

15018

ESTHER: QUEEN OF DESTINY

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #1

Vashti Dethroned

Reading: Esther 1

Good afternoon, b&s, and young people! Good afternoon b&s and young people in country areas, and greetings to our listeners on FM radio! There's a pretty wide audience, b&s, today and we hope in God's mercy, that we'll all enjoy together, this tremendous study on the book of Esther. Before we commence, b&s, on our formal study, I would like to thoroughly endorse our bro. Bill's words at the opening of this meeting, that we feel a great depth of gratitude to our loving Heavenly Father, for He has given us this day, b&s, a wonderful day, to commence our studies, and He has given us, despite the weather if it might change, this wonderful camp in which we can fraternize together, and have our young people up here, involving themselves in the things of the spirit. I believe, b&s, that this particular camp, is the nearest things that we'll ever get, to the Feast of Tabernacles this side of the kingdom of God.

Of all the feasts of Israel, b&s, the Feast of Tabernacles was the one which Israel enjoyed most; because of the great picnic atmosphere that was created by Israel dwelling under the boughs of trees and the branches of goodly trees. Well, we may have caravans in the place of boughs of trees, or canvas as the case may be, but the atmosphere is the same, b&s. It is a picnic atmosphere and I am sure that every parent here, that has young children, knows the value of this place; and we do owe a very great debt of gratitude to our loving Heavenly Father, who has made this possible. And we want to make that point from the very outset, b&s, and to Him, for those brethren and sisters in this area, who have laboured so long and so well, that we may come here once a year to enjoy this wonderful atmosphere.

Having said that, b&s, we want to launch into the story of Esther, and there's one thing I don't want to spend a long time on, and that's the background. The background, b&s, is relatively simple even though it may be involved, and the background of this book, as with a lot of the time periods involved in the reigns of the kings of Persia, is very intricate indeed, and of course, is interlaced with a lot of detail. We don't want to bog our studies down with some academic considerations of kings and their histories, though of course, if time permitted, this would be interesting. What we intend to do, b&s, is to distribute among you, a bible insert which will set out the chronology of the book of Esther, as it relates to Nehemiah and Ezra particularly. I want to make the point that that chronology is not mine; it's borrowed. It's taken from the story of the bible, and I believe that that chronology, b&s, is the most reasonable one that has been put out on this particular

history, although not without its problems. I don't believe this side of the kingdom, we're ever going to entirely solve the problems of chronology, in relation to the books of Esther, Nehemiah, and Ezra particularly, but I do believe upon very close examination, that that one which we will give to you, will certainly be the most reasonable chronology, in which the book of Esther finds a comfortable position historically. Sufficient to say this, b&s, that we believe that a king called Darius or Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes, severally either in the books of Nehemiah, Ezra and Esther, those titles belong to one king, during the period of Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah. And we believe, b&s, that the generally accepted chronology of Ezra is wrong. I don't believe it could possibly be right! because the generally accepted chronology of the book of Esther, puts it in the reign of either king Xerxes or Artaxerxes Longimanus, and if we accepted those dates, we would have Mordecai about 160 years old and Esther would be a very aged beauty, to say the least; because we are told specifically in the book of Esther, that Mordecai was carried away captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the second captivity of Nebuchadnezzar which took place in about 597 B.C. and that is about 80 years before the story of Esther. You add any more years on top of that, b&s, and we're in enormous difficulties, just to mention one of the problems that relate to chronology. So sufficient for us to put this story of Esther in its reasonable context, in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, who we believe is the Ahasuerus, the Artaxerxes or the Darius, mentioned during the course of Nehemiah's work, or I put them in their chronological order, Esther's work, Ezra's work and then Nehemiah's work. And when that is done, b&s, we find that these three books, fit very comfortably together in that historical chronology and provide, we believe, a very, very wonderful cohesion in the way that these three books link together.

For example, how was it that the people of Israel were able to go back to that Land under the jurisdiction of the Persians and to gain so much favour from them, and to be able to get those decrees which virtually gave into their hands, sufficient authority to do as they will? How were they able to do that, b&s, were it not for some influence against the throne? For example, when Nehemiah came before the king, to plead the cause of the Jewish people, and he prayed to the God of heaven, it is recorded in the second chapter of Nehemiah, 'and the queen sat alongside the king', in our opinion, that was Esther, and would therefore, b&s, lend weight to the fact of why Ahasuerus or Darius, was so ready to grant the petition of Nehemiah his cupbearer. Not only so, b&s, but you take Zechariah when he went back with the people with Haggai the prophet, and they exhorted the people to go on and build that temple. The very first vision, the very first vision that Zechariah saw was of an angel riding a horse, or sitting astride a horse under the shade of a myrtle tree, watching the progress and the building of the temple of God and watching over the fortunes of the nation against their enemies and Esther's name, b&s, was not always Esther, that was her Persian name, her original Jewish name was Hadassah which means 'a myrtle tree'. And under the shadow of that myrtle tree Israel progressed, and there was a power behind the throne, b&s, symbolized by that myrtle tree, and the angel sitting upon the red horse, ready in an instant to move forward and to protect Israel from their enemies, and the queen we believe, was the very power which was symbolized as Yahweh through His angel, used the influence of that wonderful woman, to bend the king's will, that he might exercise himself on behalf of the people of God.

When we read therefore, Nehemiah, Ezra, Zechariah's prophecy, Haggai's prophecy and Esther's book together, we can see that there was a combination of factors working all over that empire. Ezra behind the throne, Nehemiah before the throne as the cupbearer, Ezra the aged scribe, the student of the word of God, Haggai and Zechariah the enthusiastic prophets, Zerubbabel and Joshua the energetic builders and there's a co-operation in this work, b&s, giving it tremendous impetus and it's quite obvious that the power of Almighty God overshadows it all. And the strangest thing about it, b&s, is that in the book of Esther, there is not one single mention of God by name or title, and not only so, there is not one single mention of prayer or of any religious practice in association with Israel's religion. Not even a single mention of it anywhere in that book. It's merely told as a story of great dramatic import and yet, b&s, though the name of God is not in that book, nor any mention of His religion, the power of God is stamped all over that book, and one wonders why it is, in a story like that, that God's name is extracted. Why? Why would God do a thing like that? And I don't believe we have to think very long to come to an answer, because, b&s, there's a wonderful story in Esther, of course, (we know it's a wonderful story) there's a wonderful principle in that story, and that's why God does not record His name there, that the principle might even become more emphatic in our mind; providence, b&s, is in that book! We can't see God today, we don't see His angels today, there are no prophets to come and say, 'thus saith the LORD', there are no inspired men to write from the halls of heaven, b&s, to tell us what we ought to do; we know nothing by sight as it were, but everywhere in our lives God is stamped over our life, because divine providence follows us in all facets of our lives, b&s. And be it in safety or in danger, be it in prosperity or in adversity, God is there, and those who read the will of God in their lives, are those who are alive to God, and though the name of God in that sense, may not be as a reality before them, nonetheless, God is a reality to them by the eye of faith, in which they can see Him, b&s, and no question at all that Mordecai particularly, read that beautifully in the story.

You know, b&s, this book has been named Esther; Esther is not the heroine or rather the hero of that book. No one as wonderful as she was, b&s, Mordecai is the power of that book, Mordecai is the one that read that situation gloriously, Mordecai, b&s, was the one who through the power and understanding that he had of God, moved those figures around that chess board in order that he might extricate his people from disaster, and Mordecai was the one, b&s, who inspired the government, who inspired Esther, who inspired the Jews and finished up being the inspirer of the whole world. Mordecai is the hero of that book, of that there is not a shadow of a doubt, and we're going to come and see and to love him, b&s, for what he is!

