

ESTHER

Esther is a beautiful and moving book about a woman who saved her nation. One of only two books named after a woman, Esther shares a time when many Jews were living in Babel after others returned to Jerusalem.

The author is unknown however some think it may have been Esther's cousin, Mordecai. The events in the book of Esther occurred from 483 BC to 473 BC, during the reign of King Xerxes. And the book was likely written sometime during the reign of his son, Artaxerxes.

Overall, the book is a look at the life of a Jewish girl, living in a foreign nation, who is raised up to a position to save her people from genocide.

BECOMING QUEEN (CH. 1-2)

King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus) had a wife named Vashti and during a large dinner one night, he commanded she be brought before the people to show off her beauty. The queen wasn't keen on being paraded around when the king, and likely others, were "merry with wine."

Because Queen Vashti refused the king, a royal order was sent out for her to be removed from her position. After some time had passed, the king decided to search out a new wife.

All the virgin women in Susa were brought to the harem and for twelve months, essentially went through a beauty treatment. After the twelve months, one by one women were brought to the king at night. After their night with the king, they were left in the harem. It's not a beautiful picture of this time, for these women, but God used it to bring Esther to the position of queen.

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When it was Esther's turn, she won favor with the king (as well as others in the court) and it says he loved her more than any other. As a result, Esther, a Jew, was made Queen of Persia.

After Esther became queen, Mordecai actually overheard a plot to kill the king. He told Esther, who told the king, and the plot was averted in the name of Mordecai.

A PLOT TO KILL (CH. 3-4)

The second in command—the king's right-hand man—was Haman the Agagite. He was a prideful man and expected people to bow to him. When Mordecai refused to, he became angry. Haman concocts a plan to destroy not only Mordecai, but all Jews, and convinces the king to send out a royal order that the Jews be destroyed.

When Mordecai hears of this, he pleads with Esther to do something. She hadn't been invited to be in the king's presence in quite some time and expressed fear to go before him, but Mordecai reminded her that she is a Jew as well.

Esther tells Mordecai to call the people to fast.

DELIVERANCE (CH. 5-10)

In chapter 5, Esther went before the king in court—a dangerous move to make because if it displeased him, he could have done anything to her. But she found favor in his eyes and he asked her what she wished for. In wisdom, instead of asking for relief of her people (which, by the way, the king didn't even know she was a Jew), she asked him and Haman to a dinner.

In the meantime, Haman built a gallows to hang Mordecai.

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In chapter 6, the king couldn't sleep one night and asked for the book of deeds to be brought to him. An account was in there of how Mordecai saved him and so King Xerxes decided to honor the man. As he was reading, Haman actually came to him to propose hanging Mordecai from the gallows. But before he could ask, the king told Haman to honor Mordecai by walking him through the streets of the city in honor.

After this, Esther had her dinner with the king and Haman. There, she exposed Haman for what he planned to do—to kill even her since she was a Jew—and by the end of the dinner, it was ordered for Haman to be hung on the very gallows he had built to hang Mordecai.

In addition, the king signed an edict that every Jew could take up arms and defend themselves against anyone who tried to hurt them. The Jews prevailed over those who sought to harm them and a people group was saved.

The book closes out with Mordecai taking the place as second in command.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Even though God's name isn't mentioned in the book, it doesn't mean He wasn't at work. The book of Esther is a beautiful indicator that God is with us, works through us, and moves even when we can't see Him. Even when we think our world is falling apart, God is working.

MEMORY VERSE

“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:14