

# THE BOOK OF ESTHER

OT/NT Old Testament SECTION Historical Books TRADITIONAL AUTHOR Unknown

KEY PEOPLE Ahasuerus (Xerxes), Esther, Haman, Mordecai, Vashti.

**SUMMARY** Canonically, Esther is the seventeenth book of the [Holy Bible](#) (1), the seventeenth book of the [Old Testament](#) (2), and the twelfth of the twelve [historical books](#) (3). This is the only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned even one time, but He is clearly present, orchestrating things behind the scenes.

King Ahasuerus rules Persia. He holds 2 feasts (totaling 187 days) for the purpose of displaying his awesomeness. When merry with drink, Ahasuerus demands that Queen Vashti come and show off her beauty to his guests. She refuses, making the king angry, and his advisers express concern over Vashti's public insubordination. The king deposes the queen and orders an irreversible royal decree declaring all Persian men are rulers of their own households. Ahasuerus looks for new queen, with many virgins brought before him. Esther (raised by her cousin, Mordecai) is prepared, presented, chosen and made queen. She conceals her Jewish identity. Mordecai overhears two royal guards, Bigthana and Teresh, plotting to kill the king. He tells Esther, who informs the King and, thanks to Mordecai, the plan is thwarted. The disloyal guards are impaled on poles.

Enter Haman, a descendant of the Amalekites, ancient enemies of the Israelites. He is promoted above all other nobles and all are ordered to kneel before him. Mordecai refuses. Haman is angry, and seeks to kill not only Mordecai, but all his fellow Jews as well. Haman obtains permission from the king to issue a decree to kill all Jews, on the pretext that they separated themselves from the rest of the land and did not observe the king's laws. The date of the killing is set for the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Mordecai and the Jews learn of the decree and mourn with sackcloth and ashes. Mordecai informs Esther and advises her to speak with king. The Jews fast for three days. Esther visits the king and invites him and Haman to a feast (banquet). While there, Esther asks that the king and Haman come to another banquet on the following day. Haman is frustrated by Mordecai's refusal to bow before him; his wife, Zeresh, suggests having a 75 foot pole set up and to make a request to the king to have Mordecai impaled upon it.

That night, when the king could not sleep and asks the book of chronicles to be read to him, he discovers that Mordecai was never rewarded for saving his life ([Esther 2:21-23](#)). Just then, Haman enters the palace court and is summoned to the king, who asks him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor? Haman thinks the king is inquiring about him, so Haman suggests a lavish recognition to be witnessed by all. The king agrees with Haman's answer and then tells him to carry it out - to honor Mordecai. Haman mourns, is warned by Zeresh of Mordecai's rising status, and hurries to the banquet. So, the king and Haman attend Esther's banquet. She asks that her life, and the lives of the Jews (including Mordecai, who saved him), may be spared from Haman's planned annihilation of them. The king is angry, leaves and then returns. As the king walks back into the banquet, Haman trips onto Esther's couch. The king thinks Haman is assaulting Esther and impales Haman on the very pole he made for Mordecai.

Esther is given Haman's property, and Mordecai assumes Haman's place. Esther again begs the king to save the Jews, but the decree is irrevocable once ratified by the king. Mordecai issues a counter-decree, allowing the Jews to protect themselves on the day they were scheduled for annihilation. When the Jews hear the news, they rejoice. Many in the land become Jews, because fear of the Jews fell on them. Jews defend themselves, killing 75,000 enemies. Mordecai is a very prominent citizen. At Esther's request, Haman's ten sons are hung. Jews celebrate victory, and Purim is declared an annual festival. 'Purim' is derived from 'pur' meaning 'lots', and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre. Ahasuerus' empire is strong. Mordecai is a popular and powerful ruler under Ahasuerus, and his story is recorded in official records.

**COMING UP:** Next up is the Book of Job. Click [HERE](#) (4) to explore!

## FOOTNOTES:

(1) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-good-news>

(2) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>

(3) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/historical-books>

(4) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/job>