Now, as we go through that story, providence is the great lesson! I don't think we can have a better caption over the book of Esther, than what's contained in Numbers 23 verse 23, and this is the caption that I chose to write about the book of Esther, in order that we might understand the principle involved. In Numbers 23 and in verse 23, and here Balaam the false prophet being taken hold of by the spirit of God, and being forced virtually to say what he had to say; these are some of the things he said, b&s, 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel:

according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, behold what God hath wrought'. What a wonderful verse that is ; there is no enchantment against Israel, and then in the book of Esther, b&s, this was the great lesson of that book, when Haman the Jews' enemy, sat down and threw a dice as it were, to use a modern term, virtually threw the dice to determine a lucky day to destroy God's people according to all the superstitions of the world to which he belonged, and tossing the dice to determine the end of God's people, 'there is no enchantment against Israel', said a false prophet. And do you know, b&s, I've chosen that as a caption for my own bible marking, to put over the top of the book of Esther, and I was absolutely amazed and I didn't try to do this, I was amazed, I went through that story, to find that the book of Numbers kept coming back to Esther. You know, I merely chose that as a caption for myself, that I might understand the principle of that book, and time and time again, I had to go back to the prophecies of Balaam for supporting references, because I found a wonderful relationship between that prophecy and the work of Esther and Mordecai in that book, and there was Baalim, b&s, who was hired by a Gentile king to curse Israel and the curse was turned to a blessing and there in the book of Esther we have this great Jew hater. With all his vexations against the people of God, and all his planning and schemes, and all of it came to nothing, b&s, because he didn't know that there was no enchantment against Jacob and neither is there any divination against Israel. And the providence of God was wonderful in that book, b&s, to preserve His people.

And what a time to come together to consider this; what a time, when at the present moment of time, the Middle East has again erupted into a furore as Israel has crossed the borders north, and gone right up to the Leontes River in Lebanon, to clear up the whole southern region of those pests, who keep coming across her borders to slay innocent civilians. And we have in our own day, b&s, wonderful signs; oh, I wonder, how we appreciate that? I wonder, b&s, on the day of account, how many of us will be reminded of what God did for us, are we any different than the book of Esther? There was no open vision, there was no voice of God, there is no name or title of God in her book, but look at the situation they were in! It is the same today, b&s, we're not in the Land, we're not Jews, but there are Jews in the Land, and their enemies are still the same; they're still of the same stock, Agagites, they still hate Israel above all else, even when Haman was offered the world, b&s, he put the hatred of Israel above his ambition. And the Arabs do that today, they are promised this, they're promised that; United Nations would house them tomorrow if they would accept different land. The Arabs have the world at their feet, if only they knew how to play their cards right, the Arabs could have everything, but they put the hatred of Israel above everything else, and it eats them out day after day. And they try enchantments against Israel, and this week in the Middle East, we in this far off land, have been reminded by God Almighty, of the tremendous issues that face us. It must come, b&s, the day has to come, one of these days we're going to be taken right out of this place; the angel must be ready now to leave, it's going to happen very shortly and Russia will make its grand move for the building up of its image empire. Let us all understand, b&s, here and now, that the advent of the King of Israel is on the eve of becoming a fact. Mordecai knew the issues, Mordecai planned for the issues; he made a plan, b&s, on the basis of events as they happen. We are going to see him put it up into operation, a plan whereby he knew what

was going to happen and he planned accordingly, ahead, and he was always way ahead of his enemy because he knew, b&s, he knew that there was no enchantment against Israel, and he planned accordingly, and so ought we to plan for ourselves and our families.

Now there's providence in the book of Esther as far as Israel is concerned, but as we go through that book, b&s, and deal with the preservation of God's people, both in those days and, of course, in our own day, as far as the Jewish people are concerned, what about ourselves? Is there not a lesson in the book of Esther for us? Well, Romans chapter 8 provides that lesson, b&s, it's the same lesson except this time it's more personal; in the 8th chapter of Romans and in verse 28, here's the principle that comes out of the book for you and I. And Paul says 'and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and to them who are called according to His purpose', all things work together for them that love God and for them who are called according to His purpose. You know, b&s, things work together for good as far as the Jews were concerned in the days of Mordecai; but they didn't love God, that is, not all of them. Mordecai did, Esther did and a few others, the bulk of the nation, b&s, left in Persia didn't love God! if they had have, they wouldn't have been there, they would have been down with Zechariah and Haggai the prophet building the temple, and yet things worked according to God's purpose, because the Jews were called according to His purpose, but b&s, we have not only been called according to His purpose but we love God. And if God is faithful to those He calls for the destiny which He has in mind for them, when they are disobedient to Him, how much more will He be faithful, b&s, unto us, to whom He's not only called according to His purpose, but who have responded to love Him? Now there's the greatness for ourselves is it not? all things work together for good; Arthur Grange is in hospital, b&s, with a compound fracture of the wrist, his wife is hurt and his children have been upset for this weekend. Arthur's got to understand that and will understand it, because I know him, that all things will work together for good, although we may not be able to understand the circumstances of life at the moment, but they will work together for good for those who love God and for those who are called according to His purpose. And this is the great lesson, b&s, that we must extract from the book of Esther, and we want to try and paint that picture for you, to make the times exciting, to bring you into the realm of the kingdom of Persia, for you to see the king upon his throne and to feel the hatred of Haman and to feel the intensity of that situation so that when the relief comes, b&s, we're all going to feel that relief and know why it's come. And go away from this place believing with all our heart and soul, that all things work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.

Now this is how we propose to treat the book of Esther. We believe, b&s, there are three great things, great principles in the book, that are necessary for us to deal with, they will be the privily providence in the preservation of Israel, that's on the surface. In that book also, b&s, which is quite easy to see as we go through, there will be principles of truth, which will be applicable to saints of all ages, moral issues of life, we want to deal with them. And there is in that book, as perhaps in no other, types of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His people, and of His kingdom, which paint in glowing terms, b&s, the

wonderful things to which we have been related. So there's providence, there's principle and there's type in this book; but rather than come here this weekend and to deal with it in an academic fashion and say, 'here's the story, there's the principle, and then set all the types out, rather than do that, b&s, although that's what we've done in the marking of our bible, what we hope to do is weave them all together, so that as we run through the story we'll see the characters involved, we'll see the principles that emanate from those stories and then we'll see also, interwoven in those stories, the wonderful types that are set before us as the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, is foreshadowed in that book, as of course, is the work of His people.

In the characters of the book, b&s, in all the characters that are portrayed in this book, of course, we have the type set out before us. We have for example the first character introduced, Vashti, queen supreme. Chosen because of her beauty, but when it came time, b&s, at a critical moment in the king's life, on the seventh day of the royal feast in the palace, she spurned his request to demonstrate, not her beauty, but the king's beauty, and was dethroned, b&s, dethroned and replaced by a better than she. Vashti, unquestionably speaks, of natural Israel, whom God went and redeemed and in the book of Ezekiel says, 'crowned them with a golden crown and called upon them to manifest His glory and His beauty'; but they would not' says the prophet Jeremiah for which Israel was dethroned, b&s, and the kingdom of God was taken away from them and given to a nation bring forth the fruits thereof. That's what Vashti stood for in the type.

