

## Union Chapel M.B. Church

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### “Esther 1-5, Part I”

*(Study Material from Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction)*

The book of Esther (*star*) is a continuous story that contains banquets and decrees. It begins with a crisis when Queen Vashti refused to appear for her husband King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and embarrassed him before his government leaders. The story tells of Vashti's banishment and how a young Jewish girl was chosen to be queen in her place. A subplot reveals Prime Minister Haman's hatred of the Jews primarily because Mordecai would not bow to him. Haman persuaded King Xerxes to order the execution of the Jews, but Esther's wisdom and intercession thwarted Haman's evil intent. In celebration of their victory, the Jews instituted a celebration of the annual Feast of Purim (“lots”).

#### I. Danger to the Jews, Chapters 1-5

##### a. Demotion of Queen Vashti, **Chapter 1**

- i. The story begins by describing how God providentially arranged for Vashti's dismissal as Xerxes's queen so that Esther, who would be the divine instrument of Jewish deliverance, could be elevated to the position of queen in Vashti's place.

##### b. Destiny of Esther, **Chapter 2**

- i. After an extensive search, Esther was elevated to the role of queen in the place of Vashti. Her decision to hide her Jewish identity and take a pagan name was typical of many Jews living in the *diaspora* (“dispersion”) out of Israel.
- ii. The chapter ends with Mordecai preventing a plot to kill the king, but for some providential reason Mordecai never was rewarded for his heroic efforts.

##### c. Decree Against the Jews, **Chapter 3**

- i. Despite Mordecai's intervention to prevent an assassination plot against Xerxes, Haman, the king's advisor, hatched a plot to eradicate the Jews. After Xerxes' promotion of Haman, Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. Consequently, Haman flew into a rage culminating in his ambition to exterminate all of the Jews.
- ii. The source of *anti-semitism* (hatred of the Jews), *misanthropy* (hatred of human beings), and *xenophobia* (hatred of strangers), 1 John 4:20.
- iii. What people do with authority is a test of character.

d. Decision of Esther, **Chapters 4 and 5**

- i. As the drama unfolds, the Jews are mourning, fasting, weeping, and lamenting because of the king's threat. Mordecai used his influence with Esther to convince her that she was the instrument God had chosen and strategically placed in position of power to deliver the Jews during this dark hour.
- ii. Esther's leadership, poise, grace, and wisdom are shown in a series of clever choices she made to present her case to Xerxes. When offered "half the kingdom," she responded that she merely wanted to invite him and Haman to a banquet. At the banquet, she extended another invitation to do it again the next day.

II. **Application**

- a. God is sovereign and has supreme authority of all creation. He works everything with the purpose of his will, Eph 1:11; Rom 11:36.
- b. We are where we are because of God's grace. Experiences and opportunities we are granted are for God's purpose, Matt 5:13.
- c. Remember your commitment to serving Christ! What do you do when obedience to God goes against the culture (Est 4:15-17; Dan 3:1-30, 6:1-24, Ps 46:1, Acts 5:29)?

**Notes:**