

- I) **V1-8 INTRO: Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus**
As we begin our study, I will briefly give background information
- II) **The writer is unidentified: some believe it was written by Esther and Mordecai**
Esther 9:20 Mordecai **wrote these things** and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus
Esther 9:29 So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, **wrote with full authority** to confirm this second letter concerning Purim
- III) **It is the only book of the Bible in which the name of God is not mentioned.**
The NT never quotes from Esther, nor have copies of it been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Law is never mentioned, nor are sacrifices or offerings. Prayer is not specifically mentioned, though fasting is.
- IV) **This may be because the Jews in Persia were becoming Persians and were slowly losing their identity. God gives them a reason to return to Him!**
- V) **At first Esther was not recognized as inspired**
It was regarded as a **historical record**. According **to some**, this is the reason the Book of Esther doesn't contain any reference to God. Mordecai and Esther knew that the Persians would take this account and include it in their history books but would substitute the name of God with the names of their own deities. They therefore decided that it was more respectful to God to just leave His name out.
- VI) **Esther records events occurring when Persia dominated Israel (539-331 BC)**
These events took place during the reign of the Persian King Ahasuerus (Hebrew), also known as Xerxes (Greek). Xerxes reigned from 486-464 BC, so the events of this book take place during those years.
During this period, many Jews who were exiled from Israel to Babylon had returned to Israel to rebuild the temple and re-establish Temple worship.
- VII) **Most Jews chose not to return, and within the number who had not returned to Israel were a man by the name of Mordecai, and his cousin, a young woman named Hadassah (Myrtle) 2:7, also known as Esther, which is Persian for Star (Venus)**
- VIII) **Esther reveals how God provides protection for His people, Israel**
We find such insights of His promise of protection in the psalms

I) Ps. 62:6 He only is my rock and my salvation: **He is my defense**; I shall not be moved.

Ps. 89:18 For the LORD is **our defense**; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

Ps. 94:22 The LORD **is my defense**; and my God is the rock of my refuge.

II) This is revealed beautifully in this book

III) In Esther, an evil man named Haman plots the destruction of the Jews, yet God uses a courageous young woman and the wise counsel of her cousin to thwart this plan. The result is the deliverance of the Jews, and the establishment of the Jewish feast of Purim, the celebration of deliverance that God gave to the Jews over their enemies.

IV) In Esther, God's **sovereignty** (supreme power) is displayed

Ps 103:19 The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.

This is made abundantly clear in this book.

V) God raises an unknown Jewish girl to become queen of Persia, protects her when she (without permission) approaches the King, and then counters the King's command to annihilate all the Jews in Persia.

VI) In the first 8 verses, we are introduced to King Ahasuerus

He was an extremely powerful King, ruling from India to Ethiopia

BEGIN:

VII) V1-2 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus

He is in Shusan the citadel, which is the capital city of Iran

VIII) V3-4 that **in the third year** of his reign he made a feast for all his officials

This included the powers of Persia and Media

He invited all of his nobles and officials, including his military officials

IX) V4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor

It was an **extravagant** feast, and he was showing how powerful he was

Perhaps it was a planning session for the invasion of Greece, 481 BC

This banquet lasted for 6 months

- I) V5-6 And when these days were completed the king made a feast
After the 6-month planning session, Ahasuerus gave another feast for 7 days
This banquet was **for all the people**, both great and small

- II) V5 They were in the court of the garden of the king's palace
This courtyard was huge, around 60,000 square feet

- III) V6 gives a picture of the incredible opulence
It was breathtaking in its beauty

- IV) V7-8 And they served drinks in golden vessels each vessel being
This reveals the immense treasures that he had control of
The royal wine speaks of quality, being the best in the kingdom

- V) Each was able to enjoy themselves in drinking or not drinking
Normally each would have been forced to drink, but not this time
Nobody was **forced to drink** but each decided for themselves

- VI) V9 Queen Vashti (**Beautiful**) also made a feast for the women in the royal
The king would have a number of wives, but she was the preeminent one
The men and women did not feast together
The men were in the open courtyard, the women were in the palace

- VII) V10-12 On the seventh day when the heart of the king was **merry with wine**
Over time, the king had indulged in quite a bit of drinking
It seems that the alcohol allowed him to act in pride
He had already shown off his wealth, now he wants to show off his wife

- VIII) She refused his order to come to him when he called (as was her right)
The custom was to keep women, especially the queen from public view
It would not be proper for her to be seen by drunken men
Perhaps it was because she was pregnant with her son Artaxerxes

- IX) V12 the king was furious
His pride was provoked and his inebriation encouraged an angry response