Then of course, there was Esther. The young Jewish maid, obscure origins, who had lost her father and mother, but found a relationship with an incredible individual, who lifted her from the dunghill and put her upon the throne of the kingdom, and stood behind her as the great power behind that throne, and Esther rose to great prominence to become the queen of the world, and the saviour of her people. She rose out of obscurity to replace Vashti and there's no doubt whatever, b&s, who she represents; she represents us, the ecclesia of God of all ages. Israel after the spirit, who don't turn their back on God, but are prepared to come forth to manifest His glory and His beauty in the way that the king wanted it done, rather in the way that she wanted it done.

And then, of course, there was Haman, the Jew's enemy, as he's time and time called in this book, and the only one in the bible with that title, the Jew's enemy, whose hatred was such, b&s, that when he went home to his family and he called his wife and friends together to tell them what they already knew, but he wanted to recount it before them, in order that his glory might be embellished in their mind, when he'd recounted it all, that he was next unto the king, that he was the only one in the whole kingdom, nobody else was asked to the feast except 'me', but he says, 'it doesn't do me any good as long as that Jew sits there', and the hatred of his enemies, b&s, even took preeminence above his own ambition. A man who could never live with himself until he was supreme, even above the king. A man whose ego was absolutely incredible, and he was a man, b&s, who lived a miserable life because he couldn't be as big as he ever wanted to be, the Jew's enemy; and his type, b&s, or his anti-type is everywhere in the world today, and in particularly headed up in those arch-enemies of Israel, who will never be satisfied and even when they're kings of the world, if ever they could be, would never be satisfied

until every Jew is buried out of sight; and the world is full of people like that, full of them, be they haters of natural or spiritual Israel and whose hatred for the things of God, clouds out all other things in their life. Haman, the Jew's enemy, he's everywhere today!

And I've left the greatest character until last, Mordecai, the messiah of Israel. Mordecai, b&s, without whom Esther would never be where she was on that day; the one who nurtured Esther when her own mother and father had died, and became that woman's strength in life, the one who so commanded her attention and her love, that even when the queen, when she was separated from him became queen of the world, and whose authority was far above his, sitting in the king's gate, did as when she was a daughter in his house. It is recorded, b&s, that her father's name, which means 'father of might', that her father of might died, but she had a father of might in Mordecai; and he inspired her to tremendous heights, b&s, and he guided that woman in danger and out of danger, and with that, b&s, he guided the people of God through danger; when he was given the reigns of government he seized them with such enthusiasm and zeal and with such splendid administration, that he gained immediately the praise of the king, until it came the time, b&s, when the king handed the whole kingdom over to him, and left it to him, and he dominated then, the whole known world. And Mordecai without a shadow of a doubt, typifies the Lord Jesus Christ, who has put the bride of Christ where she is today and will be tomorrow. He was an administrator, b&s, above all administrators, whose wisdom and understanding and foresight has made preparation for all of us in his kingdom, and will ultimately find such favour with men, and with his own people, that he'll become king of the world and be accepted by all and will be next only unto the king.

And Ahasuerus, b&s, that there's no doubt about this, that the power which Ahasuerus wielded was typical of the power of God; though we would very much hesitate to say that he was a type, of course, of our Heavenly Father, and we don't believe that any such thing exists in the Word of God, but nonetheless, in the way in which this kingdom was administered, there is a resemblance in type, of the loftiness, the awe-inspiring majesty of the way in which God Himself conducts the affairs of His universe, who will not be approached, b&s, willy-nilly by anyone at any time at their own whim, but who stands aloft from His creation, who has provided a mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one comes into His presence unless they come according to heaven's etiquette. And in that, b&s, the almost silent, aloof, despotic king, aloof from his subjects to the degree that he didn't even understand at the time, that Haman had planned the Jew's death; he didn't know the issues because he had kept himself so aloof from them, that even in that, b&s, we have reflected in this book, the awe-inspiring majesty of which our Heavenly Father, of course, is but the great, great centre as far as majesty is concerned.

B&S, do you know, I believe that in all our understanding of the Word of God, as far as my observations of the truth is concerned, among you and myself, there's one thing in which we are seriously deficient, which very seldom finds expression in our worship or in our words, or in anything, and that is that our Heavenly Father is awe-inspiring majesty! and who will not, who will not, b&s, be approached in any way or fashion as we would wish, but who stands aloof from sin, who stands aloof, b&s, from all that morality

is related to, who is nothing else but life and glory and honour and immortality; who is the great central focus of the whole universe, who is an awe-inspiring terrible majesty; that's something we've all got to think about! And when we come to the story of Esther, and we see the carefulness and the approach to an earthly king, b&s, let us be very much impressed with the awe-inspiring majesty of the One that we worship, and who we know, is our loving Heavenly Father. Yes, He is a loving Heavenly Father, but never forgot this b&s, as the world has not only forgotten it, but has apostatized from the truth, never forget that the God of the Old Testament is exactly the same as the God of the New Testament. 'For our God, said the apostle Paul, 'is a consuming fire'; and never let's forget that, b&s, and if we get that picture of God in our minds, and that's the only way that we can conjure any idea of our Heavenly Father, if we can see Him as an awe-inspiring majesty, then our worship will be impregnated with a carefulness that will make it far more beneficial to ourselves and much more reverent; much more reverent, b&s, to Him to whom all reverence belongs.

Such is the background of our story. It begins in about the year B.C. 520; the story of Esther then runs through a period to about B.C. 485, to the 12th year of Darius Hystaspis. Darius, b&s, was a very astute Persian king. We all wonder why it was that the Persian kings were so much more lenient towards Israel; there isn't any cause of wonder, b&s, because the Persian policy was quite well defined. It was different from the Assyrian, very much more different than the Assyrian; the Assyrian's policy was that when you take a territory, you kill, kill and destroy, you leave nothing that can ever rise again in a national way, ever to defy the Assyrians. You adopt a scorched-earth policy; now the Persian policy was the absolute reverse of that. And that policy, b&s, not only operated for Israel but it operated for all the conquered peoples to whom the kings of Persia had overcome. It was a policy which left people in their own land; conquered them and then re-instated them in their own land under their own principles, their own dominion in a sense, as a local government, and organized them into their own groups and left them virtually to control their own affairs, only in as much that Persia, of course, became the great power over all of them, and they owed their allegiance and their tribute to Persia. But by and large, they were restored to their lands and left to foster their own national spirit, and in so doing, the Persians, b&s, were able to consolidate their empire, because people knew that physical resistance was foolish until the Greeks came, of course, but physical resistance was foolish and it wasn't a bad life under the Persians if one submitted. And so we find therefore, particularly when Cyrus, the first of them, came upon the throne, that the fortunes of Israel changed, because this was their policy and because certain Jews had gained notoriety by their diligence in the things of God, and before the kings of Persia, and the purpose of Israel was able to be forwarded. So Darius Hystaspis came upon the throne, b&s, at a time when the Persian throne was somewhat disjointed. They were going through a period of difficulty because an usurper had usurped the throne in Persia after the death of Darius' father. Had put himself up as the son of the one that had died, and fooled the people for a period of time, until Darius came along on the scene, overthrew him in the first two years of his reign, and in the third year of his reign, Darius Hystaspis set about consolidating his empire, and that's when we're introduced to the book of Esther, because here we have a great feast, which Darius or Ahasuerus made for all the provinces of his realm and

another feast, b&s, for those dwelling in the palace.

