

ESTHER

Author: Uncertain

Date: 483 – 473 B. C.

Historically, this book unveils a segment of Jewish history occurring during the Jewish captivity in Persia. This provides the only biblical portrait of the vast majority of Jews who chose to remain in Persia rather than return to their homeland. This story is filled with drama, romance, power struggles, intrigue, excitement, racial hatred, family issues, courage and deliverance as a young Jewish captive living in Persia is chosen to be queen. The Book of Esther records events during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) at Susa, the winter palace of the Persian Empire.

God's hand of providence, faithfulness and protection on behalf of His people is evident throughout the book of Esther, even though the name of God does not appear in this work. Esther is a Jewess living in Persia who has been adopted and raised by her older cousin, Mordecai. King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) became dissatisfied with his queen Vashti and banished her, marrying Esther. An evil villain (Haman) plots to destroy the Jews bringing grave danger to God's people and is countered by the courage of Esther and the counsel of her wise cousin Mordecai, resulting in great deliverance. The Jewish Feast of Purim becomes an annual reminder of God's faithfulness on behalf of His people.

Theme: The divine providence of God saves the Jews of Persia from annihilation.

Key verse: "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14)

OUTLINE

- Part One: THE THREAT TO THE JEWS (CHAPTERS 1-4)
 - I. The Selection of Esther as Queen (Chapters 1-2)
 - A. The Divorce of Vashti (1:1-22)
 - B. The Marriage of Esther (2:1-20)
 - II. The Formulation of the Plot by Haman (2:21-4:17)
 - A. Mordecai Reveals the Plot to Murder the King (2:21-23)
 - B. Haman Plots to Annihilate the Jews (3:1 – 4:17)
- Part Two: THE TRIUMPH OF THE JEWS (5:1 – 10:3)
 - I. The Triumph of Mordecai over Haman (5:1 – 8:3)
 - A. Setting for the Triumph (5:1 – 6:3)
 - B. Mordecai is Honored (6:4-14)
 - C. Haman Dies on Gallows Prepared for Mordecai (7:1-10)
 - D. Mordecai is Given Haman's House (8:1-3)
 - II. The Triumph of the Jews over Their Enemies (8:4 – 10:3)
 - A. Preparation for the Deliverance of the Jews (8:4-17)
 - B. The Jews Victory over Their Enemies (9:1-16)
 - C. The Jews Celebration (9:17 – 10:3)

Application: Although we may not understand everything happening around us, we must trust in God's protection and retain our integrity by doing what we know is right. No matter how hopeless our condition, we need not despair. God is still in control.