

## Esther

Hi, this is Richard Oliver, with a mini message, this time on the book of Esther, or at least on the first part of the book of Esther.

This story takes place just over five hundred years before the birth of Christ. It is the time when the Jews were held captive basically in the old Babylonian Empire which had been taken over by Medes and Persians. King Ahasuerus is the ruler of the land at the time of this story, and he has a beautiful wife, a wife called Vashti.

Now, the king decides he will have a feast to celebrate. They had enormous feasts in those days, lasted days and days and days. And the queen decided that she too would have a feast. Meanwhile, the king decides he wants to show off the beauty of his wife. So he calls her. He sends seven messengers, seven chamberlains, to get his wife to come to his feast and be revealed to all the people there. She refuses. Stone blank. Refuses to come. This upsets all the leaders of the time. It upsets the king, of course, as well, and he doesn't quite know what to do. So he asks his clever people there, all his counsellors, all his ministry, all his – whether you call it the parliament or congress or whatever – he calls everyone, all his leaders, and says “What shall we do? This is disastrous.”

And one of them says “Well, this is a major issue. Because it will change the structure, the entire structure, of the nation, of the kingdom. If it is seen that the queen can do what she likes and overrule the king, then law is broken down completely. It means that wives will not respect their husbands. There will be no natural order within the kingdom.”

“Well, what shall we do then?” asks King Ahasuerus. “How can I get out of this situation?”

The wise man says, “Well, put aside your wife. Put aside Vashti. And then go and search for a new wife, a young woman who will respect what the king wants.”

And so a search is made and a whole lot of pure virgins are taken to the king and one-by-one he sifts through until he comes to the one that becomes his favourite, the one that becomes his wife. Esther.

In short that's the beginning of the book of Esther and the story. But, of course, it's more than just that. Far more than just that.

Our Lord Jesus Christ started a church. He had the twelve apostles, or eleven apostles, the twelfth one was, of course, St Paul, and this was to be His Bride, this was to be His church, His true loving partner.

Things went wrong. If you read The Seven Church Ages or the seven letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation you will find that gradually the church becomes worse and worse and worse. There are problems with the Nicolaitans, the ministry want to be lords over the laity, that's what Nicolaitan means, to control, to conquer the laity, and they start setting out new rules, and they start setting out new doctrines, and they start setting out certain prayers and everything else that must be said, and set rules and regulations. Basically what are they doing? They're setting out their own feast. God's Word, the Bible, is what we should feed on, but so many churches over the ages have done opposite of that. They have created their own word, their own feast.

Now Jesus had sent seven messengers, one to each church age to try and correct the problems that were coming through in the churches. And individuals and small groups were staying true to Jesus

Christ, but generally speaking, the organised church tends to dominate, control and replace God's Word with its own.

It reminds me of Isaiah chapter four verse one, *'And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel.'* in other words we'll make our own feast. We will decide what is religion. Apparel is religion, or covering is religion. We will decide what will get people to heaven. And *'only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.'*

In other words, there will be seven churches, because a woman represents a church in the Bible, seven churches, the seven church ages, who will say "Well look, we will take hold of Christ, we will take hold of Him, but we will provide our own teachings, our own doctrines, and we shall wear – we shall provide our own means of atonement with God, only let us be called Christian to take away our reproach."

This is exactly the situation that faced Ahasuerus. You see, the church is not in a position to say "I will do this, I will do that, God You do not need to come and tell me". That's what Vashti was doing. She was beautiful. She had all the right signs. She was originally linked. But Ahasuerus put Vashti aside.

Meanwhile, a search is to be made for a new bride. And when you follow the story you'll see that Esther demanded nothing special. She went through the purification process. She did all the king wanted, all her aim was to satisfy her lord, her king. And as Christians that's exactly what we should be. We should be far more interested in ensuring that we provide all ourselves to Christ so that He can use us as He wants, for, if we are to be the Bride of Christ we are to be the wife of Christ. And Christ is the head. Not us.

May God bless you.