**RISE UP** in 2021

May 9, 2021 – **Mother’s Day**

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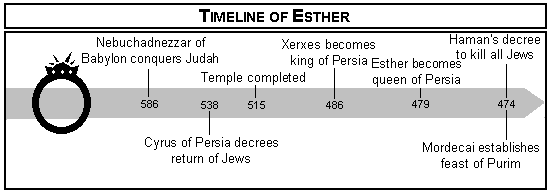
***MADE FOR THIS MOMENT***

A Study of the Book of Esther

***Battle of the Sexes***

Esther 1-2:18





One of the most obvious features of Esther is that it is set during the **exile of Israel.** Esther’s first readers would have recognized the exilic context of the book, from its Persian setting and the threat of Israel’s destruction in light of Haman’s plot. Because the book’s events take place during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I; 486–464 BC), they also take place *after*the first return of Israel from Babylon under Zerubbabel (538 BC) and *before*Israel’s second and third returns under Ezra (458 BC) and Nehemiah (445 BC). In other words, there is hope for Israel, given their first return, but Haman’s threat to destroy all the Jews puts that hope in serious doubt. As with the destruction of Samaria (722 BC) and Jerusalem (586 BC) that began the exile, the question in Esther remains – **will God preserve His people, Israel, and return them to the Promised Land?** This question dominates the drama of the book.

*When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but* ***when the wicked rule, the people groan****.* Proverbs 29:2

What can we learn from **studying** Esther?

God is the great **Promise** Keeper.

*For* ***if you keep silent*** *at this time, relief and* ***deliverance will rise*** *for the Jews* ***from another place****, but you and your father’s house will perish.* Esther 4:14a

God is **sovereign**, even when life does not make **sense**.

*And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom* ***for such a time as this****?”* Esther 4:14b

God can do a **perfect** work through **imperfect** people.

There has always been **tension** between the sexes.

**We are told in Genesis that God created them - male and female.**

*Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.* Genesis 5:2

After the fall, God tells Eve in Genesis 3:16 …

*To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but* ***he shall rule over you****.”* Genesis 3:16

48 years ago in 1973 Promoters dubbed the match between Billy Jean King (29) and Bobby Riggs (55) in the “***Battle of the Sexes***.”



50 million people in the United States and an estimated 90 million people worldwide tuned in on **September 20, 1973** to watch King versus Riggs in the Houston Astrodome. One of the most watched televised sporting events of all time; no tennis match before or since has been seen by so many.

God’s plans are always **bigger** than anyone’s **ego**.

God’s **power** is greater than those in power.

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

*Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned* ***from India to Ethiopia*** *over* ***127 provinces****, in those days when King Ahasuerus* ***sat on his royal throne in Susa,*** *the citadel, in the* ***third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants.*** *The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days,* ***180 days****.* Esther 1:1-4

*On the seventh day, when* ***the heart of the king was merry with wine****, he commanded … seven eunuchs … to* ***bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown****, in order* ***to show*** *the peoples and the princes* ***her beauty****, for she was lovely to look at.* Esther 1:10-11

*But* ***Queen Vashti refused*** *to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs.* ***At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.*** Esther 1:12

What happens when worldly power is **blocked**?

***For the queen’s behavior will be made known to all women****, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and* ***she did not come****.’ This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen’s behavior will say the same to all the king’s officials, and there will be* ***contempt and wrath in plenty****.* Esther 1:17-18

It does not matter how **corrupt** the powers that govern this world can become ... God is always **sovereign**.

God even uses **sinful** human decisions for His redemptive purposes.

*In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines.* ***She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.*** Esther 2:14

… ***the king loved Esther more than all the women,*** *and* ***she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins****, so that* ***he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.*** *Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was* ***Esther’s feast.*** *He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.* Esther 2:17-18

Jesus came to change the world ... and one way is how men treat women.

How does following Jesus impact our relationship to women, especially our wives?

*Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an* ***understanding way****, showing* ***honor*** *to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are* ***heirs with you*** *of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.* 1 Peter 3:7

*Husbands,* ***love your wives****, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.* Ephesians 5:25

**What must we remember as we seek to build God’s kingdom in a dark and broken world?**

* Do not **underestimate** God! He is omnipotently present and working even when He seems most conspicuously absent.
* Do not **overestimate** pagan power! God even uses His worst enemies to serve His greatest purposes.
* Do not **underestimate** our kingdom significance! God uses His weakest servants for His greatest works.