



Esther 1 - Longing for a better King

1) Introductory question

God isn't mentioned in the book of Esther. He doesn't speak, nor is he spoken to. Have you ever had a time when you felt God was silent, or you wondered if he was in control?

Understanding where we are in the Bible timeline:

The events recorded for us in Esther took place between 486 and 465 BC. 2 Chronicles 36:15-23 records how the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and took God's people, the Jews, into exile. The Persians then came to power and it's in the mighty Persian empire ('stretching from India to Cush' – Esther 1:1) that we find ourselves in the book of Esther. Whilst there are some Jews who have returned to Jerusalem, with permission from king Cyrus (Xerxes Grandfather), many remain in exile and living under the rule of the Persian king Xerxes.

2) An impressive kingdom (v1-9)

- How does the description of the Persian kingdom and the king's banquets show us an impressive sounding kingdom?
- Are there things about this impressive sounding kingdom that are attractive to you?
- If we are honest, we can easily find ourselves attracted to things that look and sound impressive today (and the world tells us represent 'the good life'). As we ask ourselves 'is this all there is?', how do passages such as Luke 12:22-34 and 1 John 2:16-17 help us?

3) An imperfect king (v10-22)

- What do we learn about king Xerxes and the way he rules and makes decisions as we read v10-22, and how does this hint to us that he might not be as in control as it might have first seemed?
- How does this help us as we think about the world we live in and when we feel powerless, marginalised, or persecuted as Christians?
- Can you think of a time where you felt powerless, or didn't understand why the things that happened were happening to you? Have you been able to look back and see that God was at work through this (see Romans 8:28) even though you didn't understand it at the time?

4) Longing for a better King

- To say that Xerxes is an imperfect king is a bit of an understatement! In what ways does he, and the human leaders we have today, cause us to long for a better King/leader?
- As we look to Jesus, in what ways is he the very opposite of Xerxes?
- Read Matthew 20:25-28 and give thanks for our perfect King, the Lord Jesus.