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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT: **A2383 ~ An Orphan Girl.**

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The Bible book of Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman; the other is Ruth. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew; whereas Esther was a Jew who married a Gentile. But God used both of these women in different ways to preserve the ancestral line for Jesus Christ.

Another unusual fact about the book of Esther is that God isn't mentioned in it once. Although God's name isn't in the text, God Himself isn't missing. He's working everywhere behind the scenes to make things happen that we normally wouldn't expect to happen. This book shows that God still loved His scattered people and He had a plan to save them from being totally destroyed.

The book of Esther was written by a Jew living in Persia but we don't know the author's name. The events that took place occurred during the Jewish exile to Babylon and before Ezra, a Jewish scholar and priest, moved to Jerusalem to teach God's laws to the first group of Judeans who'd returned with permission from King Cyrus, the king who defeated the Babylonians. King Xerxes of Persia lived in his winter capital city of Susa, which was located in present-day southern Iran, and he reigned there from 486 BC to 465 BC. His empire stretched from India to present-day Sudan and included nearly all the nations of the Middle East. In some Bibles, the king's name is given in the Hebrew language as 'Ahasuerus', which was a title, the same as 'Pharaoh'.

Three years into King Xerxes' reign, he organised a 6-month conference for his nobles, officials and military leaders to help him plan how to govern so many different people groups. At the end of the conference, he gave an expensive 7-day feast for them all. Xerxes' wife, Queen Vashti, also put on a banquet for the women staying at the palace.

On the last day of the king's feast, when he was somewhat drunk, he called for his wife to come and display her beauty before all the guests. Xerxes was very proud of his queen but he should never have boasted of her beauty in the first place. He was only encouraging his guests to be envious of his great power and fortune as king. Did Vashti want to be parading herself before a room full of drunken men? No, she did not, and rightly or wrongly, she refused the king's request to come. This type of disrespect made the king look foolish in front of all his important guests and he became furious with her public humiliation of him. Here he was the ruler of the greatest empire in the world yet all could see that he couldn't control his own wife. Based on his advisors' idea, Xerxes decided to ruin and discard Vashti, for it was feared that her treatment of a king's command would cause all wives to revolt against their husbands' wishes of them too.

Vashti was thus banished from the king's presence and her position of queen revoked. Whatever we may feel about the severely unfair way Vashti was treated, God was still moving behind the scenes to carry out His purposes. Although the king had many secondary wives in his harem, the search was soon on for him to find a new queen to replace Vashti.

In today's drama, Esther's old relative, Mordecai, who was the descendant of Kish the Benjaminite, persuaded Esther to put herself forward as a candidate for the position of next queen of the empire.

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The search was now on for all the most beautiful young women in the empire to present themselves as candidates for the position of queen, an unheard of opportunity for all types of young, beautiful maidens from all parts of society. It's possible that, as an official in the king's service, Mordecai had no choice in preventing or encouraging Esther from joining the competition or not. However, Mordecai told Esther to keep her Jewish nationality a secret at all times because if it were known, she'd lose all chances of becoming the next queen.

When Esther was chosen to be taken into the king's women's palace, it relieved Mordecai of the responsibility of any future care needed for Esther if something ever happened to him. Like all other chosen young women, Esther would now be provided for at least for the rest of the king's reign, which turned out to be the next 18 years. But was this the right thing for Mordecai or Esther to do? Jewish people weren't to marry Gentile or non-Jewish people, even if Xerxes was the most powerful king on earth at that time. Moses in Deuteronomy, Chapter 7, told the Israelites after they'd crossed the Red Sea that God was commanding that they shouldn't marry any of the seven tribes already living in the land of Canaan.

After Esther's time, Ezra taught in Chapter 10 of his book that the Jews were to be racially pure for God and not to intermarry with the people of any other nations. All Biblical examples of Jewish leaders marrying non-Jewish spouses happened before this decree of Ezra.

