

Esther 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

Analysis

And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: The servants' proposal becomes more detailed, outlining the administrative mechanism for this empire-wide search. The appointment of "officers" in all 127 provinces demonstrates the Persian Empire's bureaucratic sophistication. The phrase "gather together all the fair young virgins" reveals the compulsory nature of this "contest"—beautiful young women throughout the empire would be rounded up whether they wished to participate or not. The reference to Hegai, "the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women," establishes the administrative infrastructure. Every detail of this worldly, exploitative system becomes, in God's providence, the pathway for Esther's strategic positioning.

Historical Context

Persian administrative efficiency enabled rapid, comprehensive implementation of royal decrees throughout the empire. Archaeological evidence from Persepolis fortification tablets documents this administrative apparatus. The reference to the

"house of the women" indicates the separate harem quarters within the palace complex. Excavations at Susa and Persepolis confirm elaborate women's quarters with independent facilities. Hegai's role as "keeper of the women" was a significant court position, managing the complex logistics for potentially hundreds of women. The twelve-month purification process reflects ancient beauty practices documented in various ancient texts, involving oils, perfumes, and beauty treatments.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How should believers evaluate systems that accomplish God's purposes but involve exploitation or injustice?
2. What does this passage teach about maintaining ethical clarity while recognizing God's sovereignty over morally complex situations?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּפְקֶד ד	הִמָּ לְךָ	פְּקִידִים	בְּכָל	מְדִינַת	מַלְכוּתוֹ
appoint	And let the king	officers	H3605	in all the provinces	of his kingdom
H6485	H4428	H6496		H4082	H4438
וַיִּקְבְּצוּ ו	אֶת	כָּל	נְעָרָה	בְּ תוֹלָה	טוֹבֵת
that they may gather together	H853	H3605	young	virgins	all the fair
H6908		H5291	H1330	H2896	
אֶל	שׁוּשַׁן	הַבֵּיכָה	אֶל	בֵּית	הַנָּשִׁים
H4758	H413	unto Shushan	the palace	H413	to the house
	H7800	H1002		H1004	of the women
				H802	
לְ	הֶגֶה	סֵרִיס	הִמָּ לְךָ	שֹׁמֵר	הַנָּשִׁים
unto the custody	of Hege	chamberlain	And let the king	keeper	of the women
H3027	H1896	H5631	H4428	H8104	H802
וְנָתַן ו	תְּמָרוֹקִיקָן:				
be given	and let their things for purification				
H5414	H8562				