

ESTHER (Student Edition)

Part One: The Threat to the Jews (1:1--4:17)

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AUTHOR-

For centuries scholars have debated the question of who wrote the Book of Esther. The Jewish historian Josephus claimed _____ wrote it. But many modern scholars dispute this because _____ is mentioned in the _____ in the final chapter of the book. Until new evidence emerges, the author must remain unknown, but we do know it must have been a Jew who was very familiar with Persian _____.

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

The question of date can be answered with greater certainty. The Persian king Ahasuerus is generally believed to be Xerxes 1 (Xerxes is the _____ of Ahasuerus) who succeeded Darius 1 in 485 B.C. and ruled for 20 years over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. He lived in the Persian capital of Shushan. At this time there were still many Jews living in Babylon under Persian rule though they had been free to go back to Jerusalem for over fifty years. The story itself takes place over a period of _____ starting in the ____ year of Xerxes' reign. Since we know the reign of Xerxes lasted for about 20 years, beginning about 485 B.C., Esther must have been written some time shortly after _____.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

What an awesome book! A friend of mine said that this book could be a perfect screenplay without any adjustments. How true!

The Book of Esther is valuable historically because it gives us a view of the Jewish people who were scattered throughout the ancient world about 475 B.C. The events in the book occurred about _____ after the leading citizens of the Jewish nation were carried into exile by Babylon in 587 B.C. Shortly after the Persians overthrew the Babylonians, they allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their native land. Many did return to Jerusalem, but thousands of Jewish citizens chose to remain in Persia, probably because this had become home to them during their long separation from their native land. Thus, this book shows clearly that God _____, even when they are _____ among the nations of the world.

Esther is a major chapter in the _____ of the people of God to survive in the midst of a hostile world. Beginning with the Book of Genesis, God had made it clear that _____ His Covenant People and bring a curse upon those who tried to do them harm (_____). The Book of Esther shows how God has kept this promise at _____ of history. Just as Haman met his death on the gallows, we can trust God to _____ from the enemy, Satan, and to work out His ultimate purpose of redemption in our lives.

One unusual fact about this book is that it _____. For this reason some people believe Esther has no place in the Bible. They see it as nothing but a fiercely patriotic Jewish book that celebrates the victory of the Jews over their enemies.

This harsh criticism is unfair to Esther. A careful reading will reveal that the book does have a spiritual base. Queen Esther calls the people _____ and _____ (4:16), and God's protection of His people speaks of _____. The book also teaches a valuable lesson about the _____ of God: although the enemies of the Covenant People may triumph for a season, He holds the key to _____.

Something of note that is a great lesson for us today is that Mordecai and Esther _____. Regardless of the consequences, Mordecai refused to pay homage to Haman. Esther risked her life for the sake of her people by going to the king unsummoned. Their mission seemed always to be the saving of the life the enemy was trying to destroy.

In fact, in their working for God they demonstrate one of the great lessons of this book: _____.

Their successful partnering reflects the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17. The success of their individual roles, even their very survival, _____.

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF ESTHER (BASIC THEMES)-

The facts and significance of Esther's actions, at a time when the very life and existence of her nation and people were in doubt, speaks to the role each of us should play. God's Spirit is refining and shaping us, Jesus' bride, the church, to fulfill our role in this earth.

This book helps us grasp, I believe, our potential in _____.

It illustrates our privilege of affecting the rescue of individuals, circumstances, and even entire nations or people groups through _____.

The following is gleaned from this book as a preparation for each of us to become "Esther-like" intercessors:

- As Esther prepared herself for her appearance before the king, so we should lay aside old ways and _____ (Colossians 3:5-14) and be _____.
- As Haman hatefully conspired to destroy the Jews, so the Bible reveals we have an enemy who opposes all we do (John 10:10; Revelation 12:12). We should therefore not be _____ and we should _____ (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11)
- As Mordecai caught Esther's attention, prompting her full sensitivity to both the seriousness of the situation and the possibilities of her role in accomplishing a major deliverance, so we must allow the Holy Spirit to _____. (See Ephesians 6:10-20 and consider the _____ ramifications of the prayer potential being referred to)
- As Esther did not even care about her own life (compare Esther 4:16 with Revelation 12:11) but gave herself to fasting and bold intercessory entrance to the king, so we should boldly go to the throne of grace through fasting and prayer and _____ (Mark 9:28,29; Hebrews 4:16; Acts 14:23- which contextually is related to pray that pole will be empowered to change their nations)
- As Esther was invited to "touch the scepter", a phrase related to _____, so we too are called to _____ above every principality and power (Romans 5:17; Ephesians 1:18-23; 2:6)

