#### The Historical World (prep assignment for Week 4)

**Esther**

**DESCRIPTION**

The principle of looking at the Historical World is that all texts are written in specific social, economic, cultural, political and religious settings. While not all texts accurately mirror a “real” world (e.g. science fiction), many texts can be understood better if the reader knows more about the world behind the text. The purpose of this assignment is to focus on data that can help reconstruct this world. This data includes people, places, things, dates, events, and processes.

**ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment will focus on the Old Testament book of Esther. Combined with the assignment for Week 6 of this module, it is the foundation for the Signature Assignment (final paper) for the course. The main concern in this week’s assignment is to ask what some of the social and historical realities in Esther’s story that would help us understand the context of the book of Esther. The historical world will be combined with the literary world to help understand better what is happening in the contemporary world.

The following are questions that might be helpful in dealing with Esther. They are suggestive. Feel free to write about additional matters that you see as important socially, economically, politically and historically as they pertain to this letter.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What are the assumptions being made about the role of women?
2. What are the assumptions being made about the nature of God’s people in relationship to the people in whose land they live?
3. What are the assumptions being made about power and authority?
4. What are the relationships of Vashti to Ahasuerus? Esther to Ahasuerus? Vashti to Esther? Mordecai to Ahasuerus? Mordecai to Haman?
5. What has Vashti done wrong, if anything? What about Mordecai? Haman? Esther? (Read carefully and check your own assumptions.)

**Contemporary World**

1. What kind of leadership exhibited here? Does it match the content of *The Serving Leader* and/or *In the Name of Jesus*?
2. How might the concepts from *The Serving Leader* and/or *In the Name of Jesus* relate to your reading of Esther?

Note: This is a similar process that you will use in your final paper for the book of Esther. Pay attention to the kinds of questions that will need to be asking regarding historical context.