

God Behind the Scenes

"If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" Esther 4:14 NLT



- When was there a time that you were puzzled about the difficult circumstances of your life and wondered where God was?

The book of Esther is more like a drama than any other book of the Bible. Esther's story is a reminder that God is at work in our lives behind the scenes. He is involved in our lives even when we do not see any visible indication or sign of it. Also, the book reminds us that God doesn't plant us somewhere by accident. If we stay yielded to His will, we are in the right place at the right time, even if we don't understand God's plan and purpose at that moment.

Esther was confused about the circumstances of her life. She was a young beautiful Jewish orphan under the captivity of the Persians. The Persian king divorced his wife and wanted a new wife. A beauty pageant was organized and the most attractive women of the kingdom were forced to enter. Esther won because of her character and beauty. She was made Queen even though she did not want the position. Also, she was Jewish and had to keep her nationality a secret for fear of her life. However, God was in control. Haman, the second-in-command to the king, plotted to kill all the Jewish people. Only one person could stop this holocaust—Queen Esther. Suddenly God's purpose for her life was clear—she was in the right place at the right time. As Mordecai, her older cousin said to her, "...who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (4:14). Esther was able to save her people at the risk of her own life and evil Haman suffered the same fate that he plotted for the Jews. *Don't like where you are? Could you be there "for such a time as this?"*

Central Lesson

God is in control and is working behinds the scenes of our lives.

Date: The events recorded in the book of Esther took place between 483-473 B.C., between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra. The book was written somewhere between 465-435 B.C.

Historical Setting: The chart below gives a historic overview of the book of Esther in comparison to Ezra and Nehemiah.

538-515 B.C.	483-473 B.C.	457 B.C.	445-425 B.C.
First return under Zerubbabel	The story of Esther between Ezra 6 and 7.	Second return under Ezra	Third return under Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah

Esther covers 10 to 12 years. Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity in three waves of deportation: 606, 597 and 586 B.C. Also, Judah was brought out of Babylon in three groupings: Zerubbabel's group in 538 B.C., Ezra's group in 457 B.C., and Nehemiah's group in 444 B.C.

Author: Uncertain. Bible scholars have suggested:

1. **Mordecai** (cf. 9:20 and 29). He kept and wrote records. Historic Jewish authorities (Josephus, etc.) claim Mordecai as the author. Esther 10:2-3, however, describe the career of Mordecai as if it were over and someone else is recording the story.
2. **Ezra and Nehemiah** also have been suggested as the author. However, there is no linguistic evidence to support their authorship. The vocabulary and style of Esther is different from that of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
3. **A young contemporary of Mordecai** is also suggested.

Title: "Esther" is the Greek Septuagint name for the book. Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah (hā dās' sah) (cf. 2:7), which means "myrtle." Her Persian name "Ester" was derived from the Persian word for "star" (stara). The Latin title is "Hester."

Purpose and Theme: God is in control of our lives and is working behinds the scenes in ways that we will not fully understand until some day in the future. The book of Esther focuses on God's preservation of His chosen people.

Today, the Jews read the book of Esther on the Feast of Purim (pu' rim), a Jewish holiday, during the months of February & March. The holiday was established by Mordecai and the Jews of that day in Esther 9:18-32, especially vs. 23-28.

God was at work in the lives of people in Esther's day and He is also involved in our lives today. You may not understand the reason for your present position or circumstances until someday in the future—or possibly not until you are with the Lord in heaven. Nevertheless, we must trust God and believe that He is in control of our lives and circumstances. The Christian life is a life of living by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20) and trusting God's leading and care. **Proverbs 20:24** (NIV) *"A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?"* **Proverbs 16:9** (NIV) *"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."* **Romans 8:28** (NIV) *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

Key Verses: Esther 4:14 (NIV) is the pivotal point of the book. Mordecai sends a message to Esther that God will deliver His people, but perhaps God had placed her in position as queen in order that she may be the instrument of deliverance.

Key Chapters: **Chapter 6.** Mordecai is honored and Haman is humbled. Haman desired to have Mordecai hanged on the gallows (v.4). The king desired to honor Mordecai for his faithful service (v.3) and asked what should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor. Haman assumed that the king wanted to honor him (v.6). He suggested a parade (vs. 7-9) not knowing that Mordecai would receive the special honor (vs. 10-12).

Outline of Esther: Warren Wiersbe outlines the book:

- I. **The Selection of Esther (Chapters 1-2)**
- II. **The Detection of Haman (Chapters 3-7)**
- III. **The Protection of Israel (Chapter 8-10)**

Central Lesson

God is in control and is working behinds the scenes of our lives.

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.