

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

AUTHOR: It doesn't explicitly say & we can't be certain but tradition links MORDECAI to the book.

- Josephus tells us that Mordecai was the writer
- Other possible candidate: Nehemiah (see below) or Ezra (Augustine suggested him)
 - He served Artaxerxes (465-424), the successor of Xerxes (486-464)
 - He could've known of the events in Esther (especially Purim) either through living them or hearing about them by his parents
 - Nehemiah would've had access to the royal archives and been an educated man

BACKGROUND: Esther's family would have been one of the many Israelite families NOT to return to Israel choosing instead to remain in Persia. In the city of Susa. The 1st group of Jews returns ~536 BC.

- The Persian empire was expansive – from Europe's Balkan peninsula to India.

DATE OF WRITING: I'd say mid to late 5th C (~464-415) (took place in the time of King Xerxes before that)

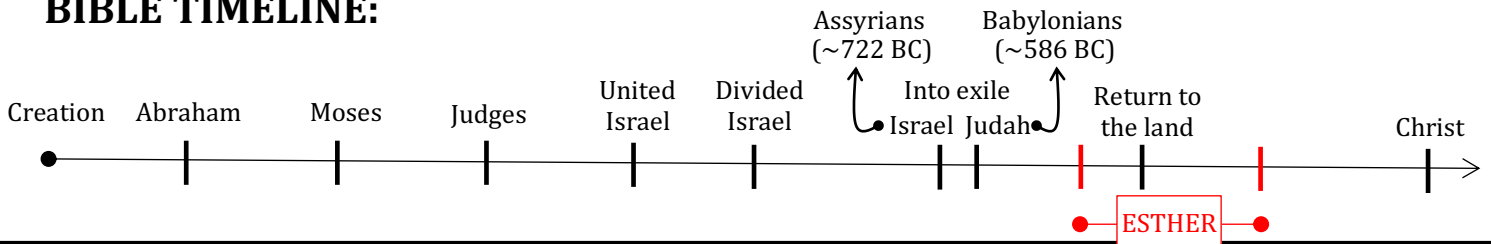
PURPOSE OF WRITING: Historical account of God's preservation of His people even as they are in a distant land (God's providence extends beyond all boundary and circumstance.) Which leads to the themes...

Providence (God's) - The foreseeing and guardianship of God over His creatures...a manifestation of His divine care or direction.

MAJOR THEMES FOR US TO KEEP BEFORE US:

- 1.) God's deliverance (in hardship).
- 2.) Man's courage/obedience in the face of intense trial
- 3.) How to respond in scary, difficult & uncertain times.
- 4.) The providence of God!

BIBLE TIMELINE:



Middle East Power Player	
Assyrians (967-664)	Nebuchadnezzar Babylonians (625-539)
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Medes/Persians (550-330)	Alexander the Great Greeks (334-308)
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Romans (330-)	

** During the book of Esther, the Medes/Persians were the world power of the day...

Persian Kings:

- Cyrus II "the Great" =====>
- Cambyses II =====>
- Darius I =====>
- Xerxes I =====>
- Artaxerxes I =====>
- Xerxes II =====>
- Darius II =====>
- Artaxerxes II =====>
- Artaxerxes III =====>
- Arges =====>
- Darius III =====>

Reign(ish):

- 550-529 =====>
- 529-522 =====>
- 522-486 =====>
- 486-465 =====>
- 465-425 =====>
- 425-424 =====>
- 424-404 =====>
- 404-359 =====>
- 359-338 =====>
- 338-336 =====>
- 336-330 =====>

Important biblical event:

- Jews to return & rebuild temple (Ezra 1-4:5; 2 Chron. 36:22-23)
- Temple finished (Ezra 6:15)
- Book of Esther
- Ezra's reform in Jerusalem (Ezra 7-10; Neh. 8-9)
- Jerusalem city walls (Neh. 1-7)
- Nehemiah's reform in Jerusalem (Neh. 13)

** Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 536(ish)

MORE INFORMATION on the Persian Dynasty:

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/persian-empire>

- The Persian Empire “started as a collection of semi-nomadic tribes who raised sheep, goats, and cattle on the Iranian plateau.
- Cyrus the Great was a leader of one of these tribes and he “began to defeat nearby kingdoms, including Media, Lydia, and Babylon, joining them under one rule.”
- The Persian empire also became known as the Achaemenid Empire, founded in 550 BC and became the world’s first superpower (see maps page)
- “Darius the Great, the 4th king of the Achaemenid Empire, ruled the Persian Empire when it was at its largest, stretching from the Caucasus and West Asia to what was then Macedonia, the Black Sea, Central Asia and even into Africa including parts of Libya and Egypt.
- Though the Persian kings practiced a religion known as Zoroastrianism, they did not force that on the groups of people they assimilated. Starting under Cyrus the Great and followed by the kings that followed, they allowed “Persia’s diverse citizenry to continue practicing their own ways of life.”
- “The Persian Empire entered a period of decline after a failed invasion of Greece by Xerxes I in 480 BC. The costly defense of Persia’s lands depleted the empire’s funds, leading to heavier taxation among Persia’s subjects. The Achaemenid dynasty finally fell to the invading armies of Alexander the Great of Macedon in 330 B.C. Subsequent rulers sought to restore the Persian Empire to its Achaemenian boundaries, though the empire never quite regained the enormous size it had achieved under Cyrus the Great.”