

Esther

Introduction.

- A. Xerxes (reigned 486-465 BC).
 - 1. Kings of Persia.
 - a. Cyrus the Great.
 - b. Cambyses II (only 8 years).
 - c. Darius the Great (wife, Atossa, daughter of Cyrus).
 - d. Xerxes.
 - 2. Grecian campaigns.
 - a. Won at Thermopylae.
 - b. Lost naval battle of Salamis.
 - c. Lost so many soldiers he returned to Asia.
 - 3. Reputation of being a womanizer.
 - 4. Assassinated 465 BC.
- B. Susa (Sushan).
 - 1. About 150 miles north of Persian Gulf.
 - 2. Already an established city 4400 BC.
 - 3. Setting of Aeschylus's "The Persians," oldest known play in theatrical history.
 - 4. Today, next to the ruins, the city of Shush, a county seat, pop. 77,000.

I. Vashti deposed (ch.1).

- A. Xerxes's great party.
 - 1. Had spent two years quelling rebellion.
 - 2. For the planning of his campaign against Greece.
- B. Vashti (prob. Amestris) summoned to display her beauty.
 - 1. Refused.
 - 2. Deposed as queen.
 - a. Not divorced.
 - b. Accompanied Xerxes on Grecian campaign.
 - i. Learned of his affair with a married woman.
 - ii. Horribly mutilated the mother.
 - c. To teach all wives to be obedient to their husbands.

II. Esther chosen as queen (ch. 2).

- A. Later = 4 years.
- B. Xerxes had returned from Grecian campaign.
 - 1. Had initial victories.
 - 2. Ended with significant defeats.
 - 3. Vashti in seclusion.
- C. Neither father nor mother (2:7).
 - 1. Like Melchizedek (He.7:3).
 - 2. Appears in history then vanishes.
- D. At Mordecai's request, did not reveal she was a Jew.

III. Mordecai foils a plot (2:19-23).

- A. Sitting at the king's gate (cf. Ruth 4:1).
- B. Discovered a plot to assassinate Xerxes.
- C. Warned the king through Esther.
- D. Not necessarily religious, but quite nationalistic.

IV. Haman's plot (ch.3)

- A. Five years later.
- B. Haman made prime minister.
 - 1. A descendant of Agag the Amalekite.
 - 2. Xerxes commanded all the officials to bow to him.
- C. Mordecai refused to bow to Haman.
 - 1. No prohibition on bowing to a high official.
 - 2. Possibly because Haman was an Amalekite.
 - 3. Because he was a Jew.
 - 4. Enraged Haman.
- D. Haman decided to annihilate all Jews.
 - 1. Jews = religion, not the province of Judea.
 - 2. Offered 10,000 talents of silver.
 - a. 375 tons.
 - b. At \$27.37/oz. = \$328,440,000.
 - 3. Cast lots to choose the date -- 11 months in the future.
 - 4. Xerxes agreed.
 - 5. Susa bewildered.

V. Mordecai persuades Esther (ch. 4).

- A. Esther was unaware of the plot.
 - 1. Was told her uncle was in sackcloth.
 - 2. Found out the reason through her messenger.
- B. Mordecai urged her to go to the king.
 - 1. Esther resisted at first.
 - 2. "You have come to your royal position for such a time as this."
- C. Esther agreed.
 - 1. Asked for a time of fasting (and prayer).
 - 2. "If I perish I perish." (cf. Dan. 3:17-18).

VI. The plot foiled (ch. 5-7).

- A. Two intertwined stories.
- B. Esther received gladly by the king.
- C. Invitations.
 - 1. Asked Xerxes and Haman to a banquet.
 - 2. Invited them to a second banquet.
 - 3. Maybe timidity, maybe wisdom.
- D. Haman was filled with pride.
 - 1. Turned to rage at Mordecai's intransigence.
 - 2. Boasted of his honor and wealth.
 - a. Meant nothing if Mordecai wouldn't bow.
 - b. Constructed a gallows for Mordecai.
- E. A sleepless night for Xerxes.
 - 1. Discovered Mordecai had not been rewarded for saving his life.
 - 2. Haman's pride led him to believe he was the one to be honored.
 - 3. Haman was humiliated by carrying out the king's wishes for Mordecai.
- F. Failure.
 - 1. "Grant me my life and the lives of my people."
 - 2. Esther revealed she was a Jew.
 - 3. Haman executed.
 - 4. Mordecai elevated.

VII. The Feast of Purim (ch. 8-10).

- A. First edict could not be rescinded (cf. Dan. 6).
- B. Second edict decreed the Jews could defend themselves.
- C. Mordecai proclaimed a feast to be called Purim.
 - 1. From the casting of the Pur.
 - 2. Remember God's delivering power.
 - 3. This year (2021) Feb. 25-26 (evening to evening).

VIII. Lessons from Esther.

- A. God works in history.
- B. God brings good from evil.
- C. God can deliver his people if he so chooses (cf. He.11).
- D. Our responsibilities.
 - 1. Maintain a right relationship with God (4:16).
(fasting implies prayer)
 - 2. Trust God's promises and past activities (4:14).
(probably based on promises made from Abraham = prophets)
 - 3. Put oneself wholly in God's hands (4:16).