

## Operation Camouflage

### I. Slide#1 **Announce:**

A. Jr. High are at camp this weekend: pass out prayer cards w/each kids name on.

### II. Intro:

A. Slide#2 Title: God Invented *Camouflage!*

1. Camouflage is the concealment of otherwise visible objects by any combination of methods that allows them to remain unnoticed.

a) God invented camouflage, man copied it.

2. Slide#3 It may be used by **animals, soldiers, military vehicles and other objects** to blend with their environment, or to make them resemble something else. [see lizard?]

3. Slide#4,5 *Bad Camo.*

B. Problems in the text: You'll want to "right & wrong" each character. [Vashti, rt decision/wrong?]

1. No our moral/ethical example is **Jesus**. The HS daily is *conforming us into His image*. **Bible characters** can be looked at but they just provide the setting for **the story**.

a) [*don't need to read*] **Biblical Hermeneutics:** As a general principle,...interpreters must be cautious about taking an **exemplary approach** to any **biblical character** (exemplary = imitation). As Christians our ethical & moral standard is exemplified by **Jesus**, to whose likeness the H.S. *Conforms us* in the process of sanctification. While we may learn from reflecting on the examples of biblical characters, the biblical writers may have included episodes from their lives as events relevant to the unfolding of redemptive history, & not as ethical models for us to imitate directly.<sup>1</sup>

2. This chapter will **set up** for us: the Persian Empire's immensity; the power of a sovereign king (beheaded men building a bridge cuz a storm delayed its completion); it provides us with a context for Queen Esther; & especially it gives us **front row seats** to watch how **divine Providence** works through human behavior that flows from even the most ambiguous & confused of motives.

3. We know its a story of how **God**, against all odds, reverses the fate of His people from annihilation, to end with a celebration of Purim.

a) *But instead of starting with Esther or Mordecai.* He starts with Xerxes purely political decision to give a banquet to solidify support for his impending military campaign. *Which starts a chain reaction of human history of seemingly insignificant, ordinary events.*

C. Slide#6 God, **more often than not**, "covers up" life situations to look simply *normal, ordinary*, even *random*. Let's look at **Operation Camouflage**.

### III. Slide#7 **DRUNKEN DEPOST! (1-9)**

<sup>1</sup> Karen Jobes, The NIV Application Commentary, pg.68 footnote #4.

- A. **Recap:** Main characters in ch.1: **Ahasuerus, Vashti, Memucan** (“wise” man).
- Remember this book deals w/the **Jews who stayed in exile** over in Persia.
- B. (1,2) The story is set in the Persian empire (Iran). Most of the action of this book takes place right there in **Sushan/Susa** the capital, in the **winter palace** called the **citadel**.
- Susa, 1 of 4 capital cities the Persians ruled.** **Susa** is where **Daniel** had one of his visions (8:2) & where **Neheimiah** served as cupbearer to Xerxe’s son, Artaxerxes 1.
- C. **Slide#8 1st Feast!** (3,4) - **Lasted 6 months, & was for all his officials.**
- There is a gap of a few years in between ch.1 & 2.
  - It is learned from **Persian inscriptions** that this great feast was held in preparation for his great expedition against Greece (Thermopylae & Salamis, 480bc) **Oh, and he got spanked!**
    - So, it seems, **he deposed Vashti** before he left; & **he married Esther** after he returned.
- D. **Slide#9 2nd Feast!** (5-8) - **Was for all the people & lasted 1 week.**
- What better way to end a 6 month party?...but by a party!**
  - Note the details of the wealth** (6,7).
    - Herodotus said, **Persia’s wealth & magnificence dazzled even Alexander the Great** when more than a century later he entered the palace at Susa & found **40,000 talents of Gold & silver bullion** (1,200 tons) & **9,000 talents of minted coins** (270 tons), **which had been accumulated by the Perisan Kings.**
- E. (8) **Not compulsory** - Party only if you please!
- F. **Slide#10** Herodotus, 5 cent. Bc, “The Father of History”. Greek historian whose writings, chiefly concerning the Persian Wars, are the earliest known examples of narrative history. **Herodotus said, “The queen was supported by ample revenues, not dependant upon the goodwill of the king, but fixed by the law & usage of the country”.**
- She had great power over the women of the court, **yet** she was completely at the will of the king as the least slave in the country.

#### IV. **Slide#11 DESCENT DISOBEDIENCE! (10-12)**

- A. (10) Unfortunately like most parties they move from **Banqueting** to **Bachanalian** real quick!
- Roman name for the Greek god Bacchus** god of wine(Dionysos).
  - Prov.20:1 **Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.**
  - Is.5:11 **Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, till wine inflames them!**
  - Read** Prov.23:29-35 (esp 33).
  - Note the link in vs.10** of the kings drinking & his decision.

- a) The narrator implies that the king was **influenced** by alcohol & perhaps wouldn't have given such a command, had he not been drinking.
- b) The point. The Persian court was not a safe place. Especially when absolute power is combined w/decadence & ruthlessness, no one is safe.

B. (11) **Crown** – lit. *turban*.

1. **Slide#12** Some Jewish scholars suggest that the command was for Vashti to come **unveiled** to show off *her beautiful face*.
2. **Slide#13** Others suggest that the command was for her to come wearing “*only*” the turban?
3. **Slide#14** We **do know** it was for the sole purpose of “*showing off her beauty*” to his ½ drunken beer buddies.
  - (1) Here we have a lovely face before lustful drunken officials!

