

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 28TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

INTRO TO ESTHER

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF ESTHER?

The author of the book is not identified in the text. While some believe it was members of the Great Synagogue, others believe it was Mordecai, Ezra, or Nehemiah, who wrote the book.

- Most likely the author is Jewish with a personal knowledge of the Persian court or at least had access to detailed information.

IS SOMETHING MISSING FROM THE BOOK?

It was written around the turn of the 4th century and is **the only book of the Bible that has no mention of God.**

- We cannot assume that **because God is not directly mentioned in the book, He is absent from the story and is not in control of the events that take place within it.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Understands God's providence – He cares for and directs all things in the universe.

- **Trust in God's promises** – He is trustworthy, and that gives us confidence in the face of adversity.
- **God takes what the enemy intends for evil and uses it for good** – It is often the evil plans of men that become their own demise.

The balance between loyalty to God and life within a pagan culture.

- Though God is sovereign, faithful, and active in the world, **we must make the decision to recall his promises, trust Him, and actively pursue Him and the things above instead of the things of this world.**

FEAST OF PURIM

Also known as the Feast of Lots, which is a Jewish holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Jewish people from Haman, the prime minister to Ahasuerus, in the book of Esther.

- The feast was instituted by Mordecai (Esther 9:26-32) and is celebrated every year, now with the reading of the book of Esther at the feast.

HOW IS ESTHER APPLICABLE TO ME?

We have the choice of seeing God's hand at work in our lives or passing situations off as coincidence. We must understand **there is no such thing as coincidence, only providence.**

- **God is sovereign, and His plans are not thwarted by evil men.**
- **God cares for His people.**

WHO ARE WE TO IMITATE?

We cannot make the Word say something that it does not or make people out to be something they are not. The people in the book of Esther are not meant to be a model of morality.

- While we can draw inspiration from people in the Bible, our goal is not to be more like Esther, Mordecai, David, Moses, or Abraham. **Our goal is to be more like Christ!**

ROYAL FEASTS (ESTHER 1:1-9)

MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE KNOWN WORLD

Esther opens with an introduction to Ahasuerus (Xerxes), the King of Persia. He inherited the vast empire from his father, Darius I. It was his grandfather, Cyrus the great, that allowed the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

- Ahasuerus ruled 127 provinces from 486-465 BC.

SHOWING OFF

To display his wealth and power, Ahasuerus held a feast that lasted 180 days.

- The Persian empire was one of opulence and excess. Pride was not the only motivator in parading his wealth around. With the armies and officials of Persia and Media in attendance, Ahasuerus hoped to unify them on an attack against Greece.

AN INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR MORE

It was the King's pursuit of "more" that led him to attack Greece again, where historical evidence shows the Persian army was defeated and expelled from Europe as the second attack on Greece ended in 479 BC.

- **All the things of this world will not be able to fill the void in each of us that only Jesus can fill.**

DISINGENUOUS AND CONTROLLING

At the end of this six-month spectacle, the King then has a second banquet, inviting everyone within the citadel, and gives a royal decree for wine to be served without restriction.

- At these feasts, a different glass of wine would be had with each course. While the decree allowed for the refusal of wine, this freedom was used to overindulge.

ROYAL DECREE (ESTHER 1:10-22)

A DRUNKEN FOOL

Verse 9 introduces us to Ahasuerus' wife, Queen Vashti, who is hosting a third feast for the women of the palace.

- At the end of their week-long feasts, the King is so drunk he sends his servants to bring Vashti to him. He wants to parade her around, in her royal crown, as if she was just another possession on display.

A BOLD QUEEN

Though Vashti was not a woman of God, she had enough wisdom and modesty to refuse the King's request.

- Whatever the reason for Vashti's refusal, it was a breach of etiquette. The King was used to getting what he wanted and having his demands met. Vashti put herself in a dangerous situation by refusing the King.

HIS PRIDE AND EGO WERE EASILY DAMAGED

The issue is not that Vashti broke a law or some unspoken rule by refusing her husband. Instead, the issue was that this King's ego and pride were now damaged.

- The King who so arrogantly displayed his power for half a year did not look so powerful to the drunken party-goers when his wife wouldn't bend to his will.

HE CALLS ON SELF-SERVING MEN OF THE COURT

In a continued act of ignorance, the King does not wait for the dust to settle. Instead of sobering up so he could think clearly, he hastily calls upon "experts of the law and justice."

- These "wise men who understood the times" probably included astrologers and diviners that knew how to cater to the King, therefore, protecting their own interests.

MASS HYSTERIA

When the King receives counsel on what should be done about Vashti's disobedience, Memucan suggests that the Queen be removed and be replaced with someone else.

- The exaggerated reasoning he used was that news of the Queen's disobedience would reach all the wives throughout Persia and they would be inspired to imitate Vashti's disobedience.

CREATING THE VERY THING HE TRIED TO AVOID

The King feared everyone would hear about the Queen's refusal. So, what did he do? He sent letters to everyone telling them about the Queen's refusal.

- A letter was written in each language and sent to each province, spreading the news of Vashti's removal and orders that every man should be the ruler of his own house.

GOD IS AT WORK

- The stage has been set. The Queen is out, and the door is now open for Esther to enter and save God's people.
- Though not mentioned, God is orchestrating everything to lead to the deliverance of God's people.
- There is nothing that can thwart God's promises to His people.
- **Romans 8:28**

WHAT ARE WE PURSUING?

- **What is our aim in life? Are we after "more"?** The pursuit of anything besides Christ will leave us unsatisfied and unfulfilled.
- **Are we content with what we have?** "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11).