OLD TESTAMENT · HISTORY · BOOK 17 OF 66

Esther

For such a time as this (4:14)

10	Mordecai	483–473 B.C.	Purim
Chapters, 167 Verses	The Writer (9:20)	Under Xerxes	Adar 14 and 15

STRUCTURE

The Book in Four Parts

Each part turns on a feast or a banquet: the king's feast (1–2), Esther's first banquet (3–5), her second banquet (6–7), and the feast of Purim (8–10).



Each bar shows that part's share of the 167 verses.

I 1–2 · 45 verses

Queen Esther

The king's feasts, Vashti, Esther chosen, a plot uncovered.

II 3–5 · 46 verses

The Plot

Haman's decree, "for such a time as this," the first banquet.

III 6–7 · 24 verses

Haman Falls

A sleepless king, Mordecai honoured, Haman hanged.

IV 8–10 · 52 verses

Purim

A new decree, the Jews delivered, a feast for ever.

DATES B.C.

The Years of Ahasuerus

The book dates its events by the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes).

1:3	2:16–17	2:21–23	3:7
483	**479**	**c. 478**	**474**
The great feast; Vashti refuses	Esther made queen	Mordecai uncovers a plot	Haman casts Pur, the lot
3:12–13	**8:9–14**	**9:1–16**	**9:17–28**
474	**474**	**473**	**473**
Haman's decree sent out	The king's second decree	The thirteenth of Adar	The first Purim

WHO'S WHO

The People of the Story

Five people carry the story; one more, unseen and unnamed, rules over it all.

1:1
Ahasuerus
King of Persia (Xerxes), powerful but easily swayed.

1:12
Vashti
The queen who would not come at the king's command.

2:7
Esther
An orphan, "fair and beautiful," who became queen.

2:5–7
Mordecai
A Benjamite in the king's gate, Esther's cousin and guardian.

3:1, 10
Haman
The Agagite, "the Jews' enemy."

4:14
The Unseen One
Deliverance would arise "from another place."

From India unto Ethiopia

MAP

From India unto Ethiopia

King Ahasuerus ruled 127 provinces. Gold markers belong to the Persian court, navy to the Jews' homeland and exile, and rust to the ends of the empire. The numbers match the cards below.

ESTHER 1:1

From India unto Ethiopia

The Persian empire of king Ahasuerus

c. 483–473 B.C. · Borders approximate



The kingdom of Ahasuerus
127 provinces (1:1; 8:9)

The Persian court
Shushan, Persepolis, Achmetha

Where the Jews came from
Jerusalem and Babylon (2:5–6)

The ends of the empire
India and Ethiopia (1:1)

"Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

ESTHER 4:14 (KJV)

Ahasuerus is the king the Greeks called Xerxes. The empire's borders are approximate.

BibleStudyForAll.com · Map positions approximate · Scripture from the King James Version

1 1:2; 2:8; 3:15

Shushan the palace

The Persian court. Winter capital of Ahasuerus, where the whole story takes place.

2 2:5–6

Jerusalem

The Jews. Mordecai's family was carried away from here with Jeconiah king of Judah.

3 2:6

Babylon

The Jews. Where Nebuchadnezzar took the captives; many Jews still lived in its provinces.

4 1:3

Persepolis

The Persian court. A royal city of the kings "of Persia and Media."

5 1:14, 19

Achmetha

The Persian court. Summer capital in Media; the laws of "the Persians and the Medes."

6 1:1; 8:9

India (Hoddu)

The ends of the empire. The eastern edge of the 127 provinces.

7 1:1; 8:9

Ethiopia (Cush)

The ends of the empire. The southern edge of the 127 provinces.

ESTHER AT A GLANCE · PART 3 OF 5

Esther’s Courage and the Great Reversals

ESTHER 4–5

If I Perish, I Perish

To go to the king uncalled was to risk death. Esther asked her people to fast, and then she went.

> *“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*
>
> Esther 4:14 (KJV)

1 **4:16**

Fast for Me

Three days, night or day, she and her maidens too.

2 **4:16**

I Will Go In

“And if I perish, I perish.”

3 **5:2**

The Golden Sceptre

She obtains favour in the king’s sight.

ESTHER 6–9

Turned to the Contrary

Again and again, what Haman planned for others fell on his own head.

HAMAN PLANNED	GOD TURNED IT
A gallows fifty cubits high for Mordecai — 5:14	Haman hanged on the same gallows — 7:10
Honour for himself: the king’s robe and horse — 6:6–9	Leading Mordecai through the street in honour — 6:10–11
The Jews destroyed on the thirteenth of Adar — 3:13	The Jews “had rule over them that hated them” — 9:1
Mordecai in sackcloth — 4:1	Mordecai in royal apparel of blue and white — 8:15

> *“The month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day.”*
>
> Esther 9:22 (KJV)

Purim, God's Hidden Hand and Christ in Esther

ESTHER 9

The Feast of Purim

Purim is named for the lot, Pur, that Haman cast to choose the day of destruction (3:7). The Jews still keep it today.

9:17–19
Adar 14 and 15
Days of feasting and gladness

9:22
Portions
Sending food to one another

9:22
Gifts
"And gifts to the poor"

9:28
For Ever
"Remembered and kept throughout every generation"

PROVIDENCE

God's Hidden Hand

God is not named, but He is never absent. Little "coincidences" work together to save His people.

2:17
The Right Queen
Esther is made queen years before the danger comes.

2:21–23
A Plot Written Down
Mordecai's good deed is recorded and forgotten, until the right night.

6:1
A Sleepless King
"On that night could not the king sleep."

6:4
Perfect Timing
Haman walks in at the very moment the king asks who is in the court.

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1).

LOOKING FORWARD

Christ in Esther

God preserved the Jewish people, and with them the line of the promised Messiah.

3:6, 13 · GENESIS 3:15
A People Preserved
Haman sought to destroy all the Jews; had he succeeded, the line of promise would have ended.

4:16 · HEBREWS 7:25
The Intercessor
Esther risked her life to plead for her people; Christ "ever liveth to make intercession" for His.

7:10 · COLOSSIANS 2:14–15
The Enemy Defeated
The weapon raised against God's people became the enemy's end, as the cross became Christ's triumph.

9:22 · JOHN 16:20
Sorrow Turned to Joy
"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Key Themes and Key Verse

BIG IDEAS

Key Themes

God's Providence
He works even when unseen.
4:14; 6:1

Courage
If I perish, I perish.
4:16

Fasting
Seeking God together in danger.
4:3, 16

Pride Goes Before a Fall
Haman's gallows became his own.
5:11–14; 7:10

Faithfulness Rewarded
Mordecai honoured by the king.
6:10–11; 10:3

God Keeps His People
Deliverance from another place.
4:14; 9:1

Sorrow to Joy
Mourning turned into a good day.
9:22

Remember
Purim kept in every generation.
9:28

Seeking the Good of Others
Mordecai sought the wealth of his people.
10:3

KEY VERSE

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:14 (KJV)