So the book of Esther opens therefore, with a picture of these two feasts, and I believe, that the story is told with a deliberate intent, to paint for us, not only a picture of the times, b&s, but for all those who know something about the Word of God, to instil into our minds, a picture of what that book is all about, because in the first two stories that are told, the story of the royal feast of the empire from verses 1 to 4 of chapter 1, and then the royal feast of the palace from verses 5 to 9, those stories are told, b&s, to give us a picture of the kingdom of God. And you know, the design of the book is wonderful; it opens up with a magnificent picture of the kingdom, and then tells you about Vashti who was related to the kingdom and was thrown out, about Esther who was brought into relation with that kingdom and found favour with the king, how the Jewish people were saved and how the whole world was saved. That's the design of the book, so we've got in the scriptures, b&s, a picture of the kingdom of God. Everywhere those pictures are painted. We know that the Jews were disobedient to God's law, that God deposed them as it were, for a time. We know that the call of the nations has gone out, the apostles went into all the world to preach the gospel; we are here today because of that call, and we know the day is shortly coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will return, and the whole world will come under His command. That's the whole book of Esther! So it opens up therefore, with a picture of the kingdom.

'Now it came to pass in these days of Ahasuerus,(this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces). That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, In the third year of his reign, he made such a feast'. So the book opens, b&s, so the book opens! He was a great king, Ahasuerus, the very title means 'a venerable king' an awe-inspiring, venerable king. He had overthrown the usurper; two years it had taken to rid the kingdom of his influence, he had established his own power in the nation and now when the time came for him to send out the messengers, to bring all the provinces in, that they might rejoice in a feast of celebration of the grandness of Darius Hystaspis' kingdom. And so there was 127 provinces, and into all those provinces went men to invite others to the feast. And that feast, b&s, lasted 180 days. It lasted 180 days, and you might say that's a long feast; not really, b&s, when you consider this, that when you're inviting not every one in the province, but the military men (and that's who he's inviting) are coming in from the outposts of the empire, what a dangerous thing it would have been, to bring them all for one week into the centre of that kingdom and leave the boundaries of that kingdom unprotected. No way would any king with any brains do that! so he spread the feast out over 180 days, brought in the military powers, one by one or group by group, to enjoy the feast and go back again so the kingdom be not weakened. And that's the way in which he conducted this feast.

And the centre of that feast, b&s, of course, we learn was in Shushan the palace. Shushan the palace, Shushan was the ancient Susa, the name of which has been given to the capital of the Persian empire during certain times of the year that is, when they moved the capital to Susa. The name had been given to the capital because of the excavations that have taken place in those regions, b&s, when the site of Susa had

been uncovered and the grandeur of the kings of Persia, have been revealed to mortal gaze, in the ruins of Susa the palace. Shushan, as the bible knows it, Susa, of course, just being another form of the name meaning the same thing. And the meaning? the meaning is 'a white lily'; a white lily, well, that's a strange meaning to give I suppose to a capital city, except I suppose it was built mainly of white stone, who knows! But this we do know, b&s, that Shushan is the root from which we get Shoshannim or Shushana which is one of the titles of three of the psalms. And the three psalms that speaks about it, b&s, are the psalms which deal with the marriage of the king with his bride, and with the victory of the king of Israel over his enemies. You read those psalms against the background of Esther, and see the remarkable similarity, Psalm 45, Psalm 60 and Psalm 69; Psalm 45 speaks of the marriage of the king and his bride, and we'll go there time and time again, through the story of Esther to see the link-up with that psalm. Psalm 60 speaks about the principle, 'who will lead me into the strong city, into Edom itself, the capital of the Jew haters?' And the capital of the kingdom of the Jew haters is overcome in Psalm 60 and Psalm 69, b&s, they speak about the One upon the cross when they parted His garments and cast lots for His vesture and gave Him gall to drink, and who rose from obscurity and from that sacrifice to become king of the world and ruler among His people, and those three psalms bear the title of 'Shoshannim or Shushan' the white lily. And why the white lily? because it's springtime in Israel, b&s, and the three psalms speak about the emancipation of God's people from the winter of persecution, from the winter of despond, b&s, into the brilliant sunlight of the springtime of Israel, Shoshannim, the white lily.

And do you know something, b&s, there are wonderful things to be learnt, as the king opened the doors of Shushan the palace for 180 days, and the military men came in to report from the empire, and to rejoice in the greatness of the king; and the 180 days' feast was kept. It wasn't many years before, b&s, when in Shushan the palace, the only other mention of it outside this book, where Daniel the prophet saw as he stood by the river Ulai, a ram with two horns and a goat with one notable horn, and the goat charged the ram in vigor and anger and smashed that ram to pieces and broke his horns and overthrew the ram and took over his power. And the ram was the kingdom of Persia, and all the pomp and the ceremony and the aloofness and the dignity and the majesty of King Ahasuerus, there was a prophecy in the Word that spoke of his doom in Shushan the palace. The time of the white lily was over as far as Persia was concerned, and it was going to be springtime in Israel, b&s, and the Grecian empire was to come and the Roman was to follow that, and they were to put down the prince of princes so that his empire would not stand, b&s, for the whole kingdom under the whole heaven would be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God. And Daniel's prophecies overshadowed all the king did here, b&s, and though he may have typified in his kingdom, the power and the glory of God, overshadowing him was majesty in the prophecies of Daniel which guided his destiny and the destiny of all nations. And Russia today, b&s, in the springtime of its power, and the white lily of Russia rises behind the red star and the sickle and comes forward, b&s, to dominate the world; and the world of winter is upon us, as Israel suffers its persecution. B&S, there are a hundred prophecies like Daniel which take hold of Russia and deals with Russia in no uncertain fashion. There is no enchantment against Israel, there just isn't, and we are the witnesses to

that! and so when this feast was held, b&s, let us never forget that!

'And he brought in, we read in verse 3, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants: the power of Persia and Media', that's a word that indicates the army chiefs; he didn't call in just anyone, b&s, when Ahasuerus called people to the feast, he didn't call just anyone, he called the power of Persia and Media. Who are the power of Persia and Media?

Who is the power of God's kingdom? In Revelation chapter 19 (which we won't turn to now, b&s) but when the great Judge of all the earth comes forth to make war in righteousness, astride a white horse, He's got a name on his thigh which is King of kings, and Lord of Lords, and they're the people that's going to be invited into God's kingdom. The power of the kingdom of God, b&s, is in its aristocracy; we're going to be called to the kingdom, not to be gatekeepers for the world, but to be kings and priests and to reign upon the earth; that's who is called to that feast, b&s, and you think to yourself, 'do you want to be a king or priest in God's kingdom? Do we know what the functions of kings and priests are, b&s? the power of the kingdom of God? A king is one who exercises authority and in a word, a priest is one who exercises compassion, and we're going to be entrusted under the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ with the will of God with this earth, entrusted with the will of God! to put that into operation as kings and priests, and to put down with all authority, the things that offend, and to build into men and women's lives with all compassion, things that give God pleasure! And with the kingdom of Ahasuerus as with the kingdom of God, it is called the power of that kingdom; that power is with us today in this place and in all places where brethren and sisters call upon God's name in truth and in spirit. Ah, b&s, who doesn't want that power? You know, I've had people say to me that we shouldn't talk like this, we don't want to think about exercising authority in the kingdom of God. Well, think for yourself, because I do! Why do I? because we hate the things that go on today, don't we? We detest what goes on out there, we know what's going on in high places is despicable in the eyes of our Heavenly Father, we know it grieves Him in His heart. Wouldn't you want the opportunity to put that right for His sake? Of course you would, and in the exercise of that power, tempered with compassion, we will bring this world to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, and He will bring it to the feet of our Heavenly Father, and there will be glory to God on the highest and peace on earth and goodwill toward men. God is calling to the kingdom the power of that kingdom, in order that there may be power established everywhere, b&s. That's what He's calling!

