

Esther Chapter 1

Introduction: Esther is a historical book of the Bible.

- Esther = “Star” - “She That is Hidden” - stars always seem to shine the brightest when it is the darkest...

Authorship: Not known for sure; a likely candidate would be Mordecai, Esther’s uncle.

Biblical time frame: Sometime between the books of Ezra & Nehemiah, in the middle of the 5th century BC. Esther was the step mother to Artaxerxes, spoken of in Nehemiah.

- Esther, a Jewess, became Queen of Persia in 478 BC, she was used of God to save the Jews from massacre in 473 BC.
- Esther came on the scene about 40 years after the Temple was rebuilt, and about 30 years before the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.
- This book covers a 12 year time span and gives us the historical back drop to the feast of Purim which started as a result of what we’re about to study, and continues to this present day.

Theme: God’s preservation of His people.

- This book of Esther is about a very important historical event - namely the deliverance of the Hebrew nation from annihilation in the days following the Babylonian captivity.
- If the Hebrew nation had been entirely wiped out of existence (which was Haman’s plan) 500 years before it brought Christ into the world, that would have made some difference in the destiny of mankind.
- No Hebrew nation, no Messiah. No Messiah, no hope for a lost world - we wouldn’t be here.
- This orphaned Hebrew girl, raised by her older cousin named Esther played a vital role in God’s providential plan for each of us.
- You may notice something as we go through this book; there is no mention of God in it at all. There is no mention of heaven or hell, of prayer, or faith.
- We examined through the books of Ezra & Nehemiah the 50-60,000 people that left Babylon and went back to Jerusalem, and those that followed later. This is


the story of those who didn't go, those who stayed behind, who didn't respond to the call of God.

- They had gotten comfortable on enemy soil, they had in some ways compromised and were less faithful than they had been. They built homes and raised families, just as the Babylonian king had encouraged them to. They were Jews in an ethnic sense, but Babylonian / worldly in every other way.
- This isn't a story about their faith, it's a story about His faith.

2 Timothy 2:13 "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful..."

- The first three chapters sort of set the stage for what will happen later.

V: 1 Ahasuerus; (Hebrew name), Xerxes in Greek. His father was Darius I, and his grandfather was Cyrus the great. Ahasuerus ruled over the Persian Empire from 486-465 BC after which time his son Artaxerxes assumed the throne.

- The Persian Empire stretched from India to Ethiopia and was divided into twenty "satrapies" which in turn were subdivided into 127 "provinces", and the king was in absolute control. 
- At this particular time in history the Persians under Xerxes were preparing to mount one of the greatest military invasions in history. They had gathered an army of two million men from throughout the empire to invade Greece.

V: 2 Location: Shushan ([Susa / Map](#)) at the winter palace.

V: 3-8 The king is showing off, boasting.

- He gives a great feast to all the powerful men of Persia, lasting for 180 days, (6 months)
- This 6 month party was to bring in the various princes, nobles, and military leaders - probably not all at the same time and to sell them on the idea of this military campaign. This display of power and wealth would be an encouragement, or a confidence builder.
- When that was done he extended it one week, opening up the party to the general public, showing off the riches and glory of his kingdom.
- They drank from golden vessels, but not the vessels of the Temple which had been returned. It was an open bar...
- The only mention thus far is of the kings officers & servants, men.

V: 9 The Queen threw a party / feast for the women, this implies that the two sexes were segregated and that it wasn't necessarily a drunken orgy, just a drunken party of some kind.

V: 10-12 On the 7th day of this 2nd feast the king sends his chamberlains / butlers / eunuchs to get his wife so he can show her off, put her on display before all his ministers, princes, and servants.

- It is noted that the king was “merry with wine” meaning he was under the influence to some degree. Whether he was a little tipsy, or flat out drunk - his judgment had been skewed by his consumption of alcohol.
- It's sad when people drink and lose their sense of judgment. Oftentimes a person will do things under the influence of alcohol that they would not normally do. Alcohol robs a person of their natural inhibitions and good judgment.
- It has been said that “when wine enters, wisdom exits.” The scriptures bear this out.

Proverbs 20:1 “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

Proverbs 31:4-5 “⁴It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; ⁵lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of the afflicted.”

- In that culture it wasn't proper for a woman to go out into public without her veil, without her coverings.
- **Josephus** - Antiquities 11.187
“Now the king was desirous to show her, who exceeded all other women in beauty, to those that feasted with him, and he sent some to command her to come to his feast. (191) But she, out of regard to the laws of the Persians, which forbid the wives to be seen by strangers, did not go to the king; and though he oftentimes sent the eunuchs to her, she did nevertheless stay away, and refused to come,”
- That type of invitation or command would be intimidating for any woman; to present herself to a group of drunken men for a public viewing.
- Jewish scholars / Hebrew tradition interprets this passage “¹¹... **bring the queen before the king with the crown royal....**” meaning wearing “only” the crown royal, meaning naked except for the crown. This is speculative, but it's also a possible explanation for the events.

- She refuses and he gets angry. This says a lot about husbands and wives. He's the most powerful guy in the world, his vast kingdom - but she isn't going to put up with his antics.
- Actually her refusal was a pretty radical move because in that day women didn't say "no" to their husbands, much less the king.

V: 12b The king became furious and "burned with anger."

- Ahasuerus as a mighty king could control a lot of things, but not himself.

Proverbs 16:32 "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

V: 13-15 All of this took place in a public way before the king's officials, it would seem that the king couldn't be seen as being weak or backing down in some way - publicly humiliated.

