

# A LOOK AT THE BOOK ESTHER

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## AUTHOR & DATE

The author is not identified and is difficult to determine. While the author remains unknown, some facts concerning him are evident in the book. His Jewish nationalism and knowledge of customs demonstrate that he was a Jew. His knowledge of Persian conditions and customs hint that he lived in Persia. Detailed knowledge of events indicates that he was an eyewitness, or that he had access to records from Mordecai and the annals of the kings of Media and Persia.

Chronological indications demonstrate that the book was written after the death of Xerxes (465 B.C.) and, perhaps, Mordecai (10:1-3). Events begin during the third year of the reign of Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.). They cover a period of approximately 10 years (483-73 B.C.). It was probably written prior to the burning of the palace at Susa (c. 435 B.C.), since that is not mentioned.

## BACKGROUND

The story takes place in the Persian empire. Cyrus' victories over the Babylonians had taken place more than fifty years previously. Zerubbabel had led the principal expedition back to Jerusalem long before.

Xerxes I is ruling over the Persian empire. In the third year of his reign, 483 B.C., Xerxes celebrated a great banquet as he was planning his military campaign against Greece. He deposed his queen just before he left for the battle. About three years later, he was defeated by the Greeks at Salamis and returned to select his new queen. The remainder of the events in the book occur during the next five to six years.

### Spiritual condition of the participants

- They were Jews who had not accompanied the faithful that desired to return to the land.
- They do not refer to God, nor use His Name.
- They do not pray to God.
- There is no reference to the law.
- No supernatural events, nor hope for such, are mentioned.
- They seem to be typical Jews under discipline, struggling to bring about their own deliverance.
- They rejoice and celebrate a national holiday as a result of their victory.
- They don't acknowledge that God delivered them, nor reconfirm their covenant with Him.

## THEME AND PURPOSE

As a book dealing with conditions among God's people in dispersion following the return of the faithful remnant, Esther sheds considerable light on God's dealings with His people. Although there is no indication that the people have turned to God, He is clearly at work behind the scenes, as the faithful husband protecting His unfaithful wife.

- 1) The unfaithfulness and sin of God's people has not brought His covenant to an end. He will fulfill His promises to His covenant people. Those who plot against them will not prosper. He still loves and watches over them.
- 2) Historically, Esther describes what happened to the Jews who stayed behind in Persia when the faithful returned to the land.
- 3) It demonstrates God's sovereign control over history, even over pagan rulers, hundreds of miles away from God's land.
- 4) The book also demonstrates the origin of the Feast of Purim and exhorts them to continue observing it. The faithful remnant will recognize that they are celebrating another demonstration of God's delivering His people from sure destruction.
- 5) Although not expressed in the book, the demonstration of God's faithfulness to them should always work as a call to His people. If He loves them and protects them as He does, in spite of their sinful condition, they ought to reciprocate by following Him and submitting to His authority over them.

***What lessons do we learn from this book that should affect our lives today?***

## ESTHER

*Yahweh keeps His covenant*

Ralph Porter

CONFLICT DEVELOPED		1-4	OPPOSITION DEFEATED			5-10			
Divine Instruments Presented	1-2	Opposition Plot Threatened	3-4	Divine Intervention Protected	5-9:19	National Celebration Established	9:20-32	Individual Participation Rewarded	10:1-3
<p><b>Queen Vashti deposed</b> 1:1-22</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Feasts celebrated 1-9</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Officials</i> 1-4 <i>Common people</i> 5-8 <i>Women</i> 9</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Vashti's refusal 10-12</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Vashti's rejection 13-22</p> <p><b>Queen Esther chosen</b> 2:1-20</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Contest recommended 1-4</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther proposed 5-8</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther preferred 9-15</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther selected 16-18</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther counselled 19-20</p> <p><b>King Xerxes protected by Mordecai</b> 2:21-23</p>	<p><b>Opposition presented</b> 3:1-2a</p> <p><b>Insubordination produced</b> 3:2b-5</p> <p><b>Destruction planned</b> 3:6-15</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Contemplated 6-11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Confirmed 12-15</p> <p><b>Deliverance sought</b> 4:1-17</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Mordecai's mourning 1-5</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Mordecai's appeal 6-14</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther's decision 15-17</p>	<p><b>Destruction prevented</b> 5-7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther's acceptance 5:1-3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther's first banquet 5:4-8</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Haman's arrogance 5:9-14</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Haman's humiliation 6:1-14</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Esther's second banquet 7:1-4</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Haman's hanging 7:5-10</p> <p><b>Protection decreed</b> 8</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Mordecai exalted 1-2</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Edict issued 3-17</p> <p><b>Triumph achieved</b> 9:1-19</p>	<p><b>Xerxes' success</b> 10:1-2</p> <p><b>Mordecai's preeminence</b> 10:3</p>						