

PRECEPT
UPON
PRECEPT

Esther

A MAN AND
A WOMAN FOR
SUCH A TIME
AS THIS

ESTHER
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PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT

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HELPFUL STUDY TOOLS

ARTHUR, KAY; ARTHUR, DAVID; DE LACY, PETE

The New How to Study Your Bible

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2010

Hebrew Word Study Tools

(The following is a list of helpful Hebrew Word Study Tools:)

HARRIS, R. LAIRD; ARCHER, GLEASON L. JR.; WALTKE, BRUCE K.

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1980

RICHARDS, LAWRENCE O.

Expository Dictionary of Bible Words

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

GAEBELEIN, FRANK E.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4, 1, 2 Kings, 1, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, Esther, Job

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1992

WALVOORD, JOHN F., ZUCK, ROY B., AND DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures

Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983-c1985

CARSON, D. A.

The New Bible Commentary

Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994

KEIL, C. F., DELITZSCH, F.

Commentary on the Old Testament

Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

Logos Bible Software

Powerful search engines and up to 4,000 electronic Bible study resources (commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries etc.) make it fast and easy to do simple and complex searches of multiple sources, then pull materials together for orderly presentation—excellent for word and topical studies based on English or original Hebrew and Greek. Available at www.logos.com.

LESSON ONE

Chapters One and Two

THIS LESSON INCORPORATES The following located in the Appendix:
Observation Worksheets of Esther 1–2
“The Main Characters in the Book of Esther”
“Banquets in the Book of Esther”
“Esther at a Glance”
“The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther”
Cross-references

If you want a good story, you’ll find it in the book of Esther.

It’s a book you don’t want to put down—especially if you are reading it for the first time. Because it is short and fast-moving, you’re eager to see how it all turns out. You are eager to know:

What will happen to the hero and heroine?

The people?

The villain?

Will the king be deceived—a pawn of those who serve him?

Who will live? Who will die?

While Esther has all the ingredients for a good story, what makes it even more fascinating is that it is a book of the Bible, which means it is a book “breathed” by God—inspired, recorded, and preserved for eternity. A divine work ordained by the One and Only True God.

And because of that, Esther has a purpose beyond being simply a fascinating story in a quick read. God has a reason for including this book among the sixty-six that comprise the Bible. According to the book of Romans, the book of Esther, like the other portions of the Old Testament, was written for your instruction—so that you might have encouragement and hope for your life (Romans 15:4).

It is for this reason that we are going to ask you to restrain yourself and move with us through this book chapter by chapter, letting its story unfold over these

next four weeks. We are going to ask you not to read ahead or read commentaries until we tell you to; Esther didn't happen in a day—so let's read and study it a segment at a time.

We long to have you discover the truths of Esther for yourself, to have a divine encounter with God Himself, to give Him the opportunity to be your primary and principal teacher. If you'll do this, you'll never forget His message and His purpose for including Esther in His book.

We're confident God will use the message and story of the book of Esther to prepare you for the days ahead—days that are leading us rapidly to the end of the ages.

DAY ONE

1. When you study God's words, you want divine insight, nothing veiled. So begin with prayer, talking with the Author and seeking His purpose for including Esther in the Bible. As you pray, you might want to remind God of His promise to lead you and guide you into all truth. You might also ask Him to keep you on track so that you see and understand what He wants you to know. Be careful that you don't bring any presuppositions into your study that would keep you from handling God's Word accurately. Remember, we are not to add to His words; He tells us everything we need to know, and if He doesn't tell us, we don't need to know it!
2. When you study a book of the Bible, it is important to identify the type of literature you are reading as it helps you determine how to interpret it correctly. In the Appendix of this workbook, you will find a printout of the whole book of Esther. Read the first chapter of Esther. When you finish, think about the type of literature you just read. Does it sound like history, poetry, wisdom literature, or prophecy?
3. As you read a historical narrative—an account of what happens in time and place to people, you want to begin by getting the facts. Like any good journalist, you need to ask the **5 Ws** and **H**: **who, what, when, where, why**, and **how**. Of the 5—the two easiest to see in a historical account are the **who** and the **what**: people and events.

So let's begin there. Read chapter 1 again and list your observations on the chart that follows.

- a. **Who** are the main characters of Esther chapter 1?
- b. **What** is happening? In other words, what is the main event—or main events?

