

Introduction to Esther

The book of Esther is a unique and somewhat different book within the Bible. Similar to the Song of Solomon, God's name is not mentioned in the book of Esther. For this reason, some have questioned its inspiration and even its place within the canon of Scripture. Although God is not mentioned by name, His sovereign power and providence are revealed throughout the book.

Esther has found a place of prominence among the Jews, highly regarded and studied. The Jews hold the book of Esther in as high esteem as the books of the Law. In fact Esther is one of five books within the Old Testament assigned to be read during the Jewish holidays.

- **Song of Solomon** is read during the Feast of Passover which celebrates their deliverance from Egypt and preservation from the death angel.
- **Ruth** is read during the Feast of Pentecost in remembrance of God's goodness to Israel and His abundant provision in the land.
- **Lamentations** is read on the ninth of Ab (our July or August) to commemorate the destruction of the Jewish Temple. The Temple was actually destroyed during the same timeframe, hundreds of years apart. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple in 586 BC and the Romans destroyed the rebuilt Temple in 70 AD. Many Jews also believe the ninth of Ab corresponds to the date that 10 of the 12 spies gave an unfavorable report regarding inhabiting Canaan.
- **Ecclesiastes** is read during the Feast of Tabernacles which celebrates God's goodness and provision while the Jews wandered in the wilderness for forty years.
- **Esther** is read during the Feast of Purim in the Jewish month Adar (our February or March.) Adar is considered to be the last month within the sacred year.

The Jews continue to celebrate the Feast of Purim to this day. The word Purim literally means "dice." It refers to the means by which Haman chose the 13th of Adar to exterminate all the Jews within the Persian Empire. We will consider that in detail as we move through Esther. Purim celebrates the sovereign hand of God which is able to preserve His people in the face of national hatred and determined persecution. It is said that as Julius Streicher, Hitler's minister of propaganda, made his way to the gallows, condemned to death for the slaughter of millions of Jews, he said, "Purim 1946! Purim 1946!" He too acknowledged the sovereign hand of God in preserving His chosen people.

Having discussed the importance of Esther to the Jews, and its place within their Feasts of celebration, one might wonder what significance it has for the church. First and foremost in

relevance is the fact that Esther is part of the inspired Word of God. Although written to a Jewish audience, regarding Jewish events, it has value for us today. It was inspired of the Spirit and eternally preserved.

Esther also beautifully illustrates and confirms the sovereign hand of God among His people. While our struggles are much different than those of Esther's day, God never changes. We can learn valuable insight concerning the sovereignty of God through a careful study of Esther.

Very similar to the accounts of Joseph in Egypt, Esther also is an Old Testament picture of a profound New Testament truth. [Romans 8:28 – And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.](#) Regardless of the severity of our situation, God is able to work all things for our good. He can take circumstances that appear destined for a horrific outcome, and work them for our good. God can use the evil intentions of men and use them to preserve and even prosper His people. Esther serves as a reminder of the security we have in Christ!

Esther also reveals that God is always at work within the lives of His people. He always has a plan, and individuals to fulfill His divine plan. When Israel needed deliverance from Egypt, God had a Moses. When they needed strength against the Philistines, God had the judges: Samson, Deborah, Gideon, etc. When they were forced to face the enemies surrounding their land, God had a David. When the people had the opportunity to return to Jerusalem, God had an Ezra and Nehemiah. While facing certain death in Persia, God had Esther and Mordecai. This is revealed in the key verse. [Esther 4:14 – 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?](#) God always has a servant prepared for such a time as this!

Esther stands as a picture or type of the church, the redeemed of Christ. Her Hebrew name, *Haddasah*, means **myrtle**. The myrtle tree was symbolic for the Jews and often used in ceremonial events. It was viewed as a symbol of immortality. The dead were buried with twigs of myrtle, symbolizing their belief in life after death. Bridegrooms were often adorned with crowns of myrtle woven on their heads, indicating the marriage commitment was for life.

As the myrtle is the emblem of immortality, the Church will live with Christ for eternity. The myrtle has evergreen, dark, shiny leaves with white five petaled starlike flowers which emit a sweet fragrance from the flowers and bruised leaves. Believers today have a sweet fragrance in their life when Christ saves them, they suffer for Him, and are surrendered to Him in every area of their life. Five is the number of grace in the Bible. Believers are recipients of God's grace and are cleansed by the blood of Christ. Esther is the accepted queen or bride. She is a picture of those

*who received the righteousness of God by His redemption. Esther was chosen by the grace of the king. She didn't work to become queen. We don't work to become the bride of Christ. We are saved by His grace. Esther is in submission to Mordecai even though she is queen. She follows the directions of Mordecai who is a type of Christ. The Church today is to follow and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Esther was given one year to learn how to beautify and prepare herself for her husband, the King. The believer today is to prepare and beautify him or herself until Christ, the King of Kings, returns or we meet Him in death. We are to adorn ourselves with the beauty of holiness ([Psalm 29:2](#); [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)). Esther was a woman of piety, faith, courage, compassion, charm, patriotism, and maturity.*ⁱ

As with any study in Scripture, we must always seek to discover Christ in the text. He is found throughout each book of the Bible, and Esther is no exception. While He is not mentioned specifically, the Lord is revealed in the book. Mordecai, Esther's cousin, cared for her as his own child in the absence of her parents. He submitted to the role as Esther's kinsman redeemer, just as Christ our Lord stands as our Kinsman Redeemer. Mordecai assumed all debt that Esther had, delivered her from bondage, and placed her within his family as one of his own.

The life of Esther pictures the church, but we also can see the person of Christ in her life as well. Her actions that helped save the Jews reminds us of Christ our Lord. She went to King Ahasuerus and interceded for the Jews. Jesus Christ our Lord died for our sin on the cross, rose triumphant over sin and death, ascended back to the right hand of the Father, and now stands as our Advocate, interceding on our behalf.

Finally we discover a prophetic aspect to the book of Esther. Haman was the enemy of the Jews. In fact, he is literally described as such five times within this book. It is interesting to note that the number 13 is associated with Haman, the number of rebellion, apostasy, and corruption. The decree to exterminate the Jews was signed on the 13th day of the first month, [Esther 3:12](#). The Jews were to be killed on the 13th day of the twelfth month, [Esther 3:13](#). Numbers are significant in Scripture, and the phrase "Haman the wicked" has a numerical value of 666, the number for the anti-Christ. While Esther was written hundreds of years before the first advent of Christ the Lord, it speaks prophetically of the deliverance of God's people during the Great Tribulation.

I trust you have a better understanding of the context in which Esther was written and the great significance it has within the whole of Scripture. I am looking forward to the great truths we will discover as we move through this Old Testament book.

ⁱ Mattoon's Treasures - Mattoon's Treasures – Treasures from Esther.

Much of this material was adapted from Dr. Mattoon's Treasures from Esther Introductory