V: 15 The king then asks what shall we do to queen Vashti, what does the law say because she's been disobedient?

V: 16-18 Memucan - which also means "Yes Man" explains that she's done more than just disobey the king, she's going to turn their whole way of life on it's end if this isn't dealt with.

- This rebellion will spread to all the officials wives, there will be mayhem and chaos, dogs and cats falling from the skies - insanities!
- This was all a self serving exaggeration.
- This was foolish counsel rendered by foolish men. How could they be so foolish and brutal as to use the authority of the law to destroy one woman and threaten the peace of every home in the empire? Because they were selfish and self serving!
- They were essentially encouraging every husband to acts like King Ahasuerus and manage the home on the basis of executive fiat. What a total contrast to Peter & Paul's counsel to husbands and wives in 1 Peter 3 & Ephesians 5.

V: 19-22 Vashti would be banished and used as an example throughout the empire so that every man can keep the rule of his house.

"Let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered..." (Daniel & Darius & the lions...)

- Once the king made it a law, it couldn't be altered, even by the king. They may have been taking advantage of his intoxicated state, concerned that he would change his mind when he sobered up. (Secular history, Semseis, powerful)

Esther Chapter 2

V: 1-4 Sometime later after (479 BC - returned defeated / Navy destroyed at Salamis, his army defeated at Plataea) Ahasuerus was appeased, thinking soberly and he thought about Vashti; possibly regretfully.

- As he considered his rash action against his wife, his affection for Vashti was rekindled; and even though he had a harem full of concubines, he missed his queen.
- There is a difference between love and sex. The passing excitement of the moment is not the same as the lasting enrichment of a lifelong relationship. (Amen!?)
- The servants immediately begin to suggest a replacement to placate the king and secure their own positions.
- So begins the search for a new queen.
- Qualifications: fair - pretty, young, and virgin - never having had a physical relationship with a man. The one that is pleasing to the king shall be his queen.
- It seems that while the king had probably many concubines of consorts, he only had one wife that was the queen.

V: 5-7 Mordecai: "Little Man" (George / 6'2")

- Mordecai's father or grandfather was taken in the Babylonian captivity, the last installment with king Jechoniah.
- Mordecai adopted "Hadassah" his uncles's daughter, meaning Mordecai's cousin.
- Hadassah = Myrtle, the Jewish name for "Esther". "Esther" is a Persian name that means "star." The myrtle tree produces a flower that looks like a star.
- Esther was fair and beautiful, doubly pretty - presumably a virgin and thus qualified.

V: 8-11 As the king's commandment was heard, Esther was gathered up along with all the other young girls who were pretty.

- Esther was turned over to the custody of Hegai, presumably a eunuch who had charge over a group of women.

V: 9 Esther found favor in the eyes of Hegai - much like the patriarch Joseph found favor with Potiphar, then the prison warden, and ultimately with Pharaoh, God was working behind the scenes setting His plan in motion.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (bring you to...) NKJV

- She found favor, and he showed her kindness.
- Up to this point Esther had not revealed that she was a Jewess, upon the instruction of Mordecai.
- Nobody knew that Esther or Mordecai were Jews... Mordecai doesn't reveal that until chapter 3 when he won't bow down to Haman. No one knows they are Jews because they don't act like Jews, they're not keeping kosher or observing the Law.

V: 12-14 They kept and observed each of the women for 12 months prior to sending them into the king. During that time there was a program or regimen of purification and preparation for each woman, they were each given what they wanted and treated well.

- Each woman would in turn go from the “house of women” being overseen by Hegai, into the king's chamber for the night, then onto a “second house of the women” overseen by Sha-ash-gaz, the king's chamberlain, who was also a eunuch.
- They didn't see the king again except upon request of the king. (Shut in for life)

V: 15-20 When Esther's turn came to go into the king - God granted her favor above all the other virgins. She had favor in the sight of all that looked upon her.

- ¹⁷The king “**loved**” Esther above all the women and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins;”

Proverbs 21:1 “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.”

- Esther was made queen, and was still obedient to Mordecai's instructions. She hadn't shown her kindred, that she was related to Mordecai, nor her people - that she was a Jewess.
- This is the 7th year of Ahasuerus' reign, this all started in the 3rd year (1:3) so 4 years have passed.

V: 21-23 In those days, or about that time while Mordecai - who was a servant to the king, was sitting in the gates - no doubt conducting the king's business he became aware of a plot, a conspiracy to kill the king.

- Mordecai informs Esther, who informs the king giving credit to Mordecai - it's investigated and they're both executed. Hanged on a tree, which is then recorded in the official records of the court.
- Mordecai does a good thing, a good deed which seems to go un-rewarded. That will come later. These good deeds are like seeds that will be planted in the ground, the fruit will come later.

1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

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- We see here that God has set the stage. Through all kinds of circumstances He's set Esther on the throne as queen. In direct communication with the king of Persia. He's placed Mordecai in the city gates where he's of service to the king.
 - God puts people in positions and places so that He can use them as He will in His plans and for His purposes. (Joseph in Egypt).

Daniel 4:35 "... He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest thou?"

- *He does the same things in our lives. He either orchestrates or allows events in our lives, all with the purpose of drawing each of us to Himself, drawing each of us into a personal relationship with Him.*
- *His desire is for us, we don't have to go through a lengthy beauty treatment (?) we need to go through a "sin treatment!"*