Who What is happening Where When

4. Now does the narrative tell you *where* chapter 1 is happening? If so, double underline the place on your Observation Worksheet in green. Then write it under the heading **Where** as you did with the **who** and the **what**. This will help you put the book in its geographical context. There is a map in the Appendix. Locate the place on the map. Also, note the extent of King Ahasuerus’s kingdom.
5. Now, one last thing for today. Is there any reference that tells us when the event(s) is taking place? Any reference to time? If so, put a green circle around all time references and then note the time on the chart above under **When**.

That’s a good start! The story has begun . . . and lest you think, “And what does an event that happened millenniums ago mean to me, besides maybe being a little entertaining?” why don’t you ask God to show you?

We guarantee He will—in His time! Be patient.

DAY TWO

Have you ever read the Bible and then within the same day forgotten what you read? If so, that can change. Yesterday you began to learn the technique of asking 5 W and H questions in order to discover truth for yourself. The second technique is marking certain words in the text. These two techniques work together to slow you down as you read and help you see clearly what the author is saying.

If you are new to Precept but have met others who are not, undoubtedly you’ll hear or have heard the difference marking the text makes as you study; so please jump into the water of God’s Word in good old cannonball style.

And for those of you who are Precept veterans, take the opportunity to help new students in your class see how these techniques work and how they unlock the meaning of the text. It will sharpen your discipleship skills.

1. Read Esther 1 again and color-code the main characters:
 - a. Ahasuerus
 - b. Vashti

By color-coding, we simply mean choose a color for each one and then mark every reference to that person in the color of your choice. As you do, also color all related pronouns and synonyms.

Remember a **synonym** is a word that means the same as another, such as *king* for Ahasuerus and *queen* for Vashti. **Pronouns** are words like *I, me, my, he, she, you*, etc. You remember, don't you? Pronouns are stand-ins for the person.

2. Now what is the purpose of identifying and marking people? It's to help you see where they are mentioned and what God wants you to know about them. Therefore, after you mark you make a list! On "The Main Characters in the Book of Esther," in the Appendix, list in brief what you learn about Ahasuerus and Vashti. Leave space to add to your lists as you study each chapter.

There are lessons to be learned from observing the lives of others—things to imitate and sometimes things to avoid, so look for these and think about them. These are real people, not fictional characters created by man's imaginations.

3. Usually when you reread the text and make your lists about people, you discover words or phrases that are repeated. They are repeated because they are important. Remember, in biblical times people didn't have their own copies of the Word of God; therefore, the Word was read to them. When they heard something over and over, it helped them get the point—and remember it.

Did you notice the word *banquet* being repeated several times?

- a. Read through Esther chapter 1, and in your own distinctive way or color, mark all the references to *banquet*.
 - b. When you finish, list the various banquets on the page in the Appendix titled, "Banquets in the Book of Esther." As you do, note who gives the banquet, who attends, how long it lasts, and basically what happens at each. Be brief in what you record. Just the facts. You don't need to rewrite the text.
4. Now let's pause and think about what you have seen *for yourself* these past two days. You have discovered the **who** (the king and the queen) and the details about them including **how** the king reacts to the queen's refusal, the **what** (banquets), the **when** these things are taking place and the **where**. And you have marked each one. This is a great beginning.

On your Observation Worksheet you probably noticed that some of the verse numbers are bolded. This indicates where a new paragraph begins.

A **paragraph** consists usually of one or more sentences that are connected by a common thought or subject. When studying a book of the Bible, it is very helpful to summarize the main thought, event, or teaching of each paragraph. This is called the *theme* of the paragraph. So let's do that now.

Read through your Observation Worksheet again. As you do, write in the left margin the main theme of each paragraph. You may, of course, also write it below.

- a. 1:1-4
 - b. 1:5-9
 - c. 1:10-12
 - d. 1:13-20
 - e. 1:21-22
5. Now you have the themes of the paragraphs, so what is the theme, the main subject or event, covered in Esther chapter 1? If you wanted to remember what this chapter is all about, how would you title it?
- a. Write it out in as few words as possible. If you can, it is always best to use words from the text as it will help you better remember the content of the chapter. For example: you could title it “A King and Queen Throw 3 Celebrations” or “Ahasuerus Gives a Banquet, Queen Vashti Refuses to Come.” While the first title is true, the latter uses terms from the text (*banquet* rather than *celebration*) and is more specific, noting the names of the key people and the problem at the second banquet.
 - b. You will find an “Esther at a Glance” chart in the Appendix of this book. Record a theme for Esther 1 on the chart.