And then we read in verse 4, 'And he showed them the riches of his glorious kingdom'. The riches of his glorious kingdom, we're going to be showed the riches of God's glorious kingdom, b&s; when I came to that verse and I knew what the writer was trying to tell me, and in obedience to the Word of God, we ought to do what it says, I knew what He was trying to tell me. Now, think about God's kingdom, this is a picture of God's kingdom. What are the riches of God's kingdom? you've got a concordance alongside of you, flip it open and let your mind run upon the riches of God's kingdom. And this is what you read about the riches of God's kingdom; we're told in Romans 2 and verse 4 about the riches of His goodness. We're told in Romans 9 and verse 23 of the riches of

His glory, in Romans 11 and 33 of the riches of His wisdom and in Ephesians 2 and verse 7 of the riches of His grace, and they're words, b&s. Think about them! Riches, treasures beyond price, the enormous treasure of God's goodness. 'Behold, says David, 'I will see thy goodness in the land of the living'. Who might want to see God's goodness and the riches of that? and the riches of His glory, glory unspeakable, physical and moral; or the riches of His wisdom, to see the treasure of divine wisdom and the treasure of divine grace? And Ahasuerus might have paraded his diamonds, his pearls and his jewels and his gold, but God parades things beyond price! goodness, glory, wisdom and grace, riches of them and that's what we're called to, b&s, to see such riches as that!

And in verse 4 again, we read 'that he called them to Shushan to show the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an 180 days'. Interesting! the primary reason, b&s, as I have intimated for that 180 day length feast, was in order to give men and women the time, to come in groups to enjoy the feast for a period of time and to go out again, that the empire be not weakened. But have a note of this fact, and fact it is, that from the third year of Darius until the year B.C.331, when a Median swept out of Macedonia, on a black horse and in three great decisive battles, brought to the ground a great power of Persia, was a period of exactly 180 years. You think about that! 180 years from the time of that feast, Alexander the Great at the battle of Issus, Arbela and Granicus, cut the Persian army to the ground; 180 years, b&s, and it was no more and Daniel's prophecy in Shushan the palace overtook the kings, and it was gone! No such thing, b&s, will happen to God's kingdom. When we apply the types to the book of Esther, they're not the very image of those things of which they speak. No power will bring God's kingdom down like that, but nonetheless, the kingdom of Persia came down from the third year of Darius, to that day, 180 years later and was no more! What an incredible thing that is, but even in that time period there was a prophecy of the king's doom.

Now having had this feast of 180 days, b&s, for all the world as it were, bringing in from the 127 provinces, we find from verses 5 to 9 a special feast for those in Shushan the palace, and that lasted for seven days. That's incredible! You know, seven, does a Christadelphian have to be told that seven is significant in the bible? Of course, we don't, somewhere in the markings of our bible or in our notes, somewhere we've got a note about the number 7. We all know the significance of that! well, there was 7 day's feast of which they were presiding over the cares of the people, seven eunuchs; in the course of that feast, Ahasuerus speaks to seven wise men that he had, and when after was crowned queen after that feast, Esther had seven maidens given her for her retinue of followers to the wedding. Seven is everywhere in this book, as an indication, b&s, that we have in our hands a great type of the future age.

Now this feast in Shushan the palace, was made, b&s, for the intimate association in that palace; it wasn't for the whole empire. This seven day feast was kept for those close to the king. Now you turn to Psalm 45, here's one of the Shoshannim psalms, the white lily; it speaks of the marriage of the king and his bride. And there in the great palace of the king, b&s, in Psalm 45 we have the intimate associations in that palace of

those who were close to the king. Verses 7 and 8, 'Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad'. And in verse 15 to 17 we read, 'With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever'. And there, b&s, in Psalm 45 is a great feast of gladness and rejoicing in the king's palace, in the great ivory palace of the king, and this feast of Esther, I believe, beautifully sets out in type, the feast, b&s, that won't be offered to all the world, but to those people immediately in proximity to the King. Those people who belong to the King's palace, and into that feast they will be invited.

Now let's have a look at some of them; in verse 5, 'And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the peoples that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days'. You see who he made the feast for, b&s? great and small; have you ever heard of that in the bible? 'Behold, says the Revelator, 'the seventh angel sounded and the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the nations were angry and the time of thy wrath is come; and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants (not great and small; Revelation says small and great), and you see the difference, b&s? Ahasuerus invited the great and the small; but Jesus Christ invites the small and the great. He that is least will be the greatest and he that would be great among you, He said, will be abased. He that will serve, b&s, will be the greatest in the kingdom of God, and he that will be served, will become the servant. It will be a question of the small and great in that day, and not a question of the great and the small, that's just the difference, but nonetheless the type is there. And into the kingdom comes all the small and the great, and the whole mark of greatness, b&s, is smallness. It always has been, it always will be! the whole mark of greatness is smallness; it was said of one man in this world, when he was compared with all the great men of this world, who occupied the thrones of the kingdom, and divided the worlds among themselves, concerning John the Baptist it is said, 'he was great in the sight of the Lord', and that's all that matters. And all the rest were great in their own sight and in the sight of the world that beheld them. As Luke elaborates upon all their kingdoms and their territories, but of John he says, 'he was great in the sight of the Lord', and whenever they looked at him, he was the most strange, eccentric and fanatical creature you could ever imagine and the smallest man in everyone else's opinion except God's. And into Christ's kingdom are invited the small and great, and the king, b&s, embellished that feast for seven days with wonderful things.

But you know, one of the things which I believe is the most significant about that feast, is that he took the people outdoors. It says that 'he made a feast of seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace'. Now I'll tell you what he did, and I wouldn't have to say another word, so you'd go away and mark up your bibles of the significance of it. You see, in verse 6, it says, 'that in the garden were hangings and part of the hangings were green'. And on pillars of marble, b&s, he hung among other things, green

hangings; it's the only occurrence of the word in the bible and it literally means 'vegetable hangings'. So what the king did was he made an outdoor feast of seven days wherein the people are covered with vegetable hangings. Need I say anymore about that? for the student of the Word of God or anybody who does their daily readings would know, b&s, that when Israel were called together on one of the most joyous feasts of all occasions, of which Zechariah says, 'is typical of the kingdom of God', they were taken outdoors for seven days under green hangings. This was, of course, the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast of booths, so-called because Israel in that day walked under the boughs of trees, and what for? In Nehemiah chapter 8, b&s, this was the lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles, typically set forth in Ahasuerus' feast, in the 8th chapter of Nehemiah in verse 16, 'So the people went forth and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto this day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he (Ezra) read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner'. And they hadn't done that, b&s, since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, they hadn't come out like that ever since the days of Joshua the son of Nun; why hadn't they? Were there not faithful men between Joshua and Nehemiah? Of course there were! did not David king of Israel, did not Hezekiah, b&s, and other great kings, Josiah and the like, organize the Feast of Tabernacles? Hadn't they kept it? Of course they did! but the record of God's Word is true, they had never done that since the days of Joshua; done what? kept the feast when they immediately came out of captivity, 'and all the congregation of them that were come again out of captivity', and they hadn't done that since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. In other words, b&s, and this is the lesson of Nehemiah and the first chapter of Esther, in other words, the Feast of Tabernacles can only really be appreciated by people who've got out of prison. Now when they came to the borders of the promised Land with Joshua the son of Nun and they kept the Feast of Tabernacles, they were told it was to remind them of their deliverance out of Egypt, and they kept that feast religiously and with furore, b&s, because it meant something to them! And when they came out in Nehemiah's time and they were dragged out of Persia, b&s, from servitude to the kings of Persia, back to their Land again, (some had never seen it in their lifetime because the most of the people had been there for 70 years or more). Here were children who had grown up of Christadelphian parents as it were, and had never seen the Land, and now they kept the Feast of Tabernacles; they'd never done that since Joshua's day, for these people came immediately out of captivity. B&S, we're going into the kingdom of God and when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, not only to organize the Passover again, but the Feast of Tabernacles, it will never be kept like that! ever, because we're going out of captivity!

