

WEEK 11 | ESTHER

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The book of Esther describes events which take place during Israel’s exile in Babylon, likely between the years of 483 and 473 BC during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), who ruled in Babylon from 486-465 BC.

PERSIAN KINGS	PERIOD OF REIGN (APPROXIMATE)
Cyrus II “the Great”	550-529 BC
Cambyses II	529-522 BC
Darius I	522-486 BC
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	486-465 BC
Artaxerxes I	465-425 BC

Biblically, the events in Esther can be positioned between Ezra 4:6 and 4:7, during which time the rebuilding of the temple was stalled due to Gentile opposition. Thus, even as returning Jews in Israel are being opposed, those remaining in exile are also under threat. It is during this dark period that God works providentially through kings, queens, and ordinary Israelites to protect His chosen people and deliver them from peril.

STRUCTURE

Three Reversals

- I. From Vashti to Esther (1:1-2:18)
- II. From Haman to Mordecai (2:19-7:10)
- III. From Tragedy to Blessing (8:1-10:3)

From Vashti to Esther	From Haman to Mordecai	From Tragedy to Blessing
Royal Edict Esth 1:13-22	Royal Edict Esth 3:7-15	Royal Edict Esth 8:3-14
Feast #1 Esth 1:3,5,9	Feast #1 Esth 5:4,5,6,8,12,14	Feast #1 Esth 8:17

Feast #2 Esth 2:18	Feast #2 Esth 6:14; 7:2,7,8	Feast #2 Esth 9:17-19,22
		Feast of Purim
1:1 - 2:18	2:19 - 7:10	8:1 - 10:3

PURPOSE

God demonstrates His unwavering faithfulness to Israel in her exile, working providentially through Esther, Mordecai, and even the Gentile king Ahasuerus to protect them from harm and bless them.

THEMES

- 1) Omissions
 - a. The Promised Land
 - b. The Temple
 - c. The Law
 - d. Prayer
 - e. Yahweh
- 2) Providence – Despite no mention of Yahweh, His providence is on display in the three reversals which comprise the book
- 3) The Jews – 2:5; 3:4, 6, 10, 13; 4:3, 7, 13, 14, 16; 5:13; 6:10-13; 8:1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17; 9:1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; 10:3
 - a. Hatred for the Jews – 3:5-6; 6:13; 8:13
 - b. Deliverance of the Jews – 4:14; 8-9
- 4) The Characters
 - a. King Ahasuerus – self-centered; insecure; emotional; impressionable; sensual (1:1-8, 21; 2:2-4; 3:8-11; 7:7-10; 8:1-14; 9:11-14)
 - b. Vashti – beautiful; defiant; remembered (1:10-12; 2:1)
 - c. Mordecai – dedicated to the welfare of the Jews (2:5-7; 4:13-17; 10:3)
 - d. Esther – beautiful; submissive; courageous; prudent (2:7; 5:1-2; 5:3-8; 7:1-10)
 - e. Haman – vindictive; crafty; proud (3:1-6; 5:9-14; 6:6)
- 5) The Echoes
 - a. Deliverance – Gen 37-50; Exod 1-15
 - b. Conquest – Josh 1-12