

Church of God Sunday School

ESTHER CHOSEN AS QUEEN

Esther 1:1 — 2:23

When King Ahasuerus (*uh-haz-yoo-EE-ruhs*) became the king of Persia, he ruled "from India even unto Ethiopia." He was king over 127 provinces, or districts. His queen's name was Vashti (*VASH-tye*). She is believed to have been the daughter of Belshazzar, the last Babylonian king.

During his third year as king, Ahasuerus gave a banquet (a huge feast). So many people attended this banquet that it had to be held in "the court of the garden of the king's palace."

At the same time, the queen held a banquet for the women. This feast was held in the palace of the king.

On the last day of the king's banquet, after he had had too much to drink, King Ahasuerus commanded that Queen Vashti be brought before him. She was to wear "the crown royal" and show the king's guests how beautiful she was. For some reason Queen Vashti did not want to do as the king commanded. (According to tradition, Vashti was expected to be dressed very immodestly.) So, Vashti refused!

King Ahasuerus became angry at Queen Vashti. He asked his wise men what he could legally do about her disobedience. The wise men said that Queen Vashti had set a bad example for all the women in the kingdom. They told the king that other women would now feel free to disrespect and disobey their own husbands.

On the advice of the wise men, the king forbade Vashti from ever coming into his presence again. He also sent letters to all the provinces, stating that every man was to bear rule over his own household.

Time passed. The king was no longer angry, and he began to think about Vashti, what she had done, and the decree he had made against her. The king's servants

advised him to have the most beautiful, young, unmarried women in his kingdom brought to the palace. From these young ladies, King Ahasuerus could choose one to be queen instead of Vashti. "And the thing pleased the king; and he did so."

Before long, many young women were brought to the "house of the women." (The historian Josephus wrote that 400 women were brought to the palace.) There, while in the care of Hege, or Hegai (*hay-GAY*),

the king's chamberlain, the women would be prepared to appear before the king.

At that time, in Shushan, the capital city of Persia, there lived a Jew named Mordecai (*MOR-duh-kye*). (Many Jews were living in Persia, after having been carried away from Jerusalem in captivity many years before.) Mordecai had a young cousin named Hadassah (*hud-DAS-uh*), or Esther, whose parents had died. Mordecai raised Esther as "his own daughter." She was a beautiful young woman.

Esther was one of the many beautiful young ladies who were brought to the palace. Each of the young women

had to spend one year in "purifications" (beauty treatments) before she could be brought to King Ahasuerus.

When Hegai met Esther, he was pleased with her. He quickly supplied her with everything she needed for her purification. He gave her seven maidens to wait on her, and she was also given the best place in the house of the women.

Every day Mordecai walked by the court of the women, "to know how Esther did, and what should become of her." But Esther never told anyone that she was a Jewess, for Mordecai had warned her not to.

When a young lady was to go to the king, she could ask for "whatsoever she desired"—jewels, beauti-



ful clothes, or perfumes. But when Esther's turn came, she asked for nothing. She let Hegai decide what she needed. "And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her."

When Esther came before King Ahasuerus, he loved her more than all the other young women. He placed "the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." Then the king held a great feast and called it "Esther's feast." The king declared a holiday and gave out gifts. Still, Queen Esther told no one she was a Jewess.

After those things happened, while Mordecai "sat in the king's gate," he learned that two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan (*big-THAWN*) and Teresh (*TEH-rish*), were angry and sought to kill the king!

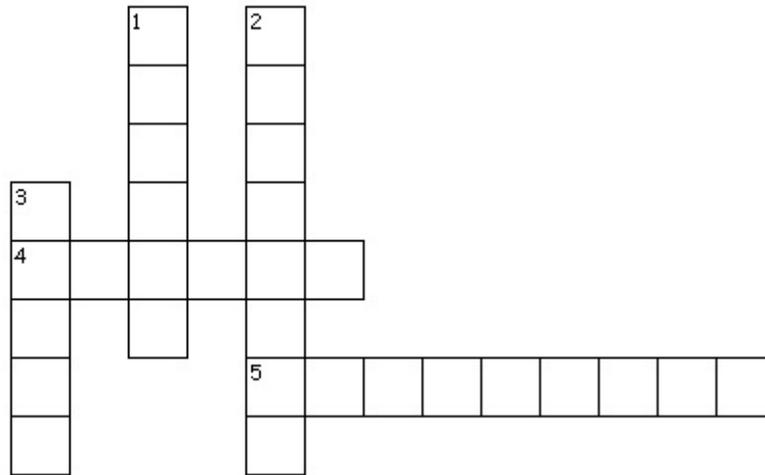
Mordecai let Queen Esther know of their plans. She sent word to the king about the men's wicked plot, but she gave Mordecai all the credit for finding out about it. After the king had searched the matter thoroughly, both men were put to death.

Mordecai had saved the king's life! All this was written in the "book of the chronicles" (a record book of what happened to the king, or the history of the kingdom).

MEMORY VERSE:

"And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her." —Esther 2:15b

Esther Becomes Queen



Across

- 4. another name for Hadassah
- 5. King of Persia

Down

- 1. the Queen who disobeyed
- 2. Esther's cousin
- 3. the keeper of the women



Queen Esther

