

Esther Chapter 1 and 2 - Handout #1

- I. Esther Placed in a Position of Prominence (1:10-2:20)
- II. The Jews Marked for Extermination (2:211-4:3)
- III. Calamity Averted by Esther (4:4-9:19)
- IV. Feast of Purim Established (9:20:32)
- V. Greatness of Mordecai Described (chap. 10)

The book of Esther is one of the two books of the bible in which the name of God does not appear (the other is The Song of Solomon). Neither is the act of prayer mentioned, although fasting is mentioned and we assume that prayer accompanied that act.

The action of the book takes place between 483b.c. and 473b.c. This is after the first group has returned from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem in 538b.c. and before Ezra leads a second group in 458b.c. (Nehemiah will lead a group in 444b.c.)

Important people

Ahasuerus (Hebrew transliteration) - means High Father or Venerable King (a title); Khshayarsha (Persian); Xerxes(Greek). He is king of Persian Empire from 486-465b.c.

Esther (means star in Persian) - maid of the tribe of Benjamin who would be crowned queen;Hadassah (her Hebrew name meaning myrtle-v.2:7)

Mordecai-benjamite, 1st cousin of Esther who raised her; court official

Haman the Agagite, son of Hammedatha, probably the number 2 man just under the king-v.3:1

Vashti (Greek literature records name as Amestris) Queen of Persia who is deposed;mother of Artaxerxes, the next king

Memucan- prince of Persia who suggests deposing Vashti

Hegai-keeper of the women who favored Esther

Bigthan and Teresh - kings chamberlains who plotted to kill the king

Hatach-king's chamberlain for Esther; go between Esther and Mordecai

Zeresh-wife of Haman

First Chapter of Esther:

Ahasuerus has a 180 day feast (more like feast and strategy meeting for his campaign in Greece) in the palace in Shushan, one of the four capitols of the Persian empire. After that, he had another 7 day feast, a mishteh, which is a drinking party. On the 7th day of that party he sends for his queen Vashti to show her beauty to his princes. She refuses to come. The Persian

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customs do call for modesty concerning descent women. Their gatherings were usually separated; the women were veiled. Possibly her refusal was the desire to uphold these cusoms. Some even speculate that she was pregnant at the time with Ahasuerus. There is no indication in scripture that the king wanted her to do anything indecent. But whatever the reason, she refused. Mamucan suggested that her disobedience was not only against the king but against the princes, and all the people. It was a crime against the state. He suggested that she be deposed and that the king make it official.

Note: Once something is Persian Law, it cannot be reversed, not even by the king. Look at the example in Daniel 6:8

Chapter two:

This begins some 4 years later. The king is thinking about Vashti, but he cannot reverse what has been done. It is suggested that he look over all the provinces for fair young virgins to be brought to Shushan palace, to the house of women (the harem). Which ever of the maids that please him the most, make her queen in Vashti's place.

Esther is brought to the palace with other women; the purification period is about one year

Each one will have their turn to be brought to the king for one night, never to come again except the king ask for her by name (One night with the king)

Esther finds favor with Hegai, keeper of the women/ He gives her the best room in the place

She eventually is brought to king for her one night

He likes her and gives her the crown royal/

Mordecai, her cousin, discovers a plot against the king, tells Esther