

# *Esther*

## *"The Power of Inner Beauty"*

### Background Information

Along with Ruth, Esther is one of just two Bible books named after women.

Hadassah (2:7) was her Hebrew name, and meant "myrtle."

"Esther" probably came from the Babylonian love goddess, Ishtar or the Persian word for "star."

The author is unknown. Suggestions include Ezra and Nehemiah, but \_\_\_\_\_ seems to be the logical choice.

### Time Covered and Outline

Ahasuerus (Xerxes) ruled from about 486-465 B.C. The events of this book fall within the earlier years of his reign, probably 483-473 B.C.

Being one continuous story, the book of Esther is easily outlined.

- I. Vashti dethroned (chapter 1)
- II. Esther chosen as queen (chapter 2)
- III. Haman's trickery and ultimate downfall (chapters 3-7)
- IV. The Jews are delivered; Feast of Purim instituted (chapters 8-9)
- V. Mordecai's greatness (chapter 10)

### Major Themes

Preservation of the Jews

God's faithfulness

Courage

Providence

Strength of character (especially female character)

#### Jewish Feasts

There are 9 different feasts in the Old Testament that Jews were to observe.

1. Passover (Exodus 12:1-14)
2. Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15-20)
3. Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14)
4. Pentecost (or Weeks) (Deuteronomy 16:9-12)
5. Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) (Numbers 29:1-6)
6. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) (Leviticus 23:26-32)
7. Tabernacles (or Booths) (Nehemiah 8:13-18)
8. Dedication (Hanukkah) (John 10:22)
9. **Purim (or Lots) (Esther 9:18-32)**

#### Interesting in Absence

Esther is one of the rare books of the Bible (along with Song of Solomon) in which there is not a single reference to any of the names of God. There is no reference to the Law of God, worship, or even prayer. This "absence" leads to the strength of the book, because it shows how God operates today, through providence rather than through direct miracle.

## God's Character in Esther

Providence (entire book; focus on 4:14; 8:5-17)

## Jesus in Esther

Esther's devotion and courage save the Jews and help preserve the line to the Messiah.

She also serves as an example of Christ's willingness to lay down His life for His people.

Esther is a type of advocate; a role Jesus carries for His people today.

## Key Words in Esther

Fasting (Hebrew *tsum*) "to abstain." 4:3; 4:16

Deliverance (Hebrew *hatstsalah*); 4:14 is only instance in all Scripture of this word

Purim (from same Hebrew word) "lot." 3:7; 9:24; 9:26

## Elsewhere in the World...

In 356 B.C., the Chinese complete the building of the "first wall," trying to prevent invasion from the Huns.

## Elsewhere in Scripture...

No other Scripture overlaps with Esther's events, but the account of Esther takes place between the events of Ezra chapters 6 and 7.

### Reading Esther

"Along with the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, Esther stands with the Old Testament books of the Megilloth, or "five scrolls." Rabbis read these books in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year—Esther being read at Purim." (John MacArthur)