Summarizing each chapter of a book as you study is great tool for helping you remember what the chapter is about. If you have a New Inductive Study Bible (NISB) you'll find an At a Glance chart at the end of each book of the Bible. You might want to record the themes of Esther there. We suggest you use a pencil to begin with in case you want to change or refine a theme.


DAY THREE

1. As we begin observing Esther chapter 2 today, once again you'll want to talk to the Author. Ask Him to help you handle His Word accurately as 2 Timothy 2:15 says—not adding to it or taking away from it, but simply hanging on His every word and treating it in accordance with Whose it is!
2. Read through your Observation Worksheet of Esther 2. As you do, note the main characters in this chapter. Jot down their names below.

3. Add pertinent information to “Banquets in the Book of Esther.”
4. Now that you have an overview of this chapter, let’s prepare to observe the text more closely so that we can see exactly what is happening.

On the back cover of this workbook there is a **Key Word Bookmark** that serves two purposes.

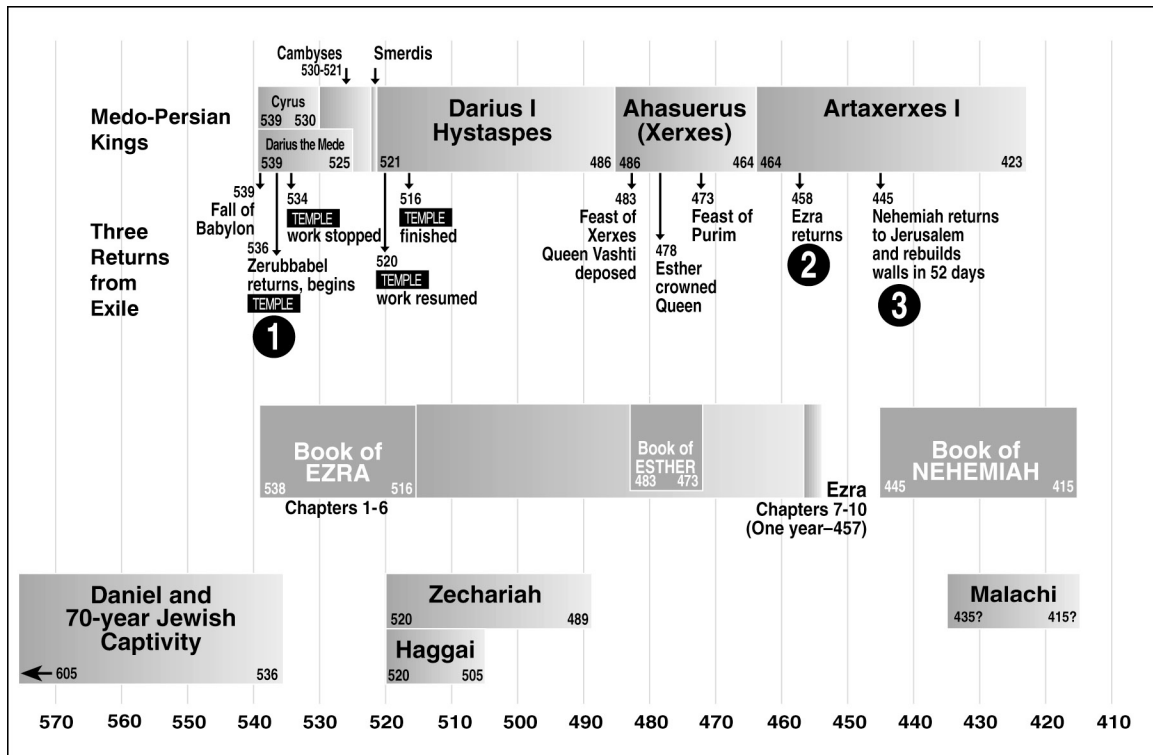
- a. *First*, it lists key words which appear throughout the Bible and gives you suggested ways of marking them so that you can be consistent throughout the Word of God. A **key word** is a repeated word that helps unlock the meaning of the text. Please note, the markings on the bookmark are merely suggestions—there is no right or wrong way to mark. Do what suits you.
 - 1) On that side of the card you will also find a suggested way to mark references to time—words that tell you *when* something happens or indicate *timing* such as *then, when, after*, etc. When you observed Esther 1, you put a green circle over the reference to “the third year of his reign”—marking the *when* of this chapter.
 - 2) It also suggests a way to mark geographical locations—*where* something occurs. Remember when you marked the where of Esther 1—the citadel of Susa? We suggested you double underline it in green.
 - b. *Second*, on the other side of the bookmark you will find space to list key words used in Esther as you go. Mark or color them as you will do on your Observation Worksheet. Then you can use this as a reminder of the words you want to mark.
5. Do your observations of Esther chapter 2. Remember as you read to question the text with the 5 Ws and H: *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.
 - a. Mark any references to *when* and *where*.
 - b. Mark *King Ahasuerus* and *Vashti* as you did before. Put the king on your bookmark.
 - c. Add *Esther* and *Mordecai* to your Key Word Bookmark and mark each in a distinctive color or way.
 - d. Mark *banquet* as you marked it in chapter 1. Make sure it is on your Key Word Bookmark.
 - e. Add *favor* to your bookmark as it will be a repeated word throughout the book.
 6. Read through Esther 2 again. This time look for the paragraph divisions (bolded verse numbers), and in the margin of your worksheet, record the main event of each paragraph. Then add a theme for Esther 2 to “Esther at a Glance” in the Appendix.
 7. Now briefly list what you learn about Esther and Mordecai on “The Main Characters in the Book of Esther.”

