

The Book of Esther

Author:	? maybe Nehemiah or Ezra
Date/Location:	470-465 B.C. – Persia
Genre:	Historical Narrative
Length:	10 chapters
Key Passages:	4:14; 8:17

Contents:

The story of an Israelite woman who becomes queen of the Mede/Persian Empire and helps her people evade genocide.

Theme and Purpose:

Esther tells the story of a beautiful Jewish girl whom King Xerxes of Persia chose to be his queen. When Haman plotted to murder all the Jews, Queen Esther's cousin Mordecai persuaded Esther to try to save her people. Risking her own life, she appealed to the king and rescued the Jews. Although the name of God does not appear in this book, the theme and purpose of the book is to show God's providential care of His people in their trials and persecutions.

Key Words:

The key word is "Jews," which is repeated some 44 times. Thus, in concept, a key term is the word *providence*, God's providence in caring for the Jews.

Outline:

Esther divides into two sections:

I. The Danger to the Jews (1-3)

- A. The Choice of Esther as Queen in Place of Vashti (1-2)
- B. The Conspiracy of Haman Against the Jews (3)

II. The Deliverance of the Jews (4-10)

- A. The Decision of Esther for the Jews (4-5)
- B. The Defeat of Haman (6-7)
- C. The Decree of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Mordecai (8)
- D. The Defeat Over the Enemies of the Jews (9:1-19)
- E. The Days of the Feast of Purim (9:20-32)
- F. The Declaration of Mordecai's Fame and Exaltation at Court (10)

Christ as Seen in Esther:

Esther provides a fitting picture of Christ in that she was willing to put herself in the place of death for her people's salvation and also in that she acted as an advocate for them. In addition, we also see how God continued to providentially protect the Jews through whom He would give the Messiah.

Chronology in Esther:

The events of Esther unfold over a period of 10 years.

Reference	Event	Month	Day	Year of Reign	Year
1:3	Ahasuerus holds his banquets			3	483 b.c.
2:16	Esther goes to Ahasuerus	10		7	479
3:7	Haman casts his lots	1		12	474
3:12	Haman issues his decree	1	13	13	474
3:13	Date planned for annihilation of the Jews	12	13	13	473
8:9	Mordecai issues his decree	3	23	13	474
8:12; 9:1	Day upon which Jews could defend themselves from attack	12	13	13	473
9:6–10, 20–22	Ten sons of Haman executed; Feast of Purim celebrated	12	14, 15	13	473

Questions:

How can we relate to this period in Israel's history? What are ways that we have similar circumstances as Esther?

Have the Scriptures ever affected you the way it affected Israel in this period?

What difference does the death & resurrection of Jesus make when it comes to the flourishing of God's people? How does this account encourage you in the gospel?