

Esther: Date and Setting

1. Esther is the story of a Jewish girl and her older cousin living in Persia after the Jewish people have returned from exile. She became queen and was able, in this position, to save the Jewish people from genocide.
2. Author and date of writing are unknown. The events take place during the reign of Xerxes I (Ahasuerus). The book opens in 483 (1:3, 3rd year). Esther was made Queen in 479 (2:16, 7th year). The rest of the events of the book take place in roughly 474 (3:7, 12th year).
3. The setting in world history is the height of the power of the Persian Empire. The narrative takes place in Susa, the capital. The Father of Modern History, Herodotus, writes extensively about Xerxes in his famous book, *Histories*, sometimes titled, *The Persian Wars*. He lived during the reign of Xerxes.
4. The book explains the origin of the festival called Purim (which basically means “lots” and is an ironic reference to the lots cast by Haman to determine the day the Jews should die).

Narrative Outline:

Esther 1-3	Main characters and plot established.
Esther 4-6	The fate of the characters and the Jews in question
Esther 7	The Reversal
Esther 8-10	The Deliverance of the Jews and Purim Established

The Theology of Esther

1. The absence of God’s name in Esther is not an accident or a matter of indifference. It is intentional, and teaches that though God is not visible and apparent he is present and active on behalf of His people.
2. There is also a heavy emphasis on our place as God’s instruments to accomplish his purposes. (see especially 4:12-14)

Where is Christ in Esther?

God is not mentioned in the book, nor is His law, or the temple, or the priests, or any King of Israel, or the prophets. It is among the most secular narratives in Scripture. So we do not find Christ in any pre-incarnate appearance (Christophany) or being prophesied. We do, however see him in a few typological ways, and the seed theme is present as well.

1. Type – The feasting, which is so prominent in the book, ends with a feast celebrating their deliverance. This foreshadows the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19) in which we will celebrate our salvation with Christ.
2. Type – The story of Esther is one in which there is a decree that brings death and another that brings life, secured by the selfless act of Esther at the risk of her life. The story of redemption is the story of the decree of death, and the decree of life, and Jesus Christ who secured the decree of life at the cost of his own.
3. Type – Mordecai in 8:15-17 is a type of Christ – dressed in royal robes and declaring the salvation of the Jewish people – and even gentiles converted to the God of Israel. And in 10:3 he “sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.”
4. Seed – As the OT history comes to a close, the promised seed, represented by the people of Israel, is once again threatened with annihilation. The deliverance of Israel is the deliverance of the seed – it secures the people of God and therefore the promise of God, which is Jesus Christ.

Book Recommendations:

1. *Esther & Ruth* – Iain Duguid (REC)
2. *Esther* – Karen Jobes (NIVAC)
3. *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary* – Joyce Baldwin (TOTC)
4. *The Son of David: Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books* – Nancy Guthrie

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