



ESTHER

THE GOSPEL FOR A LIFE OUT OF CONTROL

LED BY STEPHEN SPEAKS

ESTHER: THE GOSPEL FOR A LIFE OUT OF CONTROL

Her life seemed completely out of her control. She was orphaned at a young age, objectified for her beauty, sex-trafficked, forced into a bad marriage, threatened by a wicked government, and condemned for her race and beliefs. Then she saved a nation. The story of Esther in the Bible is better than any Hollywood blockbuster. It's a true story, but it's not ultimately her story. It's God's story. And your story. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." In this five-week study, we want to understand what God teaches us to give us hope in a world that is beyond our control but not beyond His.

Week 1: Introducing Esther - The Love of God in an Uncontrollable World

Week 2: Providence - God in Control When We Are Not

Week 3: Called - The Heart of God in the Hearts of His People

Week 4: Faith - Flawed People Listening to God

Week 5: Hope - When Everything Evil Becomes Untrue



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ESTHER

WEEK 1:

The Love of God in an Uncontrollable World

Introducing Esther

We study the Old Testament because it reveals the grace of God.

Jonah 4:1-3 - But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

God’s reply in Jonah 4:11 is: “And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 souls of men and women who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

We are going to spend 5 weeks on the Book of Esther. We are not going to study it chapter by chapter, or chronologically, but thematically, looking at God’s Grace, God’s Providence, God’s Call, God’s Impact, and God’s Victory.

READ Esther 1

PURIM

Purim is one of the largest Jewish festivals and is celebrated every year. On it, the Jews remember the deliverance of the Jewish people living in Persia from sure and certain death during the time of Esther. The last chapters of Esther outline for them how they are to celebrate Purim.

The name of the festival, Purim, comes from Esther 3:7, which reads, **“In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the pur (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.**

The casting of the pur, or lot, was something a little akin to the roll of a dice. The festival name refers to Haman and his cronies casting lots to determine the best day to carry out his plot to exterminate all of the Jews.

The True Story of Esther

The account of Esther is not fable. The lists of names in 1:10 & 14 serve as a bibliography. These names tell us that Esther is a true, historical account, though selective in the information it presents.

We also see this in Esther 10:2 - **And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia?** It is functionally like a footnote to show us that this took place in the real world.

The Story at a Glance:

Ahasuerus's Party
Vashti's Refusal

Esther's Introduction
Esther's Abduction
Esther's Elevation

Mordecai's Loyalty

Haman's Honor

Haman's Plot

Mordecai Enlists Esther

Esther's Wisdom

Mordecai Honored
Haman Hanged

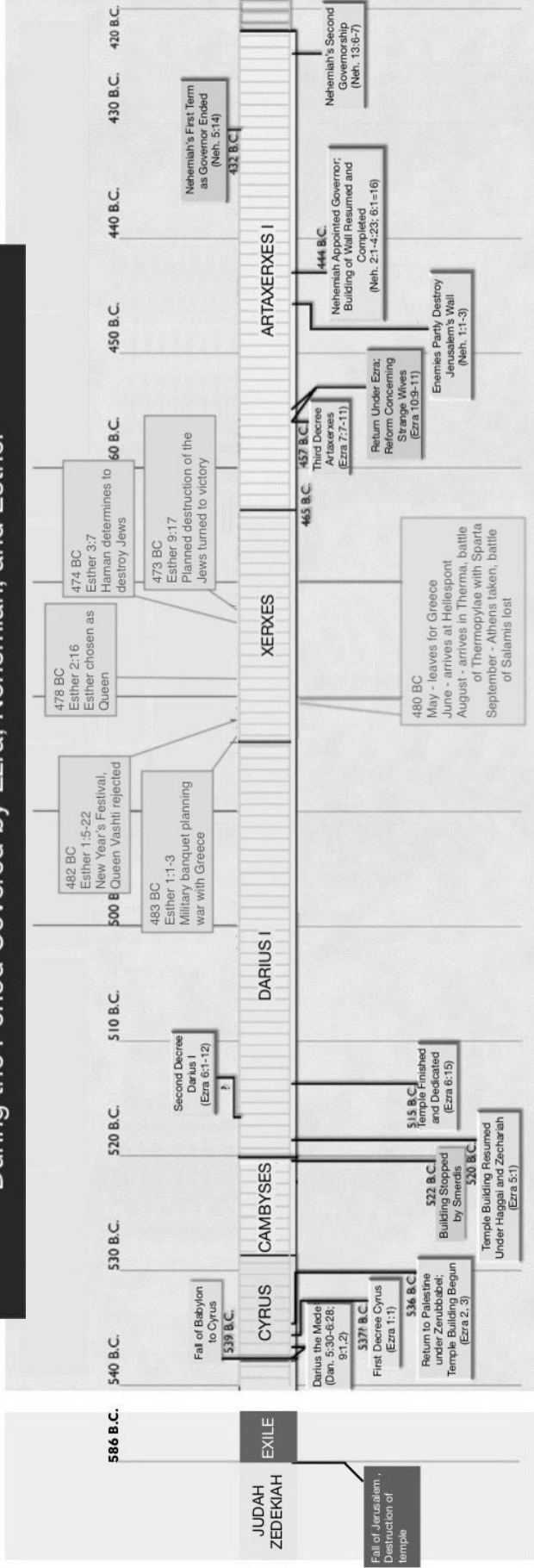
The Reversal of Haman's Plot

The Timeline of Events

see next page

TIMELINE OF CAPTIVITY

During the Period Covered by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther



516 B.C.

Temple rebuilt (in Jerusalem) (Ezra)

478-473 B.C.

Events of Esther (in Persia)

445 B.C.

Walls rebuilt (in Jerusalem) (Nehemiah)

The People Involved

AHASUERUS/ XERXES I

Although the name is different in Esther, Ahasuerus appears by most accounts to be Xerxes, who succeeded his father Darius, around 486 BC at the age of 36. He reigned for twenty-one years (B.C. 486-465). Xerxes was assassinated in 465.

VASHTI

According to Jewish sources, Vashti was the daughter of King Belshazzar mentioned in Daniel 5. She was Queen of Persia and the first wife of Persian King Ahasuerus. She was banished for her refusal to appear at the king's banquet to show her beauty as Ahasuerus commanded.

HAMAN

Haman was a high-ranking political advisor in the Persian empire under King Ahasuerus. We are also told in 3:1 that Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites during the time of Israel's King Saul. The Amalekites were unrelentingly brutal toward the Israelites throughout the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 – Moses says, **Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God. Therefore when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget.**

MORDECAI

Mordecai was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin. He was born in exile, had lived in exile, and had experienced only exile. He lived in the Persian capital city of Susa. Mordecai, who, as Esther's cousin, was her closest relative, took her in when her parents died and functioned as her father figure. He was apparently a city official who worked at the palace gate.

ESTHER

Esther lived in ancient Persia about 100 years after the Babylonian captivity. She was young, beautiful, and Jewish. And she was swept into events too difficult for her to handle on her own. God used her to rescue his people from Haman's plot.

What are we supposed to get out of Esther?

The New Testament Message of the Old Testament

What is the Bible about?

The story of the whole Bible is the story of Jesus Christ. The New Testament is about Jesus. The Old Testament is about Jesus. Jesus himself said so.

Luke 24:27 – And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:44-47 – Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

John 5:39-40 – You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Covenant Chart

see next page

Genesis 3: 15

**I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”**

The story of the Bible is the story of the Promised Seed.