C. (12) **Refused to come** – What kind of King can't even control his Queen?

D. Was Vashti **wise** or **foolish** in **not** attending such a feast?

1. Prov.23:20 **Do not mix with winebibbers**,
2. Prov.28:7 **a companion of gluttons shames his father**.
3. **Plutarch**, the *Greek biographer and philosopher* said, The habit of a Persian King was to have his queen by his side **until** he wished to riot & drink. **Then** he sent her away & called the wives of *inferior rank* – his concubines.
4. **Ahasuerus went from:** 7 days of **feasting**(5); to **drunkenness**(10); to wanting to **show off** his wife's good looks(11).
  - a) It was a breach of custom for an Eastern woman (who usually lived in seclusion) to **show her beauty**. (even today)
  - b) He was stripping her of her “womanly honor”.
5. **Slide#15blank** Her body was only for her husband to gaze upon.
  - a) **I wish this were true today!** (what ever happened to modesty?)
  - b) It used to be an *embarrassment* to be naked:
    - (1) 1st time *naked* is used in the bible, **and they were not ashamed** (context husband/wife)  
2nd time and throughout Scripture...it spoke of *shame* outside the marriage realm.
6. Some ladies **want** to be noticed for her body, craving the compliments from others.
7. Some ladies have taken this too far in the *other way*, thinking that “**the more spiritual you are, the less you need to worry about the outside?**” - **Note to those ladies...**
  - a) “Your husbands don't go blind because you get spiritual ladies.”
8. The bible doesn't blush when it says that **Sarah** was “**a woman of beautiful countenance**”; **Bathsheba** was really *a bathing beauty*; **Vashti** was gorgeous! **And Esther** was “**lovely & beautiful**” (after 12 months of intense beauty school see 2:9)

- a) Some husbands want to show off their wife like a **trophy** (we even call them **Trophy wives**).
- b) Some husbands even ask them to **dress sleazy** in public.
  - (1) Mark 9:42 **But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.**
  - (2) Rom.14:13 **...resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's/sisters way.**
  - (3) Phil.1:9-11 **And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise.**

E. **Slide#16** Queen Vashti represents a good example of the **limits** of a wife's submission.

1. I think **Tony Evans** definition for **submission** fits for this chapter... "Submission is knowing when to duck, so God can hit your husband."
2. The command for a wife to submit is clear in scripture.
  - a) Eph.5:22-24 **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.**
  - b) But it is **not absolute & not w/o limits**.
    - (1) Col.3:18 **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**
  - c) The woman doesn't give up her **dignity as a human being** when she becomes a **wife**.
  - d) "A wife need not & may not obey her husband in what opposes God's law & the laws of feminine honor & decency!"<sup>2</sup>
  - e) **Husbands listen up** - Marriage does not give you the license to pursue your *basest sexual fantasies*, **neither** does it **enslave the wife** to fulfill them!
3. In **Esther 1** - **respect is** demanded; In **Eph.5** - **respect is** to be the response of a woman toward a man who loves her as Christ loved the church & gave himself up for her.
4. "Rather than lower the **white banner of womanly modesty**, Vashti accepted **disgrace & dismissal**."<sup>3</sup>

F. (12b) And so in vs.12b, **The wine in the kings blood started to boil!**

G. This spurred a **hot debate!** - **What would this do to all the Persian society?**

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Lockyer, All the Woman of the Bible.

<sup>3</sup> ibid

## V. Slide#17 **DEPOSITION NOT DISHONOR!** (13-22)

A. (13-15) What shall we do?

B. Slide#18a (16-22) **Memucan's counsel!** (16-22) - *Milquetoast Memucan had 2 agenda's:*

1. **Demean** the queen (19);
2. **Keep the women in the Persian Empire subjugated** (20-22).
  - a) Slide#18b [1] **Demean the Queen!** (19)
  - b) As far as God was concerned the most important point of the edict was, **let the king give her royal position to another.**
    - (1) This would allow Esther an in-road to become queen.
    - (2) \* **Can we infer from this, that even when we make the right decision**(Vashti), **it might not look like the result is in our favor?**
    - (3) Here we see the truth of Prov.21:1 become visible right before our eyes, **The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.**
    - (4) She was stripped of her **Royal Insignia**, **yet** clothed in her own **Integrity**, in sumptuous fine purple apparel!
    - (5) She wore **a crown** no king could take away...**the crown of exalted womanhood!**
    - (6) She chose **Deposition** rather than **Dishonor!**
    - (7) With beauty, charm, courage, heroism, character, & integrity, she flies off the pages of scripture, like **a shooting star.**
      - (a) In a sky crowded full of stars, a **shooting star** is the 1 that people take notice of.
    - (8) **"All praise to the heroic Vashti for her decent disobedience!"**

C. Slide#18c [2] **Keep the women in the Persian Empire subjugated!** (20-22)

1. Vs. 20b sounds pretty good **all wives will honor their husbands, both great & small... but no**, this is **forced submission!**
  - a) Since when does **legislation** bring about **submission?**

D. (22) Means, not speak your wife's language if hers was different from yours.

1. Remember, this is many countries under the rule of 1.

E. Slide#19 What situation around you has God camouflaged?

1. **Why wont He let you see the big picture?** (it might scare you)