

Esther Study

Spring 2026, Dave Passey

Introduction:

Esther (Ester), apparently is derived from the Persian word for “star”. Hebrew name was Hadassa, meaning “myrtle”.

She was an orphan from the tribe of Benjamin, lived with exiles in Persia and raised by her cousin Mordecai.

The theme of the book is an illustration of the overruling providence of the sovereign God who delivers and preserves His people from the malice of the heathen who would plot their destruction.

God’s name is not mentioned, but nothing is clearer than the irresistible power of His omnipotent rule, watching over His covenant people, preserving them from the malignity of Satan in his vain attempt to work through Haman and accomplish the annihilation of the Jewish nation.

These Jews have passed up on the opportunity to return to Israel and chose rather to stay put.

Mordecai may be the author (9:20). The dating of the book may be implied by 10:2, in that it implies that Xerxes’ death (464 BC) suggests that his reign is over.

Who was Ahasuerus?

- Persian king, Ahasuerus better known as Xerxes I (485-465 BC)
- Son and successor of Darius I (Hystaspis)
 - Darius (521-486 BC)
 - Seized the Persian throne after the death of Cambyses II
 - Quelled many revolts as his authority was not accepted in all provinces
 - After authority was accepted, he started expanding the empire
 - Became ruler of the largest empire that the world had ever known
 - Continual conflict with the Greeks, which did not settle until Alexander the Great when he conquered the empire in 330 BC. Darius launched 2 major campaigns after conquering Thrace and Macedonia
 - 1 campaign failed due to a storm in Aegean Sea. The other was the defeat at the hands of the Athenians at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC

- Promoted trade and commerce, instituted a uniform system of weights and measures, completed a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea

- Built the palaces at Sushan (Susa) and Persepolis

- He is the Darius, king of Persia mentioned in Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah

- 3rd year of his reign he convoked an assembly of his leaders to plan an invasion of Greece

- Campaign began in 480 BC and was unsuccessful

- He too had massive building projects at Susa and Persepolis

- Assassinated in his bedchamber in 465 BC

Esther 1

I. The DISPLAY of wealth (v.1-4)

A. The kingdom was GREAT

1. India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces
2. Throne was in Sushan the citadel (fortified palace)
3. (v.3) 3rd year of his reign (years 3-4 of his reign)
4. Organizes, plans a feast (banquet)
5. Princes, Servants (powers of Media and Persian)
6. Nobles, Princes (of the provinces)

B. The kingdom was GLORIOUS

1. (v.4) Shows off the riches of the kingdom
2. Honor/Splendor, lit: “magnificence of his majesty”
3. All things in view for them to see
4. “Glorious kingdom” - Glorious, root “to be heavy”, to have so much that it weighs you down. In this sense, the context is riches

II. The DETAILS of the feasts (v.5-9)

A. The PRIVATE feast for the servants

1. 180 day feast is done, another smaller feast begins - 7 day feast for all Palace people, great and small
2. Court of the garden of the palace - The open space where the palace was built around
3. Many courts in the palace - Paved with marble
4. White, green, blue hangings - Cords/ropes of fine linen and purple - Silver rings
5. Pillars of marble - Beds of gold and silver, probably solid
6. Mosaic pavement (red, blue, white, black) marble
7. Drinks in diverse vessels of gold - Royal/kingdom wine, domestic? Special for the king?
8. Abundance, according to king’s generosity (his hand)
9. “Hand of the Lord”, “My hand is against him”
10. (v.8) In accordance with “the law” -Drinking not compulsory, not forced

11. A statute, mandate - Appointed to the officers, commanded them - Allow the people to do what they want

B. The PERSONAL feast for the women

1. Queen Vashti made a feast - For the women of the palace
2. No mention of details - Like an afterthought
3. Women usually secluded from the men
4. Feast inside the house, not the court of the gardens

III. The DENIAL of the king's request (v.10-18)

A. The ANGER of the king

1. Last day of the 7 day feast - King is a bit drunk
2. Heart is "happy", cheerful, in a good place
3. Commands the 7 eunuchs to bring Vashti
4. With the royal crown, assuming full queenly dress
5. Desire to show off her beauty – what was the point?
6. If the feast was for the people of the palace, wouldn't they already know of her beauty?
7. She refused - Not a "I'd rather not", flat out "No"
8. King "broke out" in anger, flew in a rage - Anger=breaking of a relationship, the spark that causes explosive anger
9. Anger burned, kindled

B. The ANGST of the council

1. King consults his "wise men" - His general counsel
2. "understood the times", continual knowledge
3. Knew the law and justice
4. 7 princes of Persia/Media, very high ranking
5. King's counsel asks the question "what shall we do?" - Not "what should be done"
6. They consult the law - Vashti did not "obey, do" (same word) the king's command
7. Memucan answers - Somehow the thing that Vashti did explodes, private (king) to public (husbands)
8. Initially affects the king - Memucan widens the effect to all princes and people

9. Vashti's deed, her word, her behavior - It will become known, lit. "germinate", like a plant
10. Women will despise their husbands - When word gets out, and it will, all women will revolt
11. Queen was a role model, powerful figurehead
12. Contempt and wrath will be in abundance
13. Contempt = to hold something in disdain, to undervalue it
14. Wrath = anger, from a sense of breaking off (twig broken off the main root)
15. Anger is derivative of v.12, anger here is strongest term for anger; outburst or quarrel

IV. The **DESIRE** for justice (v.19-22)

A. The REJECTING of Vashti

1. Memucan comes up with this plan for a decree by the king
2. If the king is happy with this - remove the queen from her royalness, her position
3. Find another woman who is "better", Heb. 'Tov'
4. "Pleases the king", noun Tov = to be happy, cheerful
5. "Better than she", adjective Tov = strong sense of moral goodness
6. In the princes' eyes it wasn't that she just said 'no' to the king, but it was that she knew it was the wrong thing to do and still did it

B. The RESTORING of honor

1. Once the law goes into effect, wives will give honor to their husbands
2. Affects all, great and small
3. The idea, saying caused the king to be pleased, happy
4. The men will rule over their own house - Reign, rule, act as a prince
5. Moses dealt with this issue of lordship (Num 16:13) "...that you should keep acting like a prince over us?"