And what did they do? They went outdoors and with their vegetable hangings they dwelt in booths. What on earth was the lesson of that? Well, the Law told them there specifically what the lesson was, that they should remember that Yahweh their God had

brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. Now, b&s, this is the lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles, you don't have to be a great discerner of the Word of God, you just have to think. Over across that river is the awesome power of Egypt, with Pharaoh sufficiently powerful, if he could regather his forces, to crush this little community out of its very existence; that he's across that river with his chariots and if he could, he'd fight us with his army; there's no way in the world that I could save my family from doom, and in order to give me confidence in the fortress that God provides, He put me under the bough of a tree. That was the lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles, that they might ever be reminded, b&s, that they that dwell under the shadow of the Almighty, and have a greater fortress than they that dwell behind steel and behind the armaments of flesh. That was the great lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles, and when people come out of captivity and are able to be exposed to the open in those leafy boughs, so exposed to danger and yet beyond danger because of the shadow of the Almighty, b&s, that's the time to rejoice! And that's what Ahasuerus did! he had no idea of the significance of that feast, he never kept it for that reason, but the one who wrote the book of Esther, be it whomsoever it was, the one that wrote that book, b&s, wrote that quite deliberately; they went outdoors for seven days under vegetable hangings! Incredible!

Now what did Zechariah see? 'The nations shall go up from year to year to keep the Feast of Tabernacles', and to worship who? 'The Lord of hosts, Yahweh of Armies', where? under a bough of a tree in order that they might understand, b&s, that they that be with us, are more than they that be with them. There was the lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles, here's a great picture of it!

And among the colours on that day were the white, evidently from the original Hebrew, white lace, Gesenius says 'white cotton'. So we have the pillars of marble and the green vegetable hangings between the pillars of marble, against a background evidently of white lace; a beautiful picture, b&s. And among the colours, of course, was the purple and the silver; now we're going to have to spend a lot of time on those colours. We know what white lace speaks about, b&s, exquisite righteousness, not our own but God's that's wrought in our life by the principle of faith. That's what the white is, white is a symbol of righteousness, the lace or the linen, b&s, is a symbol of the way that it is worked into our lives, by the principle of faith and against the backdrop of that white, we see the kingdom of God, the outdoor activities as it were, under the shadow of the Almighty and a vegetable garden there as the shadow of our protection and the way the earth brings forth prolifically, the fruits that God provides for mankind, and they're hanging on marble pillars. Psalm 144, marble pillars, b&s, this is what marble pillars are symbolic of, in Psalm 144 and verse 12, 'That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace'. That our daughters may be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace, b&s, what a beautiful picture; sons growing up like plants that's one figure, in other words, the sons are producing fruit to the glory of God, but you see, b&s, it's different with a little girl isn't it? It's different with a daughter who grows into womanhood, what has she got to see in life? What is the most important thing for a sister in Israel? It was permanence, b&s. When a woman got married in Israel it was not like today, when women can go out to work and provide their own means and therefore,

become relatively independent of their husbands, if they so desire. It wasn't so in the days of Israel, b&s, marriage to those women meant more than just falling in puppy-love and putting a ring on their finger; it meant, b&s, permanence in life, and so their daughters become as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace because they're related to their kings, their husbands and because they're now permanently situated in God's kingdom. Jesus says, 'to him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out'. He's in there for good, because he's not only a pillar in there, b&s, but he's polished after the similitude of a palace, in other words, it's a marble pillar. And it's a wonderful thing to think about those leafy hangings, those leafy green hangings in themselves, b&s, ever so tender and fragile, hung from the enormous strength of those marble pillars, in the great feast of the palace of Ahasuerus. What a wonderful picture of the kingdom that is, what a terrific picture!

And there was the purple of royalty; and the hangings were held up we read with silver rings. Silver rings, b&s, where else do you read about silver rings? We're not turning all these references up just the key ones I want you to have a look at, because these we ought to know. Silver rings, b&s, were used or silver fillet as they were called, were used to hang the hangings of the tabernacle up; they held up the white linen of righteousness. Why silver rings? because it's not our own righteousness but it's God's, and we are redeemed by God's grace, and silver is a symbol of redemption and that's what hangs the curtains up. That's what hangs us up before God, not our own righteousness but His, and that by the grace of God because we've been redeemed from among men. For you haven't been redeemed nor I haven't been redeemed, b&s, by silver and gold, but by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, says Peter. And so it was silver rings just like in the tabernacle, holding up as it were, those green leafy curtains against the backdrop of the white lace, which gave that outdoor setting such a wonderful setting for that day.

And there was the purple of royalty, of course, involved in all that. And then in verse 6 we read, 'after the hangings there were beds of gold and silver'; beds of gold and silver. Now they weren't beds in the sense that we understand 'beds' b&s, they were 'couches' as Rotherham and the RSV render that particular word, in other words, they reclined while they ate that feast. As the king presided over the feast, so his royal subjects, those in intimate association with the king, reclined around on those beds of gold and silver, and the very fact that they were reclining, b&s, spoke that they were at rest, both physically and mentally in the presence of that king. You know, when the Jews had their feasts, they very often reclined on couches; we believe that in the course of the Last Supper, they would have reclined on couches as the Lord handed around the emblems of His sacrifice. We don't do that today, it's not one of our customs and I don't think we ought to perhaps, but they did it, b&s, and to them you see, it was a symbol, not that they were lazy men although it was the most comfortable position to eat and drink, but it gave the appearance the everyone was relaxed in each others' company. Have you been relaxed during the past week, b&s? until you came here? I'll tell you, you haven't; not unless you work for Christadelphians; I haven't been relaxed, no way in the world have I been relaxed; I've relaxed now! We're relaxed in this company, b&s, and pray God when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, we'll be relaxed, and we'll only be relaxed if we

can relax symbolically on couches of gold and silver. For the only thing, b&s, that will put us in a relaxed frame of mind before our Lord Jesus Christ, is the gold of faith and the fact that we've been redeemed with silver. Not with silver, the metal silver, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; if we've got faith in God and His son the Lord Jesus, and if the Lord Jesus Christ sees that faith in us and redeems us, we will 'relax' in His presence, and we'll relax upon those couches to eat and drink with Him in the kingdom of God. Such was the way they ate that feast.

And it says, 'all this was on a pavement of red, blue, white and black marble'. Red, blue, white and black marble, now looking all these words up was a tiring experience, because some of these words are very difficult to find and they don't really and literally mean the colours that are set forth there as the margin indicates; but looking this verse up and comparing scripture with scripture and putting it all together, I think what it is speaking about is this, that there was sort of a mosaic pavement. That under the whole lot, even though it was in the garden, it wasn't held on the open ground, there was a mosaic pavement with all beautiful colours wrought in it, but the predominating colour was a glistening mother of pearl; that's the idea behind those Hebrew words. A glistening mother of pearl with a black border, can you picture that? walking out into the open, yes, there are your green hangings but there was strength between the hangings in the marble pillars and there was nothing soft under your feet either, and there you walk in a garden setting where under your feet was a magnificent mosaic pavement of pearly tones, mother of pearl tones bordered in black. What a beautiful thing that would have been! You know, in Ezekiel's vision of the cherubims above all the things that he described, he saw a pavement and he saw sapphires and it was a heavenly pavement, and upon the basis of that heavenly pavement all was built, the vision was placed.

