

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER
A Study of Esther 3:1-15
By Pastor Marcus Bates

Introduction

- This OT book is named after Queen Esther of Persia, the central character and heroine of the story.
- Esther’s original Hebrew name was “Hadassah” (“myrtle”); she was given the Persian name “Esther” (“star”) by Mordecai, her cousin (**Est. 2:7**), most likely to hide her Jewish ancestry (**Est. 2:10; 2:20**).
- Because the author seems to have a detailed knowledge of Persian court affairs, Mordecai is the possible writer of this book, given that he, as a main character, served as a court official and prime minister in Persia (**Est. 2:11; 2:19; 2:21-23; 3:2-5; 4:1-2; 4:6; 5:13; 8:1-2; 8:7-10; 8:15; 9:3-4; 9:20; 9:31; 10:3**).
- This OT book was probably written and completed in terms of its compilation in the **mid-470s BC**.
- The historical setting of this OT book takes place during the reign of the Persian king Ahasuerus, who is also called Xerxes (**PK 598**), who reigned from 486-465 BC; the Ahasuerus of Esther and Ezra (**Ezra 4:6**) is not the same Ahasuerus that is mentioned in the book of Daniel (**Dan. 9:1**).
- The main message of this OT book is to show how God used a beautiful, courageous woman from humble beginnings to be a timely instrument of deliverance for the Jewish people during a great crisis.
- This main message is demonstrated by two key phrases that are mentioned in the book: “who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (**Est. 4:14**) and “so I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (**Est. 4:16**).

General Outline of the Book

1. **Esther 1:1-2:20 – Esther’s Rise as Queen of Persia**
 - An Official Feast Held by Ahasuerus (**1:1-9**)
 - Vashti’s Refusal and Removal as Queen (**1:10-22**)
 - Ahasuerus’ Search for a New Queen (**2:1-11**)
 - Esther Chosen as the New Queen (**2:12-20**)
2. **Esther 2:21-3:15 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews**
 - Mordecai Saves the Life of Ahasuerus (**2:21-23**)
 - Haman’s Promotion and Hatred of Mordecai (**3:1-5**)
 - Haman’s Plan for Revenge against Mordecai (**3:6-11**)
 - Haman’s Decree to Exterminate the Jews (**3:12-15**)
3. **Esther 4:1-5:8 – Esther Stands for the Jewish People**
 - The Jewish Fast in Response to Haman’s Decree (**4:1-3**)
 - Mordecai Appeals to Esther for Help in the Crisis (**4:4-14**)
 - Esther Chooses to Go in to the King Uninvited (**4:15-17**)
 - Esther Holds a Banquet for Ahasuerus and Haman (**5:1-8**)
4. **Esther 5:9-7:10 – The Fall and Execution of Haman**
 - Haman’s Plot to Execute Mordecai (**5:9-14**)
 - Ahasuerus is Reminded of Mordecai’s Loyalty (**6:1-3**)
 - Haman’s Plot is Discovered by Ahasuerus (**6:4-7:8**)
 - Haman and His Sons are Found Guilty and Executed (**7:9-10**)
5. **Esther 8:1-10:3 – The Triumph and Deliverance of the Jews**

- Haman's Decree is Countermanded to Protect the Jews (8:1-14)
- The Deliverance and Rejoicing of the Jewish People (8:15-9:19)
- The Proclamation of the Jewish Feast of Purim (9:20-32)
- Mordecai Becomes the Prime Minister of Persia (10:1-3)

Reflections on Esther 3:1-3

- After Mordecai had helped to expose the plot against king Ahasuerus by Bigthan and Teresh, the king promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to rule above all the princes; the king's servants showed reverence to Haman; however, Mordecai refused to bow or give him reverence; he was asked by the other servants at the king's gate why he refused to follow the king's commandment; perhaps Haman took credit for how Mordecai exposed the plot against the king, and/or perhaps Mordecai refused to bow to the another human being, given the requirement of the second commandment of the Decalogue.

Reflections on Esther 3:4-6

- Servants spoke to Mordecai on a daily basis about his refusal to bow to Haman, but he still refused; finally someone went to Haman and told him about Mordecai's refusal to give him reverence; Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew, and they told Haman this information; when Haman finally saw that Mordecai would not bow to him, he was full of anger, and determined to get revenge on Mordecai; however, he would not lay hands on Mordecai alone, because he chose to put together a larger plan against the Jewish people; instead, he desired to destroy all of the Jewish people in the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

Reflections on Esther 3:7-11

- Haman and his associates cast lots (Pur) for an entire year to determine a favorable time to launch his scheme against the Jewish people; finally, Haman told the king lies about the Jews, that they are different from other Persian citizens, and that they don't keep the king's laws; he advised the king to pass a decree that the Jewish people should be destroyed; he even sought to bribe the king with ten thousand talents of silver in order to finance his plan; rather, the king refused Haman's offer, but offered to pay for it himself, and provide the manpower to execute the decree; he gave Haman his signet ring to sign the decree.

Reflections on Esther 3:12-15

- Haman had the king's scribes write out the decree to execute the Jewish people on the 13th day of the first month (Nisan); this decree went to rulers on every level of government all throughout the kingdom, and transcribed into the various languages of the kingdom; having been sealed with the king's ring by Haman, these letters described how the Jewish people would be killed on a single day in one swoop, on the 13th day of the 12th month (Adar); rulers in every province were to prepare to execute this command on that exact day; letters were sent out quickly to all the provinces, and the decree was even announced in the palace of Shushan; the king and Haman ate and drank to celebrate, but the rest of the people in the city were perplexed, probably because they knew Mordecai was a Jew and served the king faithfully.

Lessons from Esther 3:1-15

- Mordecai was obedient to God's commandments (he refused to bow to Haman), even though it got him into trouble; in like manner, we should obey God's requirements, even if it brings persecution upon us.
- Mordecai confided in the palace servants that he was a Jew; sadly, they took this information to Haman, who used it against him; we must be careful who we share information with, because some people will use our information against us; we must be wise in what we say and share with others.
- Mordecai aroused the anger of Haman because of his obedience to God; there will be times when our obedience to God will arouse the anger of those around us; however, we should not let the anger of others affect our relationship with God; we should obey God, regardless of the consequences.