

Remember: God is in every chapter of Esther because God is always there, so look for him.

The Book of Esther

Theme: God is sovereign over all and savior of his own.

Context: The first thing to remember when coming to the book of Esther is its historicity. The book of Esther holds within its pages events that really took place. King Ahasuerus is better known for his Greek name, Xerxes I, which places the events of this book in the years from 485-465 BC. Moreover, these things begin “in the third year of his reign” (1:3), which places the starting point of these events in 483. By way of comparison, the rebuilding of the temple along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah can be placed in the years of 520-516 BC. Ezra and Nehemiah’s leading of the second return of the exiles alongside the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls had its culmination in 445 BC. More can be read about this in the *Connection* section. Also, Esther is a literary masterpiece that weaves beautiful storytelling (irony, humor, and so on) from factual events. Though the author is not mentioned, it fits most naturally that the writer would be close to the events taking place due to the amount of firsthand knowledge being recorded (some traditions hold to Mordecai as the writer). Through the history of Christendom, the book of Esther has caused difficulty to some due to certain perceived problems: no mention of God, prayer, or temple, mass bloodshed which caused formal celebration and commemoration, intermarrying in the midst of Ezra’s direct line against such things, overtly Jewish emphasis, and a feast day established outside of the first five books of the Bible (where all the others can be found). These “problems” spawn when the book of Esther is read without belief. Esther is a book of faith—to read it without faith warps all the spiritual truth within it. Though the words are not used, God is present with his people. Though the ethics are not presented in treatise form within the book, protection of life is biblical. The Jews are God’s people, and he continues to work in their lives beyond their earliest history. Esther found herself in a difficult position, as many recorded saints have throughout Scripture. And even as the Jews are God’s people at that time, he was beginning to reveal the fullness of his own revelation—that many tribes, nations, and tongues are his people, too (Esther 8:17).

Connection: As was mentioned in the *Context* portion of this handout, the book of Esther’s events is right in the middle of God’s mass actions on behalf of his people during this time period. While God is rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, while he is working in the hearts of the people to prepare them for the rebuilding of their city, he is also working to preserve his people through a young Jewish girl and her older cousin. Esther’s connection is one of placement in time. The connections become clear as God’s providence and protection—like in Nehemiah especially—is put on full display for all to see. Mordecai hearing a plot, Esther’s beauty capturing the eye of the king, the king’s sleeplessness, and so on reveal a God working even when his name is not mentioned. Just because God’s name is not invoked does not mean God ceases to be God. In this sense, God’s absolute power over all—and grace towards his people—is put on full display. These very truths absolutely connect this book of the Bible to the books surrounding it in time as well as to all of God’s revelation.

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Solid Rock Verses:

- Esther 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8's phony king—*in those days, King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa... while he showed the riches of his royal glory and splendor and pomp of his greatness...*
- Esther 2's providential placements—*And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen... he was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther... the king loved Esther more than all the women...*
- Esther 2's providential placements, part 2—*Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai... and [the regicide] came to the knowledge of Mordecai... and Esther told the king...*
- Esther 3's providential placements, part 3—*they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots)...*
- Esther 3's enemy of God—*Haman the Agagite [was promoted]... But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage... Letters were sent... to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews...*
- Esther 4's cry of the people—*there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes... hold a fast on my behalf...*
- Esther 4's providential placements, part 4—*And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this...*
- Esther 5's working people of God—*she won favor in his sight... let the king and Haman come to the feast... let a gallows fifty cubits high be made [for Mordecai]...*
- Esther 6's providential placements, part 5—*the king could not sleep... the chronicles... and it was found written how Mordecai had told... now Haman had just entered...*
- Esther 6's true prophecy—*If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him...*
- Esther 7's working people of God, part 2—*What is your wish, Queen Esther? Let me life be granted to me... and my people...who has dared to do this? A foe and an enemy! This wicked Haman!*
- Esther 7's providential placements, part 6—*and the king returned... as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was... "hang him on [the gallows Haman made for Mordecai]...*
- Esther 8's working people of God, part 3—*you may write as you please with regards to the Jews... the king allowed the Jews... to gather and defend their lives...*
- Esther 8's royal steward—*then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes... and many from the peoples declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.*
- Esther 9's working people of God, part 4—*the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them... and no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples... they rested...*
- Esther 9's providential placements, part 7—*Purim... the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days...*
- Esther 10's royal steward, part 2—*For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to king Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews... and spoke peace to all his people.*