

# The Book of ESTHER

## Introduction & Chapters 1- 3

> **Date:** 483 – 473 B.C.

> **Place:** Persia

> **Esther-** The name of the book “Esther” comes from Greek and is derived from the Persian name *Ester* for “star.” However, Esther’s Hebrew name is Hadassah, “myrtle.”

> **Author:** Unknown. The possibilities are Mordecai, he was a record keeper for the Jews (9:20). Or it could have been an unidentified author who was Jewish and lived in the Persian Empire. The author’s writings are filled with detailed knowledge of Persian etiquette and customs, the palace of Susa, and information regarding the reign of Ahasuerus, which is the Hebrew name, and Xerxes is the Greek name of Khshayarsh, king of Persia 486—464 B.C. This author was familiar with the Jewish people, their lifestyle, and gave insightful information in regards to the key movers and shakers, which is Esther & Mordecai.

> **Theme: *The providence of God.*** There are many things in life that we don’t always understand. Circumstances and situations unbeknownst to us are known and determined by God. There are moments in world events, whereas a person or persons are in the right place at the right time according to God’s providence. This is the story of *Esther*, a young Jewish girl becoming a Queen, an uncle Mordecai becoming a confidant, and the Jewish people in need of a miracle and a savior. This book reveals another satanic threat to destroy the Jewish people and thus, the messianic line. We’ll discover that our “lot” in life be cast by trusting in God for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; just as the “lot” of this historical event is celebrated by Jews annually through what is known as the *Feast of Purim*, (meaning the Feast of “lot” (s), or the casting of lots).

> **Key verses: Esther 4:14-** *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?"* **Esther 8:17-** *And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.*

> **The Mystery of *The Book of Esther*** – The story of Esther’s life fits between chapters 6 and 7 of *The Book of Ezra*, between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second return led by Ezra. It provides the only biblical portrait for the vast majority of Jews who choose to remain in Persia rather than return to Palestine after the Exile. We also discover that this Book of Esther does not mention the any form of the name of God, nor is there any mention of the Law, the offerings and sacrifices, prayer, or anything supernatural. It is never quoted in the New Testament. Yet one sees the providential hand of God throughout the book. However, this Book of Esther is found in the “Writings” section of the Hebrew Bible as one of the five rolls (*Megilloth*). The other four are Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes. These books are read on Jewish holidays, and Esther is still read on the Feast of Purim. It is possible that God’s name is not mentioned because: (1) The book was written in Persia and would be censored or profaned by substitution of a pagan god’s name. (2) The general disobedience of the Jews in preferring the comfort of Persia to the hardships of rebuilding their homeland may be another factor. (3) The silence was intentional to illustrate the hidden but providential care of God in spite of outward appearances. This is a subtle form of revelation that shows the hand of God behind every event. (4) The name of Yahweh (YHWH) does appear in acrostic form four times in the Hebrew text (see 1:20; 5:4,13; 7:7). Incidentally, the word “Jews” appears forty-three times in the plural and eight times in the singular.<sup>1</sup>

### Chapter 1- “The Queen That Was”

(v1) Ahasuerus is a title that means “high father” or “venerable king.” A fascinating insight unfolds through a volume published by the British Museum in 1907 entitled *the Sculptures and Inscriptions of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistun in Persia* establishes with the “Cyrus Cylinders” translation that Ahasuerus and Esther were the parents of the Cyrus of Isaiah 44:28; 45:1. This king Xerxes reigned over a tremendous empire extending from India to Ethiopia.

(v2-4) **What was the purpose of the feast?** To show the 127 provinces the power, wealth and political solidarity of Persia & Media, and to obtain their confidence to inspire them to ultimately go to war against Greece. This party went on for six months.

(v5-8) Xerxes invites a multitude of people in for seven days of drinking and pleasure, probably a drunken orgy.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru The Bible*, pg. 132-133.

(v9) Queen Vashti made a feast for the wives of the men attending the festival for war.

(v10-12) The drunken king invites his queen to be displayed amongst all the men. This was disrespectful and humiliating to Vashti and she would not follow the king's desire.

(v13-18) Chaos has entered the kingdom! This rebellion will spread to all wives! We must create a law to protect the men from such insubordination!

(v19-22) The men rule, a law is passed; Vashti is vanquished as Queen, and all wives better beware!

## **Chapter 2- "Present Providence Provides Protection & Prosperity"**

### **I) The Quest for a New Queen (v1-4)**

- **A call to all beautiful young virgins-** "Would you like to be queen?" What makes a woman beautiful before God? - 1 Peter 3:3-5- *Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.* (A virtuous woman - Proverbs 31:10-31)

- **The value of virginity - 1 Cor 6:18-20-** *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. A dedication to virginity provides: HAPPINESS! - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*- Mt. 5:8 **HEALTHINESS!** - No Sexually Transmitted Diseases. **HOLINESS!** - To be separate in body, soul & spirit. No emotional hang-ups, physical ties, or spiritual depression (guilt).

### **II) Mordecai, the Foster Dad of Esther (v5-7)**

- **Mordecai brought up Esther-** To raise her in the ways of the Lord. To teach her by lifestyle and from the Holy Scriptures on whom our God is, and what He can do in her life.

- **Mordecai loved Esther as his own daughter-** A pure & sacred love that is between a godly father and his daughter. A love that is gentle, kind, courteous & respectful, yet tempered with discipline.

### **III) The Making of a Queen (v8-18)**

- **Notice the attributes of Esther-** *She was pleasing & obtained favor.* One would conjecture that she was determined to take care of herself spiritually, emotionally & physically. **Observe the blessings-** *Beauty preparations, an allowance, seven choice maidservants & the best quarters in the house. In addition she received a free year's beauty spa treatment (v12).*

(v15) **Esther was a good listener and followed advise.**

(v17) **Esther is made Queen, because she obtained grace & favor from the king. Our God moves the hearts of kings-** **Listen to Dan 2:20-22-** *Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.*

### **IV) Mordecai a Man of Providence (v19-23)**

- **Mordecai, a man in the right place at the right time, coincidence or providence? Ps 33:10-12-** *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.*

## **Chapter 3- "Bow or Die"**

### **I) Haman's Hammer of Anti-Semitism (v1-6)**

-**Mordecai will not bow-** Observe the men who would not bow to the world- Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego (Daniel ch. 3); Daniel's defiance (Daniel ch. 6); Christians would not bow to Caesar; and in the Great Tribulation many will die because they will not bow or take the "mark of the beast" (Rev. 13). We only bow to Jesus for we are told that, *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father - Phil 2:9-11*

### **II) What is your lot in life? (v7-11)**

- Paul the apostle writes in Rom 8:31-39- *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or*

*persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **III) The King's Death Decree (v12-15)**

- **Satan tries to annihilate the Jews-** He tried before during the early life of Moses through Pharaoh; then throughout Jewish history Israel was constantly attacked. Then at the birth of Christ through Herod (Mt. 2:16-18). Satan is still trying to annihilate God's people, Jews and Christians alike, but our God will prevail! Ultimately Christians will be *raptured* in the last days (1Thess. 4; 1 Cor. 15) and a third of the Jews will come to their Messiah in the *Great Tribulation period* (Rev. 7); also Romans chapters 9, 10 & 11 tells us that God is not finished with Israel, as well as the prophets of the Old Testament, and the teachings of Jesus in Matthew ch. 24:15-35, pay close attention to the "abomination of desolation" and the "parable of the fig tree." **Rom 16:20-** *And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*