

## *Esther*

**Purpose:** A model for living in fidelity to God outside of the land.

**Outline:** 1:1-2:23 – Esther and Mordecai in the Persian Court

3:1-4:17 – Trouble for the Jews

5:1-7:10 – Esther’s Intervention

8:1-12:47 – Victory of the Jews

9:18-10:3 – Esther and Mordecai in the Persian Court

**Author:** Unknown

**Date:** Of Events – Between 538 and 460 BC. (Cyrus Edict and Ezra’s return to Jerusalem)

Of Composition – Between 460 and 331 BC (end of events and Persia’s fall to Greeks)

### **Highlights:**

Esther is very unique through its literary style, especially employing the literary tools of reversal (happenings that are the opposite of what you expect to happen) and irony (where the reader knows things about which the character is unaware). Most notable is the fact that God is never referred to; but God’s sovereignty is a major focus of the book.

There are also distinct similarities between the story of Esther and that of Joseph, and of Daniel. All three are Israelites living outside of the land who are given positions of power in ways that serve God’s purpose for His people.

Our opening scene takes place at a party being thrown by King Xerxes. He makes an inappropriate request of Queen Vashti. The Queen inappropriately refuses. The result is that the seven nobles tell the King to depose Queen Vashti, allowing Esther to become the new Queen.

Esther (Hebrew name – Hadassah) is the cousin (daughter – 2:7) of Mordecai. She is named the Queen in 2:17.

The next step in God’s plan has Mordecai finding out about plans to assassinate the king. Mordecai is able to tell the king through Esther. Following this a man named Haman is promoted and comes into conflict with Mordecai, causing Haman to want to destroy the Jews.

We first hear about the “pur” (that is the lot) in 3:7, this will be key later.

The King writes an Edict, at Haman’s prompting, to annihilate all of the Jews. Mordecai, calls for Esther to persuade the king otherwise. Esther says she can’t do this because she can only approach the King when summoned. Mordecai persuades her by saying that she will be killed when it is discovered that she is a Jew. And that perhaps she is Queen “for such a time as this.”

Esther agrees, and approaches the King (and receives his favor). She calls for a banquet to be served in Haman’s honor, and then a second banquet served for only Haman. She says that at the second banquet she will tell the King what she wants.

The night before the banquet Haman has gallows built to hang Mordecai. That same night the King can’t sleep and has the record of his reign read to him. It is recalled how Mordecai saved him from an assassination attempt. The next day, in a great twist of events, the King has Haman honor Mordecai.

At the banquet, Esther reveals that she and her people are to be killed because of Haman. The King ends up having Haman hanged on the very gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai, and gives Esther and Mordecai all of Haman’s estate.

The edict in chapter 3 is reversed by an edict in chapter 8. This new edict results in a massive victory for the Jews. The triumph of the Jews results in the celebration of Purim.

Purim – is a celebration of all that happened in the past year. The Pur (that is the Lot) had determined that the Jews would be destroyed in the month of Adar. But before that month came, the new edict came, resulting in Jewish victory. (See Proverbs 16:33).

In the end Mordecai is made second in command.