- X) V13-18 What shall we do to Queen Vashti: She has disobeyed my command

- I) He spoke to his counselors, men who knew the history of the empire
What would have been done in the past by other kings in this situation
Is there any law that has been broken that can now be enforced?
- II) V17 Queen Vashti has both wronged the king, the princes, and the people
Her example will cause chaos in the kingdom
If the king's orders can be refused, how much more so with ordinary men?
- III) V19-22 If it pleases the king let a **royal decree** go out from him
As we will see, when a law is enacted, it cannot be overturned
Dan 6:8, 15 says according to the law of the Medes and Persians, no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed
- IV) Have her deposed: This will cause all women to fear their husbands
This advice pleased the king: it reveals pagan ignorance!
1 Pe. 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with (your wives) with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered
- V) 2:1-4 After these things when **the wrath** (rage) of King Ahasuerus subsided
This may have taken place around two years later
The feast took place around 483 BC, and he went to fight Greece in 481 BC
- VI) He has cooled down and now realizes that he has been foolish
Pr 14:29 He who is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he who is hasty of spirit exalts folly.
- VII) He sought counsel and his advisors said **replace Vashti** with a newer model
Since marriage was not regarded, they counseled him to replace her
Obviously, they did not want her back: she might seek vengeance on them
- VIII) V5-11 **In Shusan** the citadel there was a certain **Jew** whose name was Mordecai
We are introduced to Mordecai and Esther
- IX) Jew is normally used to speak of the tribe of Judah, but not in this case
One commentator points out that all who were captives were called Jews
Mordecai is from the tribe of Benjamin

- I) V5 names his father, grandfather, and great grandfather
- II) V6 Mordecai was the great-grandson of Kish
Kish was exiled to Babylon in 597 BC in Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd campaign
- III) V7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah **that is** Esther his uncle's daughter
Hadassah means **myrtle**, and this has significance
Jewish commentary: She was called Hadassah because as the myrtle spreads fragrance in the world, so did she spread good works and as the myrtle does not dry up either in summer or in winter, so the righteous have a share in this world and in the world to come
- IV) V7 the young woman was **lovely** and **beautiful**
Lovely in outer appearance, with a shapely figure
Beautiful to behold
Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter
- V) V8-14 So it was when the king's command and decree were heard
V8 Esther was also taken (**removed by force**)
This was the power of the king: they took people for their own pleasure
- VI) This was not her choice
Sometimes circumstances arise that we would not choose for ourselves
- VII) Joseph in the OT who was sold into slavery but became the protector of Israel
Ac 8, under persecution the church dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria
Ac 8:4 those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word
- VIII) Gal 4:13 As you know it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you
Paul was passing through but because he got sick, he preached to them
- IX) If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans
Ro 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose
- X) Esther now becomes part of Ahasuerus' harem

- I) V9 Now the young woman pleased him and she obtained his favor
She was beautiful and she was likeable, attractive and charming
- II) Hegai liked her and gave her **special treatment** besides her **allowance**
She had the best beauty care, the best diet, and best women to attend her
He knew the king had preferences and made sure she was properly prepared
- III) Esther was unlike Daniel who didn't defile himself with the king's food
She ate the food, and was willing to marry a pagan (Dt 7:1-4)
- IV) V10 Esther had not revealed her people or family for Mordecai had charged her
Mordecai had charged her to keep her Jewishness concealed
Her Jewish name had been changed to a Persian name
- V) The Persians didn't regard conquered people with respect
Perhaps she would be mistreated, or her nation be held in contempt
- VI) The fact is, God was moving behind the scenes to accomplish His will
Jer 29:11 For I know **the thoughts (plans) I have for you**, declares the Lord,
plans of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.
- VII) V11 And every day Mordecai **paced in front of the court** of the women's
Mordecai was known to the king and had freedom to do this
As in the time of Daniel, he would be respected because of his character
- VIII) V12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had
Each had a year of preparations, with oil to smooth the skin and perfumes
In the hot climate skin dried out and baths were often infrequent
- IX) V13 Thus prepared each young woman went to the king
This included clothing, jewelry, and attendants
She could even bring musicians to sing or play songs
- X) V14 In the evening she went and in the morning she returned to the second
The second house was the house of the concubines: they were married
They no longer were eligible to be married to anyone else but were harem

- I) V15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail
She did nothing to make herself more desirable to the king
She had not asked to be part of this and didn't do anything to make it happen
- II) V15 She requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch advised
This shows her modest nature, her humility, and lack of selfish ambition
All who saw her admired her beauty: she needed nothing to enhance it
- III) V16-17 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal palace
This would have been in Dec-Jan of 479 BC
- IV) V17 The king **loved** Esther more than all the other women
He was more attracted to her: she connected with him
He made her his chief wife, the queen, relegating the others to his harem
- V) V18 Then the king made a great feast the Feast of Esther
His marriage was magnificent and Esther was made queen
He also released the provinces from financial tribute for a period
- VI) V19-20 When virgins were gathered together a second time Mordecai sat
The King continues adding concubines to his harem
V20 Esther has not yet revealed that she is Jewish
- VII) V21-23 In those days while Mordecai sat within the king's gate
Mordecai was sitting as a judge, at the gate
This is where civil matters would be decided upon
Gen. 19:1 Two angels came to Sodom and Lot sat in the gate
- VIII) Two doorkeepers were furious with the king and desired to kill him
They may have been loyal to Vashti and rejected Esther
This was made known to Mordecai who informed Esther
- IX) A note was made, and the plot was dealt with: they were impaled
This will prove important later