

Esther

Haman, who is Xerxes chief advisor, devises an evil plot to bring about Israel's extinction, and Esther must face the emperor to intercede for God's people in this exciting book.

Author: Nobody is sure, but my guess....Mordecai her cousin/uncle.

In Esther – Jesus is our Protector

Esther 4:14

"Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"



Persian Empire during Esther's Lifetime



TEACHER: 10 CHAPTERS

This book is probably one of the last books written in the Old Testament, if not the last. I will review the timeline that brought us to this point.

1. Genesis starts with creation and the Garden of Eden. The fall of man.
2. The collapse of society and the flood.
3. Noah and the Ark. Noah and his family begin to repopulate the Earth.
4. The population spreads as a result of the Tower of Babel.
5. God calls Abraham out of his homeland and establishes a covenant.
6. His Grandson ends up in Egypt, and under him, Israel grows into a nation over a period of 400 years.
7. Israel leaves Egypt and 40 years later enters the Promised Land.
8. 300 years of Judges. 500 years of Kings. 70 years of exile.
9. Israel returns to the Promised Land.
10. 10 plus years later, some people are still in Persia after many return to Israel to restore Temple life.
11. Israel is in restoration, and Esther is still back in Persia, that is where we are in today's bible Study.

CH. 1

STUDENT:

This is what happened during the time of King Xerxes, the king who ruled the one hundred twenty-seven states from India to Cush. ² In those days King Xerxes ruled from his capital city of Susa. ³ In the third year of his rule, he gave a banquet for all his important men and royal officers. The army leaders from the countries of Persia and Media and the important men from all Xerxes' empire were there. (NCV)

This is a relief of Artaxerxes
the King of Persia made during his life.



This is a relief of Xerxes sitting on his throne,
with crown prince Artaxerxes standing behind him.



TEACHER:

This party would continue for 180 days. After the Party was over he held another party for all his staff who had worked for the 180 days. From the greatest to the least. He had commanded that nobody be limited, they could all drink as much wine as they desired, for 7 straight days and nights. Open bar. While this was happening, Queen Vashti held a similar party for all the women who had attended to the Kings court.

STUDENT:

¹⁰ On the seventh day of the banquet, King Xerxes was very happy, because he had been drinking much wine....

¹¹ He commanded them to bring him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown. She was to come to show her beauty to the people and important men, because she was very beautiful. ¹² The eunuchs told Queen Vashti about the king's command, but she refused to come. Then the king became very angry; his anger was like a burning fire. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The custom of the time in Persia, was that the king should ask from his advisers what should be done and then make a decision. An important note here is that when the king of Persia made a law, he also was bound to obey that law, and the law could not be un-done, even by the king who wrote it.

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STUDENT:

¹⁵ The king asked them, "What does the law say must be done to Queen Vashti? She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes, which the eunuchs took to her."... ¹⁶ Then Memucan said to the king and the other important men, "Queen Vashti has not done wrong to the king alone. She has also done wrong to all the important men and all the people in all the empire of King Xerxes. ¹⁷ All the wives of the important men of Persia and Media will hear about the queen's actions. Then they will no longer honor their husbands. They will say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought to him, but she refused to come.' ¹⁸ Today the wives of the important men of Persia and Media have heard about the queen's actions. So they will speak in the same way to their husbands, and there will be no end to disrespect and anger. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The sentence was stern. She was to be banished from the king's presence, and court, for life. She would relinquish the crown, and another would take her place. Letters were sent across the kingdom.

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STUDENT:

²¹ The king and his important men were happy with this advice, so King Xerxes did as Memucan suggested. ²² He sent letters to all the states of the kingdom in the writing of each state and in the language of each group of people. These letters announced that each man was to be the ruler of his own family. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

As time passed the king grew lonely, and a queen was necessary to complete the throne room.