Now look at the basis of this vision, the kingdom of God, and under foot, b&s, the foundation of it all! Mother of pearl, you know how a pearl is formed don't you? Into the oyster, b&s, seemingly water-tight yet very often through the minute crevice, will get a speck of sand; sand that couldn't be seen by the naked eye it's so small but it'll become embedded in that oyster and it will irritate it, and the oysters will water like your eye does when it's irritated, and it will go on watering and watering until it crystallizes around that little grain of sand and builds up over years and years and years, until one day they pull the oyster up from the depths of the ocean, from the darkness of the depths, and it sees the light of day, and they open it up and there's a magnificent pearl in there, b&s. And the pearl of the kingdom is of great price, and it's developed by irritations; over the years irritation, irritation, irritation, and tears and blood, b&s, are shed in order that we may be developed for the kingdom of God, but when we're brought up from the depths of the ocean out of the wickedness of the sea of nations, we'll land in God's kingdom, a pearl. And that became the foundation, b&s, of Ahasuerus' feast. What a picture of the kingdom that is! what a glorious picture of that kingdom, b&s, that is!

What did the king do? Well, look what he did in verse 7. 'And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse one from another, and royal wine in abundance according to the state of the king'. B&S, have a look at the margin for 'royal wine', literally rendered 'the wine of the kingdom'. Now, don't you see, b&s, as we go through this feast, this is not just a little story told about Ahasuerus' glory; haven't we

seen sufficient to see a reflection of the kingdom of God? Well, here's another one! There are in that hall, all sorts of vessels; and they're all different, they're diverse one from the other. There are tall ones and short ones, and skinny ones and fat ones; there are round ones, square ones, oblong ones and oval ones; there are deep ones, shallow ones etc. but they are all different but they are all gold! Every one is gold, and in the kingdom of God, b&s, in a great house, says Paul to Timothy, in a great house there are vessels; he speaks about vessels of honour and dishonour, but forget about the vessels of dishonour, think about in a great house there are vessels unto honour, but they're not all the same, but they're all of gold! And into them, b&s, will be poured at last, the wine of the kingdom. 'I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it with you in my Father's kingdom'. And there were 11 men, b&s, to whom that applied, and one to whom it didn't apply, and he went out and hung himself, but of the other 11, they were diverse one from the other, they were different characters, but they were all gold.

And into those vessels along with many others will be poured the wine of the kingdom in abundance, b&s, and furthermore, in verse 8, 'no one will compel them to drink and the drinking was according to the law that none did compel. When it's according to the law, b&s, the law of the Medes and Persians said 'you had to drink' but what that is saying is this, there was a special law made for that feast which said you didn't have to drink; and on that day Ahasuerus coined another law in order that men may not be compelled to drink, but drank according to their own pleasure. And I'll tell you this, b&s, there won't be a single brother or sister in the kingdom of God that will be forced to drink! because if that's his attitude, he won't be there! No one will be at that table of the Lord Jesus Christ to drink the wine of the kingdom and have to be forced to do it; it will be a case of saying to the Lord Jesus Christ as He said to us, 'with desire have I desired to drink this with you', not before I suffer, but now, b&s, in glory! and the desire will be such that there will be no compulsion. When we come on Sunday morning, is it because we're told to come on a Sunday morning, b&s, to drink wine? Is it because this is what we ought to do as our duty? God forbid, b&s, Paul never saw it that way! Paul said, 'For I have received of the Lord that which I also deliver unto you'. B&S, Christ didn't force the wine on Paul, Paul received it of the Lord, and those of us who come Sunday morning to eat and drink because that's what we've got to do, may drink, b&s, wine or even the fruit of the grape, but not the wine of God's kingdom; there's no way in the world that we're drinking the wine of God's kingdom. And it's not until that hand picks that glass up with enthusiasm, if with a limpness of sorrow and sadness of the Lord's death, but with enthusiasm and love that can ever be called the wine of the kingdom, otherwise it's compulsion! No way will we ever drink God's wine that way! And that was part of Ahasuerus' speech, b&s, Ahasuerus' speech at the climax of the feast.

The seventh day came, when all this glory was exhibited, all this glory! And then we read in verse 9, 'Also Vashti'; now b&s, names in the book of Esther are difficult. When we give the meanings of them, they are somewhat doubtful because we have to rely on Persian origins, at the very least, a dangerous exercise! So for the most part, I'm not quoting to you what we normally find in Strong's or Young's but from Gesenius who had a better understanding, I believe, both of the Hebrew and of Persian origins. He says that Vashti means 'a beautiful woman', if that was the meaning of her name, she

certainly fitted that description, for we read that she was 'fair to look upon'. Whatever her name means, b&s, she was at once a very beautiful, a very vain, and a very proud woman's libber. She was a very proud woman! We read that 'Vashti the queen made a feast for the women', now there's no definite article in the Hebrew, 'she made a feast for women; she made a feast for women. There's no definite article, b&s, she just made a feast for women; 'well, if the men can have a party, the women can have a party!' Ever heard that said? 'Well, if the brethren can go off and do this, well the sisters can do something'. And we all know, don't we brethren, our responsibilities? and we're all reminded of those responsibilities from time to time, and we don't want to shirk our responsibilities, but b&s, don't let us miss this point! that a woman is made for the man, not in the sense that a lot of women and men think, but in a very beautiful and glorious sense, that is true. A little more of that later on. First of all, let us get this clear picture in our mind, Vashti was a very independent woman and one thing she forgot, in verse 9 intimates what that was. 'Vashti the queen made a feast for women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus', the word 'belonged' b&s, may be in italics, it belongs to the sense, however without it, it makes no sense. So it's every bit a part of the expression of the original Hebrew; she had forgotten, b&s, that in the great house where she made a feast for women, that it belonged to king Ahasuerus, and that's what escaped Vashti. It escaped her completely, b&s, we're going to come around to chapter 5 of Esther, to what to me, it may not be to you, but it certainly will be to me, (already I know this) the absolute highlight of this book, when Esther walked into the presence of the king, and the words of that verse are written, b&s, in a way in which it is absolutely majestic and indicates Esther's frame of mind towards that king, which was absolutely the opposite to that. And if there was one thing that Esther knew is that whatever glory she had, though of course, she knew it came from Mordecai and from the power of God, yet she never, b&s, assumed or presumed upon the king; she never ever took it into her head, that that glory was anything else but his and his alone; but that woman didn't! and she made a feast for women in a place that belonged to him, and she'd forgot that!

And when the great day comes in verses 10 to 22 very quickly, when the great day came, b&s, 'on the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine (he wasn't drunk)', (you know, a lot of people take this story, it has been taken by a Christadelphian sister in a most despicable and perverse way, and painted up here as if Esther was nothing else than a harlot, and that king Ahasuerus was a drunken slut). It's incredible what some people read into the bible. We're not to read that 'when the king's heart was merry with wine', b&s, that they're all half drunk because that's not the picture at all. As a matter of fact, even profane history records that the kings of Persia were very circumspect in this particular fashion because they knew the danger of such things in men in high places and men who had their dignity to uphold; no way in the world would a king like Ahasuerus be seen publicly to be in that frame of mind. We read time and again throughout the scriptures, b&s, that the way they used wine in those days, wine much more mild than what they have today, and the way they drank it and for the purpose they drank it, was to induce a spirit of well-being, not a spirit of rival merriment, b&s, where everybody just lets his feelings go; that wasn't the picture at all. We're told in the book of Judges that 'wine cheers the heart of man and God', not that that is to be taken literally either, but that wine is a symbol of the fruit of the vine which induces a

spirit of well-being in man, who expresses himself in thanksgiving to God, and both rejoice in the product of the vine. And it was in that frame, I believe, that the king was, when he called for Vashti to be brought before him, b&s, in order that he might display what, what was he going to display?

