
Esther

Setting

The story takes place in the royal palace in the Persian capital, Shushan. There are several million Jews scattered throughout the emperor's domain. The story covers a period of about 12 years (482-470BC).

Characters

Ahasuerus	Persian monarch
Esther	Jewish girl who became queen
Vashti	deposed queen
Haman	evil Jew-hater
Mordecai	Jewish leader, serving in the palace
God	working behind the scenes
Persian Jews	Those who chose to stay in Persia while others returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 6-7).

Summary

The book of Esther tells the story of a beautiful Jewish woman in exile, who marries a mighty Gentile king and courageously risks her life to save her people from certain annihilation.

The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible which does not directly mention God, yet it is filled with God's Divine handiwork. Some use the term providential preservation to describe this. God orchestrates all the mundane events of our lives to bring outcomes of His choosing. This is the mystery of how God, without violating free will, invisibly and infallibly controls all things. At times, God may be out of our sight, but we are never out of His sight.

Key Verse

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?"

Outline

<i>Anticipate the Crisis</i>	<i>Overrule the Crisis</i>
Esther 1-5	Esther 6-10
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The king deposes Queen Vashti2. Ester becomes Queen3. Haman plots a massacre4. Mordecai pleads for help5. Esther takes a risk, plans a way to help	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. The king honors Mordecai7. The king executes Haman8. The Jews get a way to avenge themselves9. The Jews institute Purim10. Mordecai becomes the king's chief

Personal Reflection and Application

Mordecai makes sure Esther knows that her life is also in jeopardy. [Proverbs 24:10](#) says if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. That's why we must lean on His strength. Mordecai is also convinced that the Jews will get deliverance in some way. He sees her position as being providential ([Est 4:12-14](#)). He's saying that the reason she became queen is to be there for this event.

God often puts us in places for reasons we could not possibly foresee. Think about your life circumstances that do not make sense. Consider that God has a plan to use those circumstances in some way. Begin to look for what God is doing in your life.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Persian custom was that if you came into the presence of the king uninvited, you would lose your life unless the king extended the golden scepter to you ([Est 4:11](#)). Discuss how Christ is our golden scepter allowing us to safely approach God.

Leadership Principles from Esther

Refusing to Compromise

Being God's kind of leader means refusing to compromise what you believe. Mordecai was such a leader ([Est 3:1-6](#)). Haman demanded a show of reverence that was like worship. Mordecai followed God's commandment to have no other gods before Him ([Exo 20:3-5](#)) and refused to bow down to Haman. This was a dangerous thing to do since Haman had a great deal of power.

- What are some situations you have faced that challenged your beliefs?
- How did you handle those situations?
- Looking back on them, if you were in that circumstance again, would you do anything differently?

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.
Try these:

01. Why the king removed Queen Vashti from her throne	02. What two ways Esther and Mordecai were related
03. Why Haman began to hate Mordecai and the Jews	04. What Esther risked by going to the king
05. How Haman planned to kill Mordecai	06. How the king learned he needed to reward Mordecai
07. What happened to the gallows that Haman built	08. How the king protected the Jews from annihilation
09. What holiday was established to celebrate the event	10. Where the details of these events were recorded