

"What's In a Name?"

Esther 1:1-22

March 26, 2022

I. Esther 1:1-22 Explained

- A. What's in a name? "Ahasuerus" was Xerxes 1.
- B. Scene 1 – The King's Feast (1:1-9)
 1. Xerxes through a lavish half-year gala.
 2. The point was to gain empire-wide support of his invasion of Greece (c. 485 BC).
- C. Scene 2 – The Queen's Disrespect (1:10-11)
 1. Xerxes summoned Vashti to appear at the height of the gala's culminating event.
 2. Vashi's refusal humiliated Xerxes.
- D. Scene 3 – The Wise Men's Response (1:13-22)
 1. The infuriated Xerxes asked his wise men for advice on how to respond to Vashti's personal and national sight.
 2. They advised sending a royal decree ordering wives to not follow Vashi's example and to honor their husbands instead.
- E. What's in a name? Revisited...
 1. Ahasuerus is not the Hebrew name for Xerxes. It's not a name at all.
 - a. Ahasuerus most likely was a nickname, using a word that sounded like a headache in Hebrew.
 - b. The author of Esther named Xerxes "King Headache".
 2. Xerxes is a headache throughout Esther.
 - a. Though not the villain, he endangers God's people with his self-serving apathy.
 - b. Yet, he is only *just* a headache, never a true threat to God's people.
 3. Chapter 1 shows us all this in advance:
 - a. Esther's first readers would've known that the invasion of Greece, the reason for Xerxes pompous festival, was a huge disaster – one that showed Xerxes' weakness as king.
 - b. Even before that, Xerxes and the Persian nobles are shown to be too powerless to be respected by their own wives.
 - c. Poor King Headache...

II. Implications and Applications

A. God's providence

WSC Q. 11. *What are God's works of providence?*

A. God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creature and all their actions.

1. It was the Lord who was orchestrating Xerxes present and future humiliations.
2. It was the Lord who would keep Xerxes from becoming anything more than a headache to His people.

B. Comfort and Challenge

1. Comfort: God's ongoing perfect providence causes our enemies to remain nothing more than headaches who cannot truly harm us.

Romans 8:31 - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

2. Challenge: We should avoid Xerxes-style pride and boasting.

Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

James 4:13-17 - ¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

3. Challenge: We should remember that only weak fools like Xerxes demand honor from others.
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