

# Esther 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

## Analysis

**In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:** The chronological marker "third year of his reign" (circa 483 BCE) places this feast early in Xerxes' rule, likely celebrating consolidated power and planning for military campaigns. The Hebrew word for "feast" (mishteh, מִשְׁתֶּה) emphasizes drinking and banqueting, indicating lavish celebration rather than religious observance.

The guest list reveals the empire's hierarchical structure: princes (sarim, שָׂרִים), servants (avadav, אַבְדָּוִי), "the power" or military officers of Persia and Media, nobles (partimim, פַּרְתִּימִים, a Persian loanword), and provincial princes. This comprehensive assembly suggests a major political purpose—likely planning the Greek invasion that would occur shortly after this feast. Ancient Near Eastern kings regularly held such gatherings to display wealth, secure loyalty, and coordinate military or administrative initiatives.

The reference to "Persia and Media" reflects the dual ethnic foundation of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus the Great had united these peoples, and their continued mention acknowledges both groups' importance in imperial administration. This detail demonstrates the author's accurate knowledge of Persian political realities.

## Historical Context

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Herodotus and other Greek historians describe Xerxes' elaborate preparations for invading Greece, including massive resource mobilization and coordination with satraps throughout the empire. A feast of this magnitude in the third year of his reign aligns perfectly with planning for the Greek campaign (480 BCE). Persian royal banquets were legendary for their extravagance; Greek sources describe multi-day feasts involving thousands of guests, enormous food consumption, and lavish gift-giving.

The Persepolis fortification tablets document the administrative apparatus required for such events, recording provisions, travel arrangements, and logistics for royal gatherings. Archaeological evidence from Persepolis and Susa reveals enormous columned halls (apadant) capable of accommodating thousands of guests, with elaborate drainage systems for wine and sophisticated kitchen facilities. The "Gate of All Nations" at Persepolis depicts delegations from throughout the empire, visualizing the kind of gathering described here.

The political purpose of such feasts extended beyond celebration to demonstrating imperial power, securing allegiance, coordinating policy, and distributing patronage. Provincial governors would return home with clear understanding of royal expectations and renewed commitment to imperial service. This context explains why Vashti's refusal (v. 12) represented such a serious challenge to royal authority.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. How should believers maintain perspective when confronted with impressive displays of human wealth, power, and achievement?
2. What does this passage teach about God's sovereignty over the apparently autonomous decisions of political leaders?
3. How can Christians discern God's redemptive purposes working through apparently secular historical events?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּשָׁנָה	שְׁלוֹשׁ	לְמַלְכוֹ	עָשָׂה	מִשְׁתֵּה	לְכָל	וְשָׂרֵי
year	In the third	of his reign	he made	a feast	H3605	and princes
H8141	H7969	H4427	H6213	H4960		H8269
וְעַבְדָּיו	הַיָּלִין	כָּרִס	וּמִדֵּי	הַפְּרִתִּים	וְשָׂרֵי	
and his servants	the power	of Persia	and Media	the nobles	and princes	
H5650	H2428	H6539	H4074	H6579	H8269	
הַמְּדִינֹת	לִפְנֵי:					
of the provinces	being before					
H4082	H6440					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Mark 6:21** (Creation): And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

**Daniel 5:1** (Kingdom): Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

**Esther 2:18** (Kingdom): Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

**1 Kings 3:15** (Creation): And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and

offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

**Isaiah 21:2** (Creation): A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.

**Jeremiah 51:11** (Kingdom): Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

**Genesis 40:20** (Creation): And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.