

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER
A Study of Esther 2:1-23
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 2:1-4

- After exiling Vashti, King Ahasuerus' anger was appeased, and he began the search for a new wife; servants of the king suggested that beautiful virgin women should be gathered from every province in the kingdom and brought to the palace; the king could then choose his next queen from this group of women; this suggestion was pleasing to Ahasuerus, so this idea was put into action.

Reflections on Esther 2:5-7

- In the meantime, a descendent of the tribe of Benjamin, a man named Mordecai, whose ancestors were taken into Babylonian captivity during Nebuchadnezzar's second siege of Jerusalem (598-597 BC), served in the king's palace; Mordecai's father's brother (his uncle) had a daughter named Hadassah (his cousin); because her parents were deceased (Abihail was her father and Mordecai's uncle, Est. 2:15), he adopted Hadassah and raised her as his own daughter, and renamed her Esther; she was a beautiful woman.

Reflections on Esther 2:8-11

- When the king's decree was given to gather all beautiful, unmarried women to the palace, Esther was among them; she was placed in the custody of Hegai, who was responsible for taking care of these women; he was greatly impressed with Esther, and showed her great kindness by giving her favors, including seven of her own maidens; at this point, Esther hid her true cultural identity as a Jew at the request of Mordecai, who kept tabs on her to make sure that she was taken care of.

Reflections on Esther 2:12-23

- The unmarried women were to go through a purification process lasting 12 months, before taking their turn going in to the king's house; each woman was given what she desired before going to the king; after going to the king, each woman would go to a second house, and placed under the charge of Shaashgaz, who managed the king's concubines; these women did not go to the king any longer, unless they were called by the king personally; when Esther's turn came, she had already impressed those around her, and only took what Hegai gave her, and nothing more (she wasn't selfish); she went to the king during the 7th month of his reign (479-478 BC); as it turned out, the king absolutely loved and adored Esther over all the other women, and made her his queen; he then held a celebratory feast for Esther; a plot to assassinate Ahasuerus by two of his servants, Bigthan and Teresh, came to the attention of Mordecai; he told Esther, who then informed the king; after an inquiry was made, the plot was exposed, and the two conspirators were executed; Mordecai and Esther continued to gain favor with the king.

Lessons from Esther 2:1-23

- Physical beauty has its limits, but the beauty of a godly character can make a deep impression on people; Esther was certainly extremely beautiful in a physical sense; yet, her true beauty came from her godly disposition; those around her were drawn to her gracious character and personality (Est. 2:9; 2:15; 2:17).
- Despite living under the power of a foreign government, Esther and Mordecai showed their loyalty to the king by exposing a plot against him; they were faithful to the political structure over them.
- God was guiding events, despite the fact that His people were in captivity; He was setting the stage for a great deliverance of His people.