Lesson One
Power and Influence

Esther 1

Men’s Inductive Study
For Such a Time as This
Studies in the Book of Esther

Introduction:
Esther is one of the historical books of the Bible. In the NIV translation of this first chapter, verse 1 says: “This is what happened…” meaning the author of Esther is about to tell the reader events that took place prior to his writing. We see this same opening in other historical books of the Bible such as Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. At first reading, you get the sense that this book is a dramatic story a screenwriter would pen for a Broadway play. As the book opens the writer sets the scene. The chapter has three main parts that create the tension of the entire story of Esther. First, the author describes the extent of power and wealth that King Ahasuerus had and how he used it to wine and dine the important people of his empire. Second is Queen Vashti’s entrance or should we say almost entrance. Third comes the impact of Queen Vashti’s decision to ignore the king’s request. Because this is a history book, we must back up just a bit and see in context what took place prior to this gathering of nobles and leaders in the city of Shushan. King Darius I Hystaspes had been the king of Persia but his death left the crown to his son Ahasuerus. Just before he died, King Darius had tried to defeat the Greeks and conquer Athens but failed. Ahasuerus gathered a war counsel together to strategize another attack on Greece hoping to avenge his father’s defeat. He ended this meeting with a huge celebration. It’s at this point that the book of Esther opens. As in all history, many circumstances feed into the main story under study. If you have the time, it would serve you well to research the historical events leading up to this book. This research will help in understanding the consequences of just one decision made by one individual revealing the providence of God.

More important is what this chapter meant on a spiritual level to the readers of long ago and how it affects the believer of today as God speaks through His Holy Spirit to us. It will be our challenge to keep the main thing the main thing in this book of Esther. Very often in the Old Testament it was the decision of one individual that put into motion God’s plan of redemption for His people. This book is no different. God will use all people, believers or not, knowing or unknowing, to keep His covenant no matter the situation or circumstance at hand. In this lesson, do any of the characters understand who God is? Is God even mentioned? What is the significance of the wealth and sheer opulence of the king’s palace on his guests? Was the king at fault for this uprising of Vashti or was it Vashti who was wrong in her response to Ahasuerus? What do you see in the refusal of Vashti and the effect it had on the other women in Persia? Since both were Gentiles, did it really have any importance to the story whether they were godly in their response to each other? Finally, who is it that made the difference for God to begin again His process of restoring His people for His glory?

Inductively Speaking:
Your studies in Esther will have the greatest impact when you read the entire book through in one sitting. Take particular care in observing everything you can about the words that are written before you. This is the time to humbly go before the Lord asking Him to give you insight to this passage at hand. God says that every jot and tittle is important. Handle with care when completing your observation. Look for the main theme of the passage. Surround it with supporting facts before you attempt to interpret the lesson God had for the people in that day. Think as a detective would think: who, what, where, when and how. Review the instruction guide for each section of study. Keep in mind that this book of Esther is about the underlying aspect of God’s providence working in the lives of believers and people who did not believe. Don’t forget to give God the glory for what He will reveal to you this week.

Memory Verse: Psalm 121:4
“Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”
Day One

Text: Begin this week's lesson by reading the passage.

Hint: Read the passage repeatedly, prayerfully, thoughtfully, meditatively and patiently.

Esther 1

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, 3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him— 4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.

5 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. 7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. 8 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

9 Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, 14 those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked highest in the kingdom):
And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen’s behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king’s officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the king’s decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."

And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. Then he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people. NKJV
Day Two

1. **Observation:** Finding the literal facts or most obvious details of the passage.

   Hint: Begin observation by asking the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Verses 1-8

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Verses 13-22

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What Did God Say? Highlight the overall observation concerning this chapter.
Day Three
II. Interpretation: Discovering the lessons or meaning of God's instruction to His people. 
Hint: Try to place yourself with these people, in their circumstances, at this time of Bible 
history.
Verses 1-8

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Verses 13-22

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What Did God Mean? Highlight God's main lesson for those people in this chapter.

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Day Four

III. Application: Applying the lessons and meaning of God's instructions to His people.

Hint: Apply the lesson or lessons you found in the interpretation section in the form of a question.

Verses 1-8

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Verses 9-12

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What Did God Tell You? Highlight the main application for yourself.
Day Five

Word Studies: In this portion of the lesson we will take a closer look at one or two key words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools or resources at hand (Such as, more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia). If you don’t have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning. To do some digging on your own, start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary) and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging. (You may want to make notes in the “Notes and Insights” section.) After you’ve completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today’s lesson will lay the groundwork for deeper discoveries in subsequent lessons, so be as thorough as you can.

Providence   Acts 24:2
And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, “Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence” (KJV)
Dictionary definition:

What does the Bible have to say?
Job 10:12

Write your own definition:

Sovereign   Deuteronomy 3:24
“O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?” (NIV)
Dictionary definition:

What does the Bible have to say?
Psalm 71:5

Isaiah 7:7

Write your own definition:

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Day Six
Summation Sentence: A simple personal statement about what God has shown you from this passage.

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Notes and Insights:
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Prayer Requests:
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