

Esther

Summary

In this book, the Persian King, Ahasuerus, was looking for a new queen to replace the recently displaced Queen Vashti. Through an extensive search throughout the land, he found a young and beautiful Jewish woman named Esther. He made Esther the next queen. Esther did not make it known that she was Jewish because her cousin Mordecai instructed her not to due to fear of persecution or death because of her beliefs. Mordecai had raised Esther and was a very righteous man. One day, Mordecai heard of a secret plan to assassinate the king and he made it known, which saved the king's life. This left the king in debt to Mordecai. Meanwhile, in the palace, there was a head official named Haman, who had a particular disdain towards the Jewish people. Even more specifically, Haman had a vendetta against Mordecai because he refused to bow to him during a public procession. In response to this, Haman passed an edict to allow the persecution of the Jews on a particular day in the future. At the request of Mordecai, Esther risked her own life by entering the king's chamber unannounced and revealing the plan of Haman. The king responded with mercy towards Esther, sentenced Haman to be killed, and passed another edict that allowed the Jewish people to protect themselves on the day of persecution. The day came and the Jewish people were victorious in battle, establishing the Feast of Purim, which is still celebrated by Jews today.

Author

Esther's authorship is anonymous. Many have suggested that a likely candidate is Mordecai, however, this cannot be proven without reservation. Due to the familiarity with the Jewish festivals and the passionate Jewish nationalism, it is clear that the author was Jewish.

Date

The time period in which the book of Esther is set is during the reign of Ahasuerus, which is approximately between 485-464 B.C. The date is most likely within this time period or very shortly after.

Primary Characters

King Ahasuerus (Esther 1-10)

Esther (Esther 2-9)

Mordecai (Esther 2-10)

Haman (Esther 3-7)

Historical Moments

The Reign of Ahasuerus (Esther 1-10)

Esther Becomes Queen (Esther 2)

The King's Edict on Behalf of the Jews (Esther 8)

Major Theological Themes

God's Divine Providence - Throughout the entire book of Esther, we see that there was clearly a plan for Esther's life; it was not a mere accident that she ended up where she was. God had planned for both Mordecai and Esther to be in the specific places and positions they were in to preserve and protect His people.

Lessons Learned from Esther

Sometimes God Is Most Present when He Feels Most Absent - Although the book of Esther does not reference God directly in the entire book of Esther, He is clearly at work in a very real way; it is very clear that God placed Mordecai and Esther in the right places at precisely the right time. We are reminded of this in the last thing that Jesus told His disciples: *and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). In our most difficult times when we feel God is distant, we must remember that He is with us also.

We Are Called to Make Right Decisions, Even when It Is Hard - In the book of Esther, both Mordecai and Esther are put in positions where they must decide between what is right and what is easy. Esther put her life at risk to follow through with her convictions. Just like Esther, we need to realize that there will be times when we need to make a decision between our convictions and what is convenient. Let us never sacrifice our obedience to God for our own comfort, as Jesus says in Mark 8:36, *what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*