

BIBLE TRAINING INSTITUTE

To proactively accelerate the spiritual growth of Grace Bible Church for the purpose of knowing God more intimately and becoming more effective servants of God in the world

1

Esther

2

Introduction to Esther

Title

- ✓ Hebrew = *Esther* (אֶסְתֵּר; Esther; “Star” (if Persian), goddess of love, fertility, and war, “Ishtar” (if Akkadian), or “She that is hidden” (if Hebrew/Aramaic))
 - ❖ Esther’s Hebrew name from birth was Hadassah (חַדְסָה), which means “myrtle”, a dark evergreen tree with white or pink flowers and black berries; often pictured righteousness, peace, or restoration; Isa 41:19; 55:13; Neh 8:15 [festival of Booths])
- ✓ Greek = *Esther* (ΕΣΘΗΡ; “Esther”)



3

Introduction to Esther

WHO—Authorship

- ✓ Unknown (Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiah are candidates)
- ✓ Proposal: **Intentionally Anonymous**
- ✓ Has divine, omniscient insight (e.g., Haman speaks in his heart; 6:6)

WHO—Audience

- ✓ The Jews who continue to reside in exile

4

Introduction to Esther

WHEN

- ✓ Events occur ~483 BC (1:3) to ~473 BC (10:1–3)
- ✓ Perhaps written ~470 BC.
- ✓ During the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes)
- ✓ Between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7—After the Temple was rebuilt under Haggai and Zechariah, but before the coming of Ezra and Nehemiah to the land of Israel

5

Introduction to Esther

WHERE

- ✓ Perhaps Susa, the capital of the Medo-Persian empire (1:2)
- ✓ Jews reside in exile; a few have returned
- ✓ People like Ezra and Nehemiah are in exile (perhaps young men) during the days of Esther and Mordecai
- ✓ Exile is a time/place of intentional silence from God (Ezekiel and Daniel are rare exceptions)

6

Introduction to Esther

WHY

Though His presence may not always be felt and the voice of His prophets has waned as Israel resides in exile, God providentially works behind the scenes to rescue His people from genocide to keep His promise that He will one day gather all Israel back to the land and restore them under a New Covenant (cf. Deut 30:4–6).

7

Introduction to Esther

HOW—Terminology

- ✓ Jew(s) (2:5; 3:4, 6, 10, 13; 4:3, 7, 13, 14, 16; 5:13; 6:10, 13; 8:1, 3, 5, 7 (2x), 8, 9 (2x), 11, 13, 16, 17 (2x); 9:1 (2x), 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 (2x), 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; 10:3 (2x))—total 52x
- ✓ Province (1:1, 16, 22 (3x); 2:3, 18; 3:8, 12 (4x), 13, 14 (2x); 4:3 (2x), 11; 8:5, 9 (4x), 11, 12, 13 (2x), 17 (2x); 9:2, 3, 4, 12, 16, 20, 28 (2x), 30)
- ✓ Book (Scroll; 1:22; 2:23; 3:13; 6:1; 8:5, 10; 9:20, 25, 30, 32; 10:2)
- ✓ Lot (*Pur*–Akkadian; 3:7; 9:24, 26 (2x), 28, 29, 31, 32)

8

Introduction to Esther

HOW—Themes

- ✓ No mention of God’s name
- ✓ No mention of Palestine, Jerusalem, Temple, Law, Prayer
- ✓ Reversal of Human Plans (chapters 4, 6, 7, 8, 9)—central to the theme
- ✓ Major Characters—Ahasuerus, Haman, Mordecai, Esther
- ✓ Comedy of Ironies

9

Introduction to Esther

HOW—Literary Structure*

✓ The King's Feast and Removal of Vashti (1:1–22)

✓ Esther Granted a Royal Position (2:1–18)

✓ The Plot against the King Is Thwarted (2:19–23)

✓ Haman's Plot (3:1 – 4:3)

✓ Mordecai's and Esther's Risky Plan (4:4–17)

✓ First Banquet and Haman Builds Gallows (5:1–14)

✓ The King's Sleepless Night (6:1–14)

✓ Second Banquet and Haman Hangs on Gallows (7:1–10)

✓ Mordecai's and Esther's Reward (8:1–2)

✓ Esther's Solution (8:3–17)

✓ The Plot against the Jews Is Thwarted (9:1–10)

✓ Esther Granted a Royal Request (9:11–16)

✓ The King's Feast and Honor of Mordecai (9:17 – 10:3)

10

Introduction to Esther

HOW—Interpretative Issues

✓ Literary Genre of Esther

✓ Nature of Mordecai—spiritual or unspiritual Jew?

✓ Nature of Esther—spiritual or unspiritual Jew?

11

12

4