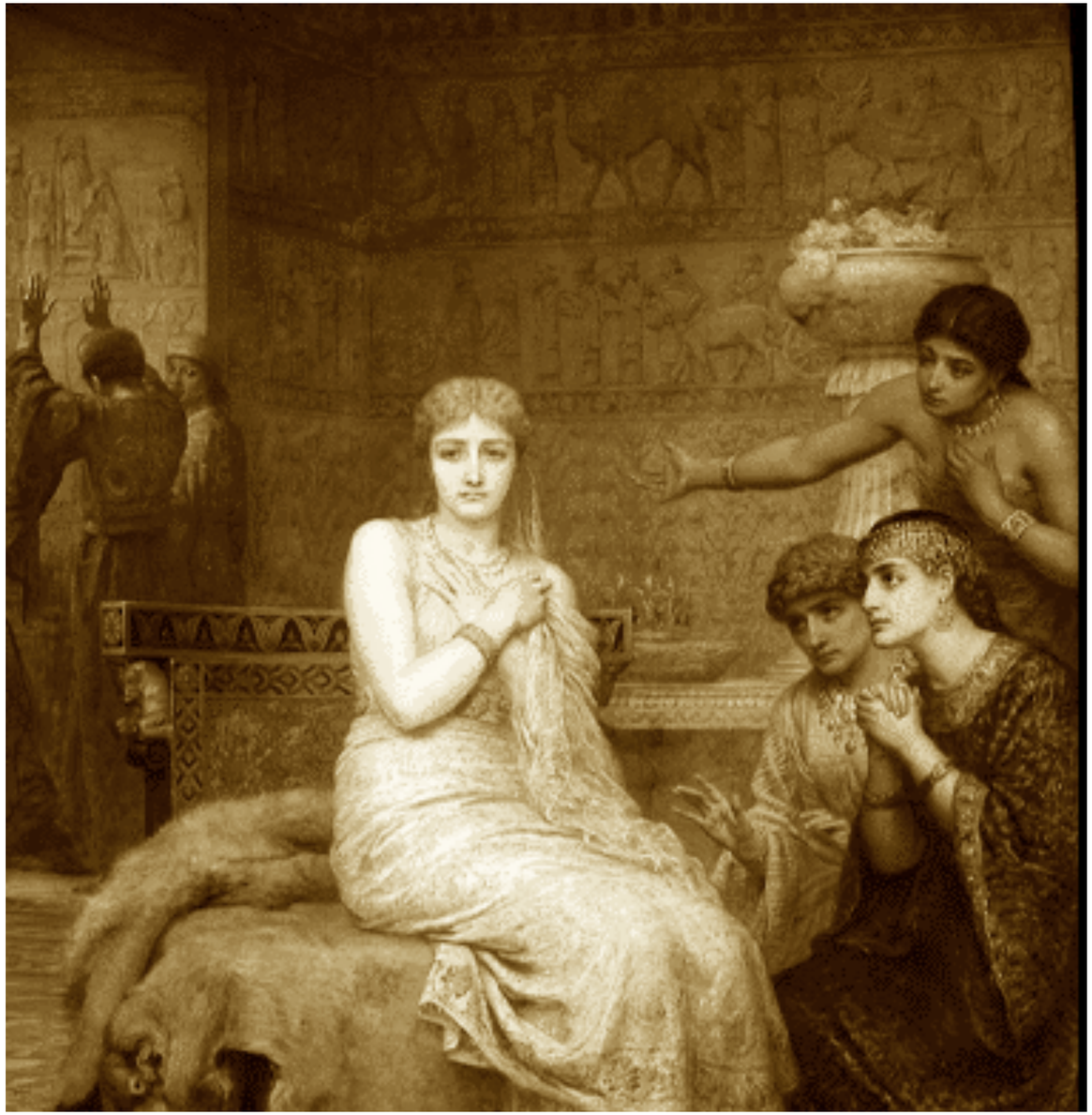
Providence & Protection (God's)

- The story of Esther fits between Ezra 6 & 7 (between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second return led by Ezra)
- Author is not identified (maybe a Persian Jew, Mordecai? Someone else?)
- We see God's providence and protection over His people
- (We don't read or see God mentioned even once in Esther)
- We see God using ordinary men and women to overcome impossible circumstances to accomplish His gracious purposes (try keeping track when you see God somehow intervening)

Trouble in Paradise

Queen Vashti's Refusal

- All started with a big party (and seemingly respectful one c.f. 1:8)
- For some reason, Queen Vashti refused the King's request to present herself
- That set off a chain of events, edict proclaimed, Queen Vashti is removed, the king is regretful and the search of a new queen started



Ordinary People?

