

# AHASUERUS' FOLLY

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The first chapter of the Book of Esther describes a situation that involves two things that have been used by Satan to plague men for about as long as man has been on this earth, alcohol and lust. These two things continue to go hand-in-hand and are responsible for many sins committed by men to this very day. Ahasuerus, King of Persia, and ruler of an empire that stretched from Ethiopia to India, spent seven days feasting and drinking wine, and then called for his wife to come and appear before the people to show off her beauty. When his wife refused to do this, she was ultimately removed as queen this set the stage for Esther eventually being chosen as her replacement. Thus, Esther 1:5-12 describes what is truly a very pivotal moment in history. In this text, King Ahasuerus “made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace; where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. 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.* And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so *the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man’s pleasure.* Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus. *On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine,* he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 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.* But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.”

## **The sin of lust**

King Ahasuerus did not have righteous thoughts or good judgment behind his decision to call for queen Vashti to be brought before the people. He was calling for her to be brought forth so that the people and the princes could look upon her beauty (Esther 1:11). Concerning a woman who is not one’s wife, the Lord says, “*Lust not after her beauty in your heart*” (Prov 6:25). Jesus says, “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Matt 5:27-28). It is clear that the dancing of Herodias’ daughter provoked lust in the heart of Herod the king, which led him to make a foolish promise, resulting in the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:3-11). Lust caused even a man after

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(continued)

God's own heart, King David, to fall into grievous sins (2 Sam 11:1-12:15). Job in his wisdom made a covenant with his eyes so that he would not think on another woman (Job 31:1). Ahasuerus was doing something to cause other men to lust after his own wife, a very foolish decision on his part.

## **The role of alcohol**

Ahasuerus did this "on the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine" (Esther 1:10). Seven days of consuming alcohol led to further sin. God says not to even look at an alcoholic beverage. Proverbs 23:29-35 says, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.* At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. *Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.* Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." One of the reasons God gives for why it alcohol should be avoided is that it causes a person to lust after women (Prov 23:33). Also, God says someone who drinks alcohol will "utter perverse things" (Prov 23:33). God especially says that "*it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink*" (Prov 31:4). Alcohol affects the mind and impairs judgment. Nobody, especially someone with as much responsibility as a king or a prince, can afford to have his thinking impaired by anything. King Ahasuerus went against this wisdom of God and drank the wine and "uttered a perverse thing" to have his wife brought forth so that the other drinkers of wine could lust after his wife. Queen Vashti was righteous not to want to have anything to do with this situation but she ended up suffering for it. This example should teach us a lesson not to commit the sin of drinking alcohol which leads to even more sins. Proverbs 23:20-21 says, "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." In the New Testament, drunkenness is also forbidden (Eph 5:18). Alcohol and lust are temptations that frequently beset young people. To the young, the Lord says, "*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (2 Tim 2:22). We need always to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." This could have saved Ahasuerus and Vashti a lot of trouble!