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STUDENT:

Later, when King Xerxes was not so angry, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and his order about her. ² Then the king's personal servants suggested, "Let a search be made for beautiful young girls for the king. ³ Let the king choose supervisors in every state of his kingdom to bring every beautiful young girl to the palace at Susa. They should be taken to the women's quarters and put under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women. And let beauty treatments be given to them. ⁴ Then let the girl who most pleases the king become queen in place of Vashti." The king liked this idea, so he did as they said. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

70 years earlier a child named Mordecai was taken into the captivity by Nebuchadnezzar as he was among the palace personnel. He was in the company of Jehoiachin King of Judah. He later had adopted his cousin Hadassah as his daughter when her parents died. She was also called Esther. She was among those chosen because of her beautiful face and pretty figure. The Eunuch in charge favored her greatly and gave her special treatment.

STUDENT:

CH. 2

¹⁰ Esther did not tell anyone about her family or who her people were, because Mordecai had told her not to. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai walked back and forth near the courtyard where the king's women lived to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

¹² Before a girl could take her turn with King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments that were ordered for the women. For six months she was treated with oil and myrrh and for six months with perfumes and cosmetics. ¹³ Then she was ready to go to the king. Anything she asked for was given to her to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. ¹⁴ In the evening she would go to the king's palace, and in the morning she would return to another part of the women's quarters.... The girl would not go back to the king again unless he was pleased with her and asked for her by name. (NCV)

TEACHER:

The girls not chosen were made servant girls for the palace. Esther's number is called.

STUDENT:

¹⁵ The time came for Esther, daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle, who had been adopted by Mordecai, to go to the king.... ¹⁷ And the king was pleased with Esther more than with any of the other virgins. He liked her more than any of the others, so he put a royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king gave a great banquet for Esther and invited all his important men and royal officers. He announced a holiday for all the empire and had the government give away gifts. (NCV)

TEACHER:

After the dust settles Mordecai continues to counsel Esther. One day as he was sitting by the king's gate, he overhears 2 eunuchs plotting to kill Xerxes, and told Queen Esther. She in turn reports to the king.

STUDENT:

²³ When the report was investigated, it was found to be true, and the two officers who had planned to kill the king were hanged. All this was written down in the daily court record in the king's presence. (NCV)

TEACHER:

In chapter 3 the plot thickens as Xerxes feeds the wrong ego.

STUDENT:

After these things happened, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite. He gave him a new rank that was higher than all the important men. ² All the royal officers at the king's gate would bow down and kneel before Haman, as the king had ordered. But Mordecai would not bow down or show him honor. (NCV)

TEACHER:

Mordecai was asked about his behavior and said as a Jew, he could only bow before God.

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STUDENT:

⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down to him or honor him, he became very angry. ⁶ He thought of himself as too important to try to kill only Mordecai. He had been told who the people of Mordecai were, so he looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, in all of Xerxes' kingdom. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

What would you have done? When is civil disobedience the proper response? Daniel went through the same thing with Nebuchadnezzar as did Shadrach Meshach and Abednego. Peter and the Disciples in the New Testament also faced this same situation. When is it ok to rebel against civil power, given the biblical commands to submit to rightly ordained delegated authority? We as Christians must discern between a law that allows evil, and a law that demands evil. Through all dispensations this rule applies.

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STUDENT:

⁸ Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain group of people scattered among the other people in all the states of your kingdom. Their customs are different from those of all the other people, and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not right for you to allow them to continue living in your kingdom. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let an order be given to destroy those people. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The date the decree was sent out was the 1st day of Passover on the 14th day of the 1st month as prescribed in Leviticus. This as you know would also be near the crucifixion date for our Lord. Haman is named in the biblical record as Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite. You might recall that Agag was the king of the evil Amalekite's, which included the giants like Goliath. They were a large and physically powerful race of people. They are the mortal enemies of the Jewish race. Xerxes gives Haman the authority to enforce his desire on the Jewish people.