Mordecai and Esther

- Mordecai, a Jew, a Benjamite, an exile
- Esther, beautiful of form and face, Mordecai's cousin (adopted as his daughter)
- Many young ladies were brought into the citadel but Esther was taken into the king's palace
- Esther kept her Jewish identity a secret (in obedience to Mordecai)
- Mordecai would keep track of Esther everyday
- Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her

The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:17

Trouble in Paradise II

The plot for the king's life

- Mordecai overhears the plot from two of the king's official for his life
- Mordecai informs Esther whom in turn informs the king
- An investigation found this to be so, and the two officials were hanged
- Then soon, Haman got promoted



Trouble in a pair of dice

Haman

- All the kings servant paid homage to Haman (except Mordecai)
- Mordecai’s reason was that he was a Jew (and would not bow down to and to adore a mere man - this isn’t just a sign of respect)
- Haman got very upset, everyone should bow down to him!
- Haman schemed to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai (what a drastic action to take) and throws some dice around to determine the date of the mass execution (Pur)
- Haman misrepresents the Jews to the king and to sweetens the deal to pay 10000 talents of silver into the royal treasuries

Haman’s Plot

The Genocide of the Jews

- Letters sealed with the king’s signet ring (I’m getting a little suspicious of this King Ahasuerus, seems lacking a backbone) were sent to every corner of the kingdom
- Destroy, kill, annihilate all the Jews, young, old, women and children and to seize their possession as plunder
- Then the king and Haman calmly set down for a drink, everyone else was in disarray - Jew or not, this is just crazy and violent and ridiculous!

Mordecai’s Reaction

Mordecai and Esther learns about Haman’s plan

- Mordecai in anguish, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, basically went into mourning
- Esther hears about this, and sends clothes to Mordecai (which he did not accept - there’s no disguising his anguish)
- Esther summoned Hathach to go learn what’s going on
- Hathach returns with grave news and Mordecai’s plea for Esther to implore the king’s favor
- Esther shares her dilemma and danger of seeking audience with the king

Esther's Resolve

Something had to be done

- Messages are sent between Esther and Mordecai
- "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews"
- If you remain silent… deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place (and you and your father's house will perish)
- "And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"
- In preparation to go to the king unannounced, Esther asked that all the Jews in Susa fast as will Esther and her maidens

If I perish, I perish

Esther 4:16

Esther’s request

Invitations to some banquets

- Esther stands in the court, and the king extends his scepter (Esther had safety)
- The king recognizes the risk Esther took, and realize that it must be some important matter (also Esther’s testimony here)
- “What is troubling you…”, the king promises to grant up to half his kingdom
- (Hold your breath moment, hear a pin drop, what is Esther going to say? A most crucial moment in Esther’s life)
- I think Esther had been thinking, praying, planning as she fasted and got ready for this meeting

Esther's Plans

The Banquets for Three

- Esther invites the king and Haman to a banquet (4th one in the book)
- Why do that and not just say it outright? Haman is the king's favorite. Won't be easy to just accuse, the king could just shrug it off
- And then, a second banquet
- Esther will then make her request known to the king



Haman's Pride

Mordecai, *aaaarrrgghhh!*

- Haman went away pleased as pie, until he saw Mordecai (who did not stand up or tremble)
- "Breathe, breathe, in, out… just you wait Mordecai" (dramatization of 5:10)
- Haman sent for his friends and wife… to recount to them the glory of his riches and fame
- "Even Esther the queen…"
- But, there's Mordecai, aaarrrggghhh!
- Advice from his wife and friends - build a 50 cubit (75 feet) gallows and get the king to have Mordecai hanged on it (you got this, you're the it person, anything you say goes)
- And so, he had the gallows made…

To be continued…