

Esther Becomes Queen

A Jewish orphan rises from obscurity to become queen of Persia, positioned by God's providence for a crucial moment in history.

Esther 1:1-22 • Esther 2:1-23

CHARACTERS: Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, Hegai

THEMES: Providence, Preparation, God's sovereignty, Divine positioning

KING AHASUERUS RULED over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia, his throne established in Shushan the palace. In the third year of his reign, he held a lavish feast displaying his magnificent wealth and power for 180 days. When Queen Vashti refused his command to display her beauty before his drunken nobles, the king's anger burned hot. His counselors advised him to depose her, lest all wives despise their husbands, and Ahasuerus agreed. The decree went forth: Vashti would be queen no more.

After his anger subsided, the king's servants proposed a plan: gather beautiful young virgins from all provinces to find a new queen. Among those brought to the palace was Hadassah, called Esther, a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai. Her parents had died, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter. She was lovely in form and beautiful to behold.

Mordecai had warned Esther not to reveal her Jewish identity. She found favor with Hegai, keeper of the women, who gave her the best place in the house and seven maidens to serve her. For twelve months she underwent beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh and six with sweet spices—before her turn to go before the king.

When Esther's turn came, she required nothing but what Hegai advised. She obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. In the tenth month of the seventh year of his reign, King Ahasuerus loved Esther above all the women. He set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and gave gifts with royal liberality.

Meanwhile, Mordecai sat at the king's gate. There he overheard two chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, plotting to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Mordecai told Esther, who informed the king in Mordecai's name. When the matter was investigated and found true, both men were hanged. The deed was written in the book of chronicles before the king—a small act that would prove crucial in days to come.

God's hand was invisible but unmistakable. An orphaned Jewish girl was now queen of the greatest empire on earth. Her adoptive father sat at the gate, positioned to hear vital information. Her identity remained secret. Everything was being prepared, though no one yet knew for what purpose.