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STUDENT:

¹² On the thirteenth day of the first month, the royal secretaries were called, and they wrote out all of Haman's orders.....

The orders were written in the writing of each state and in the language of each people. They were written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with his signet ring. ¹³ Letters were sent by messengers to all the king's empire ordering them to destroy, kill, and completely wipe out all the Jewish people. That meant young and old, women and little children, too. It was to happen on a single day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which was Adar. And they could take everything the Jewish people owned. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The letters went out, and Haman and the king had a drink. But the Bible indicates Susa (the capital city of Persia) was in confusion. The worldwide response was mourning, sadness, fasting and prayer. Esther didn't know about any of this, but she heard that Mordecai was in mourning and sackcloth, and sent a messenger to find out why. Mordecai sent a message back to Esther explaining what was happening and told her to go before the king and plead the case for the Jewish people. This was a dangerous proposition.

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CH. 4

STUDENT: *Esther to Mordecai*

¹⁰ Then Esther told Hathach to tell Mordecai, ¹¹ “All the royal officers and people of the royal states know that no man or woman may go to the king in the inner courtyard without being called. There is only one law about this: Anyone who enters must be put to death unless the king holds out his gold scepter. Then that person may live. And I have not been called to go to the king for thirty days.” (NCV)

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STUDENT: *Mordecai to Esther*

¹³ Then Mordecai sent back word to Esther: “Just because you live in the king’s palace, don’t think that out of all the Jewish people you alone will escape. ¹⁴ If you keep quiet at this time, someone else will help and save the Jewish people, but you and your father’s family will all die. And who knows, you may have been chosen queen for just such a time as this.” (NCV)

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STUDENT: *Esther to Mordecai*

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this answer to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Go and get all the Jewish people in Susa together. For my sake, fast; do not eat or drink for three days, night and day. I and my servant girls will also fast. Then I will go to the king, even though it is against the law, and if I die, I die.”

¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did everything Esther had told him to do. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Esther fasts and prays for 3 days and 3 nights. The Jewish people do the same. 3 days and 3 nights. Then she goes before the king.

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CH. 5

STUDENT:

On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner courtyard of the king’s palace, facing the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the doorway. ² When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, he was pleased. He held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand, so Esther went forward and touched the end of it.

³ The king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want to ask me? I will give you as much as half of my kingdom.”

⁴ Esther answered, “My king, if it pleases you, come today with Haman to a banquet that I have prepared for you.”

⁵ Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly so we may do what Esther asks.” (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The king enjoys the feast greatly, and is pleased with the banquet. The king asks her what she wants from him. “Ask anything to ½ of my kingdom.”

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STUDENT:

⁷ Esther answered, “This is what I want and what I ask for. ⁸ My king, if you are pleased with me and if it pleases you, give me what I ask for and do what I want. Come with Haman tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for you. Then I will answer your question about what I want.” (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Haman left the palace full of himself, very happy to be entertained privately in the royal dining room. He went home bragging to all who would listen about his fame and wealth, but was still furious that Mordecai would not show him the respect he felt he deserved. His wife and friends told him to build a gallows 75 feet tall and have Mordecai hung on it. He loved the idea, and ordered it built. That night the king couldn't sleep so he asked that the court record be read to him. Not a bad idea. That would put me to sleep as well.

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CH. 6

STUDENT:

² It was found recorded that Mordecai had warned the king about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway and who had planned to kill the king.

³ The king asked, "What honor and reward have been given to Mordecai for this?"

The king's personal servants answered, "Nothing has been done for Mordecai." (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Haman was in the courtyard preparing the gallows being erected for Mordecai, and the king calls for him.

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STUDENT:

⁶ So Haman came in. And the king asked him, "What should be done for a man whom the king wants very much to honor?"

And Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king want to honor more than me?" ⁷ So he answered the king, "This is what you could do for the man you want very much to honor. ⁸ Have the servants bring a royal robe that the king himself has worn. And also bring a horse with a royal crown on its head, a horse that the king himself has ridden. ⁹ Let the robe and the horse be given to one of the king's most important men. Let the servants put the robe on the man the king wants to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the city streets. As they are leading him, let them announce: 'This is what is done for the man whom the king wants to honor!'" (NCV)

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TEACHER:

"Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction." The king then orders Haman to perform the suggestion he just made to Mordecai! After he performs what the king commands, he returns home deeply embarrassed, and ashamed. His own wife told him "Since he is a Jew, you can't win, you will be ruined." As his friends and wife consoled him he was called to the 2nd banquet with the king and Esther. The king asks Esther again after the banquet what she would like from him.

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CH. 7

STUDENT:

Then Queen Esther answered, "My king, if you are pleased with me, and if it pleases you, let me live. This is what I ask. And let my people live, too. This is what I want. ⁴ My people and I have been sold to be destroyed, to be killed and completely wiped out. If we had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because that would not be enough of a problem to bother the king."

⁵ Then King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he? Who has done such a thing?"

⁶ Esther said, "Our enemy and foe is this wicked Haman!" (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The king is furious with Haman and storms out. Haman falls at Esther's feet, and pleads for his life. The king goes back to the room where they ate the banquet and sees Haman at Esther's feet, and screams "will he attack the Queen while I'm in the house?"

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STUDENT

As soon as the king said that, servants came in and covered Haman's face. ⁹ Harbona, one of the eunuchs there serving the king, said, "Look, a seventy-five foot platform stands near Haman's house. This is the one Haman had prepared for Mordecai, who gave the warning that saved the king."

The king said, "Hang Haman on it!" ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the platform he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king was not so angry anymore. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The king gives everything Haman owned to Esther, and gave Haman's position in the kingdom to Mordecai. Esther then puts Mordecai in charge of everything Haman had. But the law was still set to go into effect, as the king's law had to be obeyed, even by the king. Esther goes back before the king.

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STUDENT:

CH. 8

Once again Esther spoke to the king. She fell at the king's feet and cried and begged him to stop the evil plan that Haman the Agagite had planned against the Jews. ⁴ The king held out the gold scepter to Esther. So Esther got up and stood in front of him.

⁵ She said, "My king, if you are pleased with me, and if it pleases you to do this, if you think it is the right thing to do, and if you are happy with me, let an order be written to cancel the letters Haman wrote. Haman the Agagite sent messages to destroy all the Jewish people in all of your kingdom. ⁶ I could not stand to see that terrible thing happen to my people. I could not stand to see my family killed." (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The king orders Mordecai, to write a new law and use his ring as the seal, so it couldn't be cancelled. Mordecai was given carte blanche to write whatever he wanted to allow the Jews to defend themselves.

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STUDENT:

These were the king's orders: The Jewish people in every city have the right to gather together to protect themselves. They may destroy, kill, and completely wipe out the army of any state or people who attack them. And they are to do the same to the women and children of that army. They may also take by force the property of their enemies. ¹² The one day set for the Jewish people to do this in all the empire of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. ¹³ A copy of the king's order was to be sent out as a law in every state. It was to be made known to the people of every nation living in the kingdom so the Jewish people would be ready on that set day to strike back at their enemies. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

Mordecai had the king's messengers ride out through the whole kingdom to spread the edict.

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STUDENT:

Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal clothes of blue and white and a large gold crown. He also had a purple robe made of the best linen. And the people of Susa shouted for joy. ¹⁶ It was a time of happiness, joy, gladness, and honor for the Jewish people. ¹⁷ As the king's order went to every state and city, there was joy and gladness among the Jewish people. In every state and city to which the king's order went, they were having feasts and celebrating. And many people through all the empire became Jews, because they were afraid of the Jewish people. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

The day meant for great evil to the Jews still in the diaspora ended in great victory. Mordecai was greatly feared throughout Persia, and the Jews were victorious over all the people that hated them. 500 people who were enemies of the Jews in the palace were killed but Esther was not done quite yet. The king tells Esther.

