

Lesson #39

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read the book of Esther
BACKGROUND

Author and Date: Mordecai wrote down the events as they happened; Jewish scribes edited and arranged his writings by topic.
Written in Hebrew in Susa c. 450 BC.
Happened over 10 years, from 483 - 473 BC.

Themes: Doing what is right, no matter the cost; God working thru ordinary events

Purposes: To explain the beginning of a new Jewish holiday, the Feast of Purim.

Pur means *lot*. *Purim* is plural, meaning *lots*. Prov. 16:33 God controlled the results of the Persian priests.
To show God's protection of the Jews even outside the land of Israel.

OUTLINE

Feasts of Xerxes and Vashti 1-2
Feasts of Esther 3-7
Feast of Purim 8-10

HISTORICAL SETTING

500-400's BC

536 **Cyrus** becomes king of Persia.

50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and start building the Temple.
They quit after laying the foundation.

522 **Darius** the Great becomes king in Persia. He builds a palace in Susa (Shushan); develops a postal system.

520-518 **Haggai** and **Zechariah** lead the Jews in Jerusalem in re-building. The temple is finished.

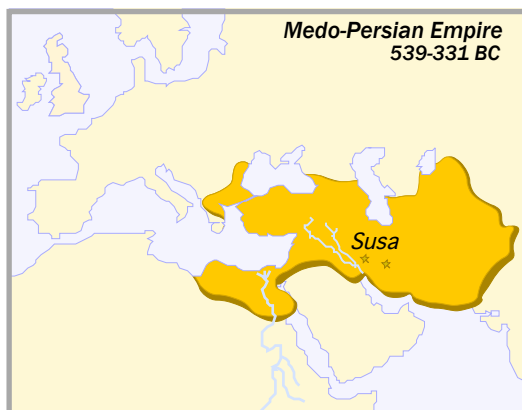
Apart from Zechariah's later prophecies, we know nothing more about life in Jerusalem for some 58 years.

486 **Khshayarsha** becomes king of Persian **Ahasuerus** is his Hebrew name; **Xerxes** is his Greek name.

The book of Esther begins in the 3rd year of his reign, 483 BC.

Bigger View 536-331 BC

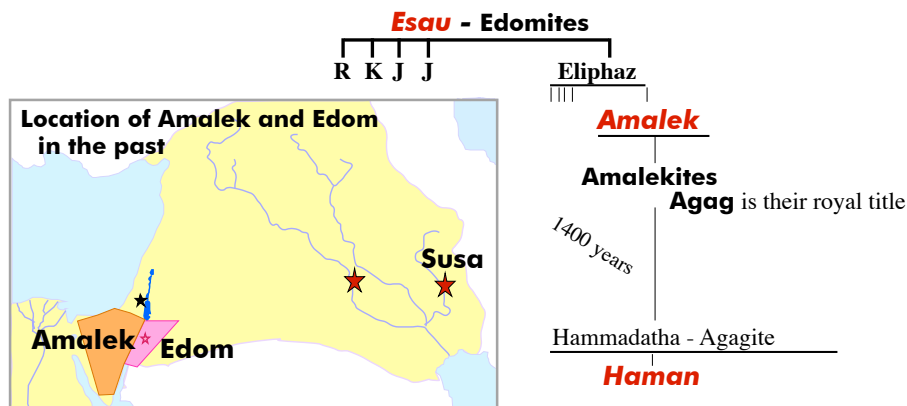
Kings of Persia



Cyrus	536-530 BC
Cambyses II	530-522 BC
Pseudo-Smerdis	522 BC
Darius I, the Great	522-486
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	486-465 BC
Artaxerxes Longimanus I	465-425
Xerxes II	424
Darius II	423-405
Artaxerxes II	405-358 BC
Artaxerxes III	358-338 BC
Arses	338-335 BC
Darius III	335-331 BC

EXPLANATIONS

Ancestry of Haman



EXPLANATIONS *continued*

Chronology of story and history

- 483 BC** Xerxes' banquet after 6 months of military planning; Vashti deposed; plan of how to replace her
- 482 BC** Xerxes puts down unexpected rebellion in Babylonia and prepares for battle with Greece.
- 481 BC** Leads army into Greece; burns Athens.
- 480 BC** Suffers naval defeat at Salamis in September; leaves troops in Greece; returns to Susa; has virgins chosen
- 479 BC** Brings troops home after they suffer another defeat; chooses Esther from the many virgins.

Problem In the original Hebrew, there is no mention of God, prayer, worship, temple or Jerusalem in this book.

God gave the Jews opportunity to return to their land, but the majority did not want to be in the land God gave them. God's people are **openly** disobeying Him, so He cannot **openly** bless them. The book shows God hiding His face, yet He is there to protect them. The story of Esther is all about God.

God may be out of sight; but they are never out of His sight...

He may seem strangely silent, but He remains actively sovereign. (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*)

Anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) If God had not intervened, the Jews would have been totally destroyed.

There would have been no Bible, no Jewish Messiah and no salvation message.

Anti-Semitism did not begin with Haman. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

God told Satan a descendant of Eve would destroy his power (crush the serpent's - Satan's - head Gen. 3:15).

Because of the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Satan believed that descendant would be the Jewish Messiah.

He would come from the Jewish race. So in 3 major events, Satan wanted to use people **to destroy the Jewish race**. If there were no Jews, the Messiah could never be born.

When Jews were in Egypt, he used Pharaoh to kill the Jewish baby boys. Ex. 1:16, 22

During the time of Esther, he uses Haman to plan the destruction of the Jews. Esther 3:13

Antiochus Epiphanes tries to destroy the Jewish race and culture in 168 BC. 1 Maccabees

But Jesus **was** born and Satan believed **Jesus** was the promised Messiah.

So his next goal was to **keep Jesus from making payment for sin on the cross**.

He used Herod to kill all the baby boys in the area of Bethlehem.

28 years later, Satan himself presented 3 difficult temptations for Jesus. If Jesus had given in,

His payment on the cross would have only been for his own sin. But Jesus did not sin.

At first, Jesus' death looked like Satan won. But Jesus' resurrection proved Satan lost and Jesus won

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work 1 Jn. 3:8

Satan has lost two battles against the Messiah - he is now engaged in the final battle,

to **keep Jesus from being King over an earthly kingdom**.

Based on Scripture, Satan has known that Jesus cannot return as King until the Jews as a nation/people repent and ask Him to come. Therefore, if there are no Jews, they cannot make that request, Jesus cannot come and there can be no kingdom. This would mean Satan, as prince of this world, could keep his kingdom.

So the goal of Satan, from the first to the 21st century AD, has been to get rid of the Jews. His most effective way has been to create anti-Semitism (hatred of the Jews).

APPLICATION:

At the moment, Satan is still prince of this world, with limited authority and power.

Anti-Semitism is on the increase, in our country and world-wide. In addition, those of us who support the Jews because we believe what the Bible says, are also under attack. The New Testament tells us things are going to get worse. But as in the days of Esther, God is going to intervene.

Satan is going to lose the final battle, just as he has lost the others.

One day the Jews, as a nation and people, will enjoy a physical kingdom with Jesus as their Messiah King.

We, as the Body of Christ, are going to meet Jesus in the air, to be with Him forever and then share in His Kingdom.

This is why Jesus said, *When you see all the chaos and evil getting worse in the world, when it looks like Satan is winning,*

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid. You believe in God; believe also in Me.