In Chapter 2 of the book of Esther, a description is given of the 12 months of beautifying preparations that were given to each young woman before she went and presented herself to the king. The king's harem operated on a selection plan that each girl would have just one night with the king as her test of proving that she should be the next queen. If the king didn't care for her, she would live the rest of her life like a widow in a section of the king's harem reserved for secondary wives. This chief man-in-charge of the young women really liked Esther and gave her preferential treatment and good advice about what the king liked.

When Esther's turn came to spend her night with the king, she won Xerxes' favour and approval above all the others; so much so that Xerxes at once chose her to be his queen. This all took place in the 7th year of Xerxes' reign, and 4 years after he had deposed Vashti. To celebrate the occasion, he gave a great banquet in Esther's honour for all his nobles and officials, declaring a public holiday for the provinces and giving generous gifts to everyone. For her part, though, Esther continued to keep her family background and nationality a secret, just as Mordecai had instructed her to do.

While we might feel sorry for all those young women who appeared to have wasted lives by being assigned directly to the king's secondary wives harem, history shows that women in Persian society had influence and some even ran their own businesses. We have to ask ourselves: just how many wives should a king in those times have?

The clearest statement that monogamy, which is a one husband-wife relationship, is God's ideal for marriage, and is given by the Lord Jesus' teaching in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 19. In the beginning in Genesis, Chapter 1, it was in the Garden of Eden that God made one man and one woman, and they were both made perfect in every way. Polygamy, which is where multiple wives are married to the same man, was never God's intention for marriage and is never satisfactory for all. Jealousy between multiple wives only destroys God's desire for harmony in the family long-term, even if all of a man's wives live in different houses.

A while after Esther was made queen, Mordecai was on duty at the king's gate and there, he uncovered a plot that two of the guards assigned to the door of the king's private quarters, were planning to kill the king. The city or palace gates were places where official business was transacted and legal judgments were made. Mordecai immediately informed Queen Esther of the plot, and she told the king, naming Mordecai as the source of her information. The plot proved to be true and the two guards were executed. Although this event was written down in the palace's records, King Xerxes forgot to reward Mordecai for his good deed.

In the book of Esther, Chapter 2, we're shown the high price of anger. Although the reason why those two guards were angry at the king and planned to assassinate him isn't given, it certainly destroyed them both. What can we do to control our anger? Firstly, anger is a God-given emotion, just as love, compassion and fear are also. Just as we need to keep our emotions in check, we need to understand that although we might be right in our position on a certain matter, we can be wrong in our attitude and the way we express our opinion.

Often a person gets angry but if they let the anger control them, then they'll do and say things that would be better left undone and unsaid. When anger arises, think of the consequences if it gets out of control, because anger is like an acid and will do more harm to the angry person than to the person who's the subject of the anger. It's wise to direct anger towards problems and not people; and wiser to focus energy on solutions to the problems than use excuses to stay bitter, unforgiving and upset.

In Ephesians, Chapter 4, it says: "Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil." It's obvious that God has placed a definite limit on the use of anger. Left unresolved, anger creates an intense desire to destroy something. And that appears to be what the king's two guards had in mind to justify themselves and change something that they thought wasn't right.

In Esther's time, the king's word was law. Some kings were good kings and fair in their decisions, but some weren't. But God is always working behind the scenes for the good of His greater plan for His people. In the book of Daniel, Chapter 2, Daniel praised the God of heaven, saying, "Praise the name of God forever and ever, for He has all wisdom and power; He controls the course of world events, He removes kings and sets up other kings." Even King Xerxes, with all his wealth and power, was under God's control. Some kings recognised this but others thought that they were as great as a pagan god and thus unaccountable to anyone, no matter what they did.

Through God's will, the Persian Empire was eventually replaced by the Greek Empire about 135 years after Xerxes' kingship was over. One day in the future, all earthly kingdoms and empires will be replaced by God's eternal kingdom. His kingdom will be different from all other kingdoms that we've known. All those kingdoms preceding His have been physical kingdoms, which came to an end and usually by being conquered by a stronger army. The leader of God's kingdom, however, is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one in all the history of the world will ever be worthy of such an honour that Christ will receive. For in Psalm 150, Verse 6, it says: "Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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