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CH. 9

STUDENT:

¹³ Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, give the Jewish people who are in Susa permission to do again tomorrow what the king ordered for today. And let the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hanged on the platform." ¹⁴ So the king ordered that it be done. A law was given in Susa, and the bodies of the ten sons of Haman were hanged. (NCV)

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TEACHER:

After 2 days of "house cleaning" the Jews rested on the 3rd day. That day is still celebrated in Jewish households as the Feast of Purim. Chapter 10 closes the Book of Esther.

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CH. 10

STUDENT:

King Xerxes demanded taxes everywhere, even from the cities on the seacoast. ² And all the great things Xerxes did by his power and strength are written in the record books of the kings of Media and Persia. Also written in those record books are all the things done by Mordecai, whom the king made great. ³ Mordecai the Jew was second in importance to King Xerxes, and he was the most important man among the Jewish people. His fellow Jews respected him very much, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the safety of all the Jewish people. (NCV)

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NEXT LESSON JOB

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"....the right to assemble and protect...."

Esther 8:11

Women in the Bible

Z X P L R H H B J A X Q N S A K H N J B
K F U R C Y L A N N A O J K A W R S I R
M H B F T T E N U N W K E O R C E A W Z
N L E N E L A D G A M Y R A M A L H H C
A Z E F Q S O N H T Z M B I L L D B Y X
C N P H U R T T G H I E U N I C E K R F
E L N S C F R H T E P J M C H P L A W R
F E K A C A C K E P P G S A H P B B H P
R Z S D M N R Y E R O I N J E T J Q U B
B X C X P O J N L O R N O U S B I P A S
S R F C D H W D I P A C Z N L A S B J C
F N B Z X A O N S H H S E I C M L D Q X
Y U Z Z D H R E A E A V D A E P Y N M J
V K C N H T U R B T B R G T C O D A Z S
E N Q M Y I O E E E I K P V M G I O Y F
C M N E R B D B T S Q R R D N R A M E Z
L D E V E A B E H S H T A B I G A I L V
N P Q D T T V K U Z G Z Q M V T V O H J
U T O S O I O A C L A U D I A D I L K I
Y Y P A G U R H C L K N S J M S C E W Y

