

Esther 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

This verse provides extraordinarily detailed description of the feast's setting, emphasizing opulence through specific materials and colors. The Hebrew text, dense with technical terms for textiles and precious materials, reflects eyewitness knowledge of Persian court aesthetics. Each element demonstrates wealth, power, and artistic sophistication.

The "hangings" or curtains (chur, חור; karpas, כַּרְפָּס; tekhelet, תְּכֵלֶת) in white, green (or cotton), and blue created elaborate outdoor pavilions, typical of Persian royal gatherings. These weren't merely decorative but functional, providing shade and privacy while creating impressive visual effects. The "cords of fine linen and purple" (butz ve'argaman, בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן) attached to "silver rings and pillars of marble" demonstrate both structural engineering and aesthetic refinement—the garden transformed into an architectural marvel.

The "beds" (mittot, מִטּוֹת) were reclining couches for dining, following Greco-Persian symposium customs, made of gold and silver. The pavement's four colored marbles (bahat, בָּהַט; shesh, שֵׁשׁ; dar, דָּר; sochoret, סֹחֲרֵת)—red, white, blue-black, and yellow—created mosaic patterns of extraordinary beauty and expense. Every

detail proclaimed imperial magnificence, overwhelming guests with visual splendor that reinforced Persian claims to universal dominion.

Historical Context

Archaeological discoveries at Persepolis and Susa confirm the accuracy of Esther's architectural and material descriptions. Excavations have uncovered column bases, capitals, and reliefs made from precisely the materials mentioned here. The Apadana at Persepolis used stone from Persia, cedar from Lebanon, ivory from Egypt and India, and precious metals from throughout the empire, demonstrating the international resources deployed for royal construction. Glazed brick friezes feature the exact colors mentioned in Esther—white, green, blue, and purple—in elaborate patterns.

The specific architectural vocabulary—including Persian loanwords like *karpas* (fine cotton) and *butz* (fine linen)—demonstrates the author's intimate knowledge of Persian court culture. Similar detailed descriptions appear in Persian inscriptions, where kings catalogue building materials and methods to demonstrate power and piety. The Bisotun Inscription and foundation tablets from Susa describe Darius using materials from throughout the empire, paralleling Esther's emphasis on diverse precious materials.

The mosaic pavement description matches archaeological remains of stone floors in Persian palaces, particularly at Susa where excavators found elaborate mosaic patterns using colored stones. The combination of architectural grandeur and textile luxury created the characteristic Persian aesthetic that Greek writers described with both admiration and criticism. This setting wasn't merely background but communicated political messages about imperial power, divine favor, and cosmic order.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How should believers evaluate the relationship between aesthetic beauty and wasteful extravagance in resource allocation?
2. What does this passage teach about the difference between what impresses humans and what God values?
3. How can Christians cultivate appreciation for beauty without falling into materialism or status-seeking through impressive display?

Interlinear Text

ח וּרְאִי	וְתֵכָה לָת	אֲחוּזִים	בְּחַבְלֵי	ב וַיֵּץ			
Where were white	green	and blue	hangings fastened	with cords	of fine linen		
H2353	H3768	H8504	H270	H2256	H948		
וְאֶרְגָּמָהּ	עַל	גָּל יְלִי	וְכֶסֶף	וְעַמּוּדֵי	וְיָשׁוּשׁ	מִטּוֹת	זָה ב
and purple	H5921	rings	and silver	and pillars	marble	the beds	were of gold
H713		H1550	H3701	H5982	H8336	H4296	H2091
וְכֶסֶף	עַל	רֹצֵף ת	בְּהַט	וְיָשׁוּשׁ	וְדָר	וְסֹחֲקֹת:	
and silver	H5921	upon a pavement	of red	marble	and white	and black	
H3701		H7531	H923	H8336	H1858	H5508	

Additional Cross-References

Amos 6:4 (Parallel theme): That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

Ezekiel 23:41 (Parallel theme): And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.