In verse 11, after the seven chamberlains are sent to fetch the queen, they are sent to fetch her with this instruction, 'to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on'. Now look what it says! it doesn't say to bring the queen to show her beauty; it says to bring the queen before the king with the crown royal to show her beauty. Now if you had a queen standing alongside the king with the crown royal, or before the king, and the king looking on her with grace, who's is her beauty? What beauty do you think he was trying to display, b&s? He was going to display his own beauty! because that was his choice, his woman and his crown and whatever she was, she was because of him. That's what king Ahasuerus was about! that woman was brought in as Psalm 45 says, here it is, (and as I told you before, this won't be the last time we're going back to this psalm), because here is a picture of a king and his bride, so much like the one we have in the book of Esther. Psalm 45 verses 10 and 11, this is what Vashti should have done, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him'. Where's the beauty of the queen? HE IS THY LORD and brethren and sisters, the word in the Hebrew is 'adon'= ruler, now the king greatly desires the beauty of the queen when she recognizes him as ruler; there's her beauty and when she came forth to show forth the beauty with the royal crown before the king, that's the beauty she was to show forth, and Vashti would have none of it, b&s. She would have none of it! because she wanted to display her own beauty.

You know, that queen there, calls her king 'lord' (without turning this reference up, b&s, in 1 Peter 3 when Peter speaks about the woman whose adorning is glorious in the sight of God, whose adorning is a meek and a quiet spirit), he takes an example of Sarah, of whom he said, 'Sarah called Abraham her lord'. B&S, search the scriptures for when Sarah called Abraham 'lord'. Get out your concordance and search the bible for it! You show me where Sarah called Abraham 'lord' and I'll tell you where he is. Once in the record of God, but I believe she called him 'lord' all the time, once, once it's recorded, when she was in the tent and she heard the angel talking to her husband about her having a child and she laughed within herself and said, 'Shall I have pleasure, my lord also being old'. In herself, so she called Abraham 'lord' in her heart and Peter went on to say that 'we've got to have a hidden man of the heart', and the hidden man of Sarah's heart was Abraham. 'The king shall greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy ruler', indeed and where is thy ruler? in your heart. Vashti didn't have Ahasuerus in her heart.

Look at the 12th Proverb, b&s, we're not very far from it, here's the principle; didn't this apply? Proverbs 12 verse 4, 'A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones', wasn't that true? A virtuous woman, b&s, is a crown to her husband, but you know, Vashti put him to open shame! And we know the story, so we're going to skip part of it, because our times gone, way gone! but

I want to say something, b&s, at the end of this chapter which is very important. You know the story, how that Vashti refused the glory that the king had offered to her, and how it was like Israel when Yahweh crowned them in the day of their espousals, when He wanted them for a name and a glory and a praise in the earth and they would not, and they spurned His glory for their own glory and He rejected them. Alright, Ahasuerus puts the proposition to the princes in his kingdom, the wise men who knew the times it says, the wise men who knew the times, who saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom. He had 7 men, b&s, 7 of them, wise men who looked the king in the face and not everybody did that; they had access to the king, they sat first in the kingdom and they knew the times. Here were the princes of Christ's kingdom in type, and they gave their advice, and their advice was that Vashti should be dethroned and deposed and divorced and got rid of, and the reason they gave was sound reasoning. Because they said in verse 17, 'For this deed of the queen shall come abroad onto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not'. And they were right in that, b&s, 'if she can get away with it, every woman in the kingdom can get away with it'. And you know what happened, they deposed her, and in verse 19 we read, 'And if it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she'.

I want to make one point, b&s, in conclusion of our first talk together, it's an interesting point! out of that verse 19. The law of the Medes and Persians was unalterable; they were proud of that! Later on we're going to see how stringent that was kept. But they were proud of it; the Medes and Persians boast about that, they said, we've got laws and when we write those laws up you better be careful how you write them up, because when they're written up that's it! UNALTERABLE! Now they wrote a law which was unalterable that that queen could never again come before that king; do you know what the apostle Paul says was the basis of a woman's subjection to her husband? Do you know the basis was laid down in Corinthians, can you think what it was? What was the law which Paul quoted to show a woman subservient to her husband? Well, I'll tell you what it was if you don't know, creation. Have a go at that; you know, b&s, if there's one great tragedy upon another tragedy that happens in these days, and there are plenty of them, if there's one that adds tragedy to tragedy, is to see women defy nature; have you ever tried to defy nature? I was a lad about 8 or 9, I jumped off the roof of a house with an umbrella, thinking I'd fly! I had many days to think about the unalterable laws of gravity. You know, b&s, Paul laid down that as a rule, did he not? 'For the woman was made for the man' or to Timothy, 'for the woman was not created first, but the man was created first', and what Paul is saying, b&s, is that it wasn't just the law of the Medes and Persians that said it can't be done, there is a law of God that can't be altered, and it's the law of nature. And you see today a degrading exhibition of women's liberation; now I'm not against sisters, I married one and brought 5 more into the world, and I've had plenty of time to think about women; and I'm not against them, but I tell you something, sisters. A sister was made by God to do something, and she will embellish His creation and His kingdom if she does it willingly and happily, 'performing and

speaking women, says bro. Thomas, speaking and lecturing are the basis of actresses who perform upon the boards, he says, for the pleasure of ignorant and foolish men. They aim at equality for which they are not physically constituted. They degrade themselves in the exhibition and they destroy all that really adorns a woman'. Glorious words, and how true they are! to see sisters defy the very nature of God Himself, defy the creative hand, to do something which they are not physically constituted for. B&S, if the laws of the Medes and Persians were unalterable, have a go at altering that one! and today you see all this liberation and what has it brought? Liberation, what is liberation? b&s, what is it? Is it freedom to serve God in the way that He would have us to serve Him? Is it happiness and confidence in His promises for the future? Is it happiness to know that we're in God's care? Isn't that freedom? and when we break forth from that freedom to obtain a freedom of our own, we shackle ourselves with galling chains of shame and disgrace, and women brought forth today, take leading places in the world, what do they do? Using language more foul than men, speaking of things that women ought not, showing forth a brassy boldness that repels mankind and sets them up as an object of scorn and ridicule, a jewel of gold in a pig's nose, as Solomon called them, b&s. And a woman, lovely creature, glorious creature, made by God to do a job, defying Him and doing everything else but. An unalterable law of creation never triumphs but conforms, b&s, conforms not to the laws of men, not to the overlordship of an ignorant and foolish husband, but to the unalterable law of a very, very wonderful and wise Creator who knew what He was doing.

Those are words to think about, b&s, and when Vashti walked out of that kingdom, never again to be seen near that place, never again to see her husband, never, b&s, there was a symbolic demonstration of what will happen to all those who defy the unalterable laws of God, as He set them down for us all to obey; and she was deposed, dethroned and divorced and there was left a void, b&s, in that wonderful picture of the kingdom that must be filled, and the king was to send his messengers out into all the provinces to find a woman to fill that void, that would reflect and resound his glory, not only in Shushan, but in all the provinces of his empire, that his glory might be known among the nations.