

Esther 1:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

Analysis

Intended effect: '**And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small**'. The counselors predict empire-wide decree will compel wifely obedience throughout the realm—women will honor husbands from fear of Vashti's fate. The parenthetical '(for it is great)' emphasizes the empire's vastness, suggesting the decree's reach and impact. The belief that public example would compel submission throughout the empire shows ancient understanding of law's pedagogical function—punishment demonstrates consequences, deterring others. This reasoning, though based on fear rather than love, became God's tool for positioning Esther.

Historical Context

Ancient empires maintained control partly through public examples—severe punishment for prominent violators deterred others. The Persian Empire's vast extent ('from India to Ethiopia,' v. 1) made consistent application of social norms challenging, requiring spectacular examples to maintain order. The counselors' belief that Vashti's banishment would be known throughout the empire and compel wifely obedience shows both ancient communication effectiveness and reliance on fear as social control. Archaeological evidence shows ancient empires used

imperial decrees to standardize practices across diverse populations and territories.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does relying on fear rather than respect for social order reveal about the weakness of coercive systems?
2. How does this illustrate God's sovereignty using even fear-based human logic to accomplish His redemptive purposes?

Interlinear Text

וְנִשְׁמַע	פְּתָגָם	הִמָּלֵךְ	אֲשֶׁר	יַעֲשֶׂה		
shall be published	decree	And when the king's	H834	which he shall make		
H8085	H6599	H4428		H6213		
בְּכָל	מַלְכוּתוֹ	כִּי	רַבָּה	הָיָא	וְכָל	הַנָּשִׁים
H3605	throughout all his empire	H3588	for it is great	H1931	H3605	all the wives
	H4438		H7227			H802
יִתֵּן	יָקָר	לְבַעְלֶיהָ	לְמַגֵּד וּלְ	וְעַד	קָטָן:	
shall give	honour	to their husbands	both to great	H5704	and small	
H5414	H3366	H1167	H1419		H6996	

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Ephesians 5:33 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

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