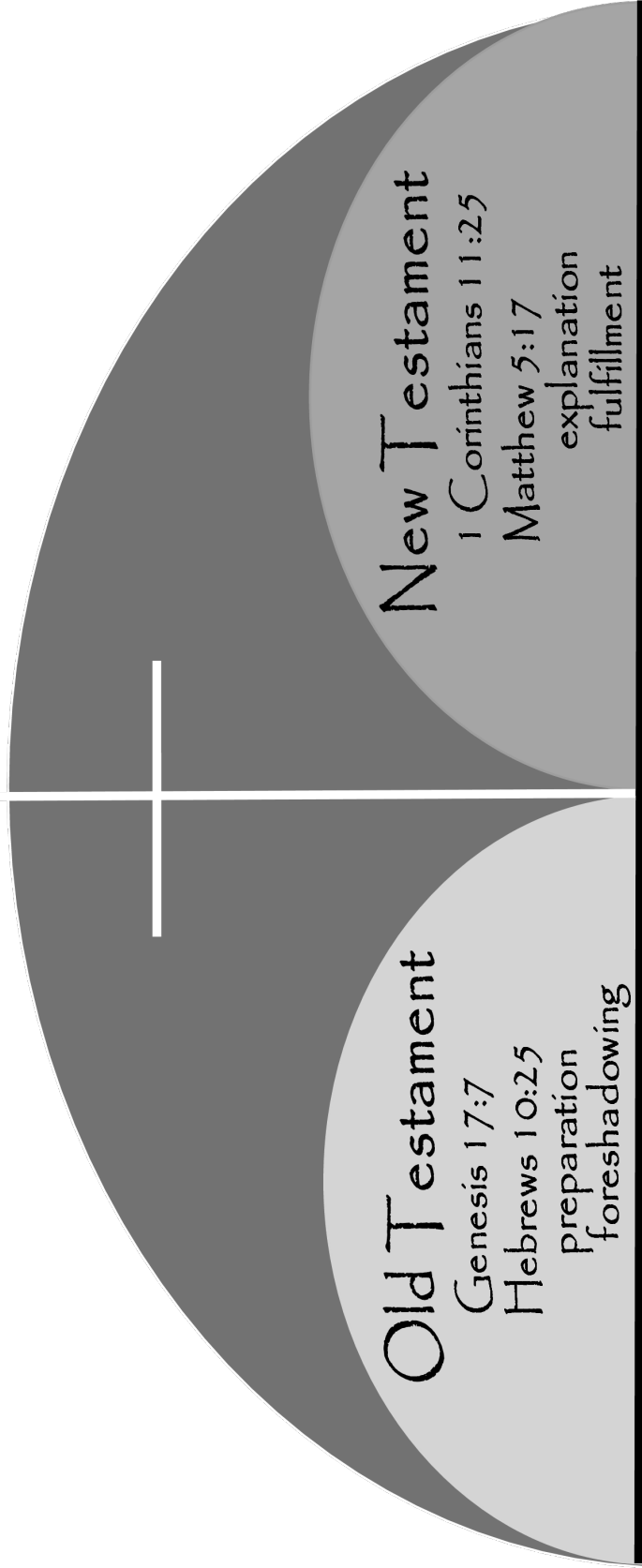
COVENANT OF GRACE

2 Timothy 1:9-10

Titus 1:1-3

Hebrews 13:20-21

Jeremiah 31:31-34



Old Testament

Genesis 17:7

Hebrews 10:25

preparation
foreshadowing

New Testament

1 Corinthians 11:25

Matthew 5:17

explanation
fulfillment

Creation



Looking forward to
Christ

Incarnation

Consummation

Looking both backward and forward to Christ



“The Old Testament is the book of the Christ who is to come, while the New Testament tells us of the Christ who has come.” S. G. De Graaf

Mordecai – God will bring deliverance

A key moment takes place in Esther 4:12-14 - **When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, *relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place*, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?**

Mordecai was absolutely convinced that God would provide deliverance for his people. How did he know? He exhibited faith. The tuning fork of the gospel rang in his soul with the sympathetic vibrations of faith. It resonated within his soul. He believed.

The story of Esther Points us to Jesus

Esther is a story for Christians

Esther is a story of God's grace for all God's people who come to Him in faith.

Galatians 3:7-9 - **Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

This is a Jesus story. It is our story. as is the whole Bible. This is a huge argument by Paul in Romans 4. The children of Abraham are not his physical descendants. His children are his spiritual descendants, the ones who share his faith in God and his Word. The Bible is a story about grace and faith and deliverance due to the faithfulness of our loving God.

Five Festal Garments, Barry Webb - **"In other words the promised fulfillment relationship between the testaments, which is implied by the gospel itself not only makes it legitimate for Christians to read Esther as part of their own story, but actually requires them to do so."**