You might say that all of the above can be summarized in the statement: _____.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

I actually think there is one particularly great key word for this book, which I believe is: _____. The reason for this is that one reason the book was written was to demonstrate God's _____ of His people in their trials and persecutions.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

I went back to being a good boy and have only one verse as a key verse. To me the key verse is: _____. This great verse speaks to the theme that God uses people who will respond to _____ in the position _____ in to accomplish _____. In that same vein, I chose the key chapter as being: _____. The reason for this is that this demonstrates the awesome results of a person's bold action in the name of their God, in this case the _____.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- _____
- _____
- The role of King speaks to Jesus' role
- _____

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- Mordecai played the role of the Spirit as he spoke to Esther, her conscience and led her
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Esther 1:17,18

Never forget: people become what you are, not what you preach. Your behavior is important are there are standards we must keep. Live what you speak!

Esther 3:1,2; 6:1-11

Esther 4:1-3

Esther 4:12-14; 10:3

Esther 8:17

Understand that God gives you favor in seasons- use that season to extend the kingdom and not for personal benefit.

Persian Customs in the Book of Esther

The Book of Esther records events during the reign of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in the fifth century B.C. at Shushan (Susa), administrative capital of the Persian Empire. After the death of Darius I (the Persian king who had allowed any Jews who desired to return to their homeland to do so), his son Ahasuerus became king. Ahasuerus was the king who became dissatisfied with his queen, Vashti, and banished her, marrying Esther.

Royal Persian feasts were noted for their splendor and opulence. Esther describes the Persian custom of eating while reclining on beds or couches. All eating utensils were made of gold, “the vessels being diverse one from another” (1:7).

Special laws protected the Persian king. Esther 1:14 refers to the seven princes who “saw the king’s face.” These were the chief nobles who were his advisors. Only a person summoned by the king could visit him, a custom which signified his royalty, as well as protected him from would-be assassins. Esther feared going to Ahasuerus without being called, because the punishment for such a visit was death (4:11).

The Persian Empire boasted a well-organized postal system (3:13). The king’s ring (8:8) was the signet ring with which official documents were signed. In ancient Persia documents were sealed in two ways: with a signet ring if they were written on papyrus, or with a cylinder seal if written on clay tablets. Among the objects excavated at the royal city of Persepolis was a cylinder seal, which belonged to King Xerxes.

The book of Esther also refers to “the laws of the Persians and the Medes” (1:19). This phrase describes the ironclad nature of the laws that governed the Persian Empire. Once a law was issued, it could not be changed or revoked—not even by the king himself.

Jewish Feasts

The Feast of Purim, which was established in the month of Adar—the last month of the sacred year—is a continual reminder of the heroism of Esther in risking her throne and life to save her people and to become God’s channel for deliverance. The feast did not celebrate the destruction of the enemies, but rather the “resting” of the Jews from the oppression of their

enemies. The days of Purim are characterized by feasting and gladness for deliverance and redemption through the providential care of God.

Jewish Feasts

<i>Feast of</i>	<i>Month on Jewish Calendar</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Corresponding Month</i>	<i>References</i>
Passover	Nisan	14	Mar.–Apr.	Ex. 12:1-14; Matt. 26:17–20
*Unleavened Bread	Nisan	15–21	Mar.–Apr.	Ex. 12:15-20
Firstfruits	Nisan or Sivan	16 6	Mar.–Apr. May–June	Lev. 23:9–14; Num. 28:26
*Pentecost (Harvest or Weeks)	Sivan	6 (50 days after barley harvest)	May-June	Deut. 16:9–12; Acts 2:1
Trumpets, <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Tishri	1, 2	Sept.-Oct.	Num. 29:1–6
Day of Atonement, <i>Yom Kippur</i>	Tishri	10	Sept.–Oct.	Lev. 23:26-32; Heb. 9:7
*Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering)	Tishri	15–22	Sept.–Oct.	Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2
Dedication (Lights), Hanukkah	Chislev	25 (8 days)	Nov.–Dec.	John 10:22
Purim (Lots)	Adar	14, 15	Feb.-Mar.	Esth. 9:18–32
*The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–19).				