ABIGAIL
ANNATHEPROPHETESS
BATHSHEBA
CLAUDIA
DEBORAH
DORCAS
ELISABETH
ESTHER
EUNICE
EVE
HANNAH

JAEL
JOANNA
JOCHEBED
JUNIA
LEAH
LOIS
LYDIA
MARTHA
MARY
MARYMAGDALENE
MIRIAM

NAOMI
PHOEBE
PRISCILLA
RACHEL
RAHAB
REBEKAH
RUTH
SAMARITANWOMAN
SUSANNA
TABITHA
ZIPPORAH

THE IDENTITIES OF
THE ABOVE WOMEN IN
THE BIBLE

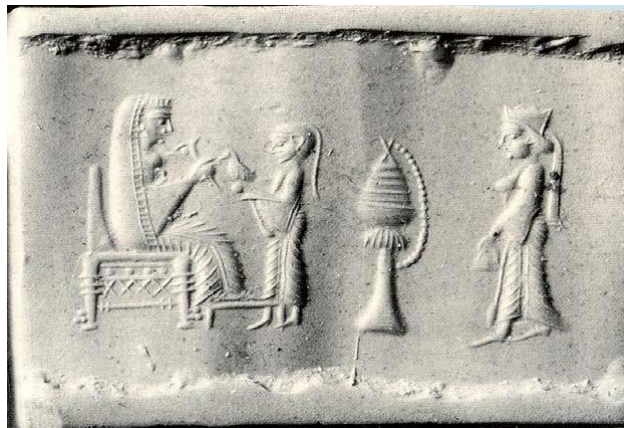
ABIGAIL	Wife of wicked Nabal, became David's wife.	1 Sam. 25
ANNA THE PROPHETESS	Aged Jewess who prophesied about Jesus.	Luke 2
BATHSHEBA	David's wife, mother of Solomon.	2 Sam. 11
CLAUDIA	Friend of Paul's	2 Tim. 4
DEBORAH	Prophetess/Judge	Judges 4-5
DORCAS	Also called Tabitha, Pauls friend	Acts 9
ELISABETH	Mother of John the Baptist	Luke 1
ESTHER	Queen of Persia	Esther
EUNICE	Mother of Timothy	2 Tim. 1
EVE	Adam's wife	Genesis 1-3
HANNAH	Mother of Samuel	1 Sam 1
Jael	Heroine who killed Sisera	Judges 4
JOANNA	Prepared Jesus body for burial	Luke 8
JOCHEBED	Mother of Moses Aaron and Miriam	Exodus 1
JUNIA	Regarded highly by Paul	Romans 16
LEAH	1 st wife of Jacob	Gen. 29
LOIS	Grandmother of Timothy	2 Tim 1
LYDIA	1 st person converted after the resurrection	Acts 16
MARTHA	Sister of Mary and Lazarus daughter	Luke 10
MARY	Mother of Jesus	Mat. 1
MARY MAGDALENE	Disciple of Christ	Mat. 27
MIRIAM	Moses Sister	Exodus 2
NAOMI	Mother-in-law to Ruth	Ruth 1
PHOEBE	Deaconess in Cenchrea	Romans 16
PRISCILLA	Missionary with Paul	Acts 18
RACHEL	Wife of Jacob	Gen. 29
RAHAB	Heroine of Jericho, helped spies escape	Joshua 2
REBEKAH	Wife of Isaac, mother of Jacob and Esau	Gen. 21
RUTH	Grandmother to King David	Ruth 1
SAMARITAN WOMAN	Woman at the well who met Jesus	John 4
SUSANNA	Follower of Jesus	Luke 8
TABITHA	Helped poor from Joppa	Acts 9
ZIPPORAH	Moses wife	Exodus 2



Queen Esther (H 3.2 cm) in front of Atossa (Darius' wife and Xerxes' mother) seated on a throne (likely when she married Xerxes in 489 BCE). Musée du Louvre (AO 22359).



Seal with Biblical Queen Esther



The first historical study of this unique seal To the right was only carried out in 2008 (Vasseghi: 2008, 11-15). The seal depicts a seated woman wearing a crown like a torque and a long veil. She is wearing jewellery and her feet are resting on a stool. A young girl with braided hair and traditional Persian dress is facing her. The woman holds a lotus flower and the young girl is giving the woman a bird. Behind the young girl is an incense burner. Another woman with a four-spike crown and a veil stands on the other side of the burner. She is wearing traditional Persian dress and is holding something that is difficult to identify. The seated woman is a mother-queen shown with other members of the royal family. The incense burner shows that women may have had religious duties and perhaps as a royal audience, the seated woman is being approached for a favour. The lotus was a sacred flower symbolic of nobility, fertility, peace, and prosperity. Persian mythology has famous birds, which usually represent good omens. The woman with the crown has her feet on a stool and there is clearly a form of gift exchange between the woman and the young girl. This image depicts women in a position of power and high status with the ability to grant wishes or address concerns. How can one to identify these two queens who lived around 500 BCE? Two simple clues enable one to answer that question: 1) the four-spike crown worn by the young queen is identical to the statue of Queen Amestris; 2) the only two Persian queens known by historians are Amestris and Atossa (550?-475?) who both lived in the time of Xerxes (496-475). The shape of the crown gives an additional clue because Persian kings usually wore a cylindrical crown for their royal audiences (left below), but when they came to power or made a heroic action (Curtis/ Tallis:2005, 92-99), such as the capture of a lion (right below), they wore a serrated crown for the occasion.