5. When you marked Esther, Mordecai, and the king, you learned that the king married a Jew but didn't know it. You also saw references to *her people*—which obviously would be Jews. Devise a way to mark the references to Jews and put it on your bookmark. Some use a blue star of David like this: . When you finish, list what you learn from chapter 2 about the Jews below, or if you want, you can put this on “The Main Characters in the Book of Esther.”

6. When you study historical books, it's always important to pay attention to anything that tells you *when* because this puts you into the historical context or setting of the book. Note all the references to time that you marked. As you do, list your insights below, what happens and when.

7. Finally, following this you will find a time chart.
 - a. Look at the center line. When does the book of Esther take place?

 - b. What empire is ruling at this time? (Look at the top line) _____
 - c. What is another name of Ahasuerus? _____
 - d. According to this timeline, what had already happened in Jewish history prior to the events in Esther? (Don't miss looking at the bottom line where it mentions Daniel.) List the events in the order in which they occur. “Temple” is a reference to the Jews' temple in Jerusalem.



e. The main theme of Ezra is the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, while the main theme of Nehemiah is rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Where does Esther fit chronologically into the events of these two books?

8. Read Ezra 4:1-6. Why might Mordecai have told Esther not to reveal her people?

Good work. It is really going to pay off tomorrow, and we think you will be excited at the truths you have discovered for yourself simply through the skills of observation.

DAY
FIVE

Now that you've observed the first two chapters, have the timing of these events, and have seen the references to Jews, let's get an even broader understanding of the historical context of the book of Esther. This will be our objective for today as we finish this week's study.

Hangeth thou in there, faithful one. It's going to be enlightening and exciting, especially if you've never seen it before.

1. Look at your list on Mordecai. Did you note why his great-grandfather left Judah? If not, see 2:5-6.

2. Let's explore the exile of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon under the reign of Jeconiah, king of Judah.
 - a. Read 2 Kings 24:8-16 which describes the exile. Jeconiah was also called Jehoiachin.
 - b. From "The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther" found in the Appendix
 - 1) The date of the exile with Jehoiachin was _____ B.C.
 - 2) Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem about nine years later, and in _____ B.C. destroyed the city and its temple. This is described in 2 Kings 25 and in the last chapter of 2 Chronicles.
 - c. Read 2 Chronicles 36:9-23.
 - 1) What items were exiled along with the people?

 - 2) Who brought about the captivity and the destruction and why?

- 3) How long would the time in captivity last and how would it end?
3. Since the captivity came under the Babylonians, one question that might come to your mind is, “Where do the Medes and the Persians come into the picture?”
- a. Read Daniel 5 to answer the question. Check “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” in the Appendix to find the kings mentioned.

 - b. Now look at your timeline to see who reigned with Darius the Mede.
4. In the last few verses of 2 Chronicles 36, you read that it was Cyrus who decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem to build the Lord’s house there. Read Isaiah 44:24–45:7 to see what Isaiah prophesied more than one hundred years before Cyrus was born.
- a. List what you learn from the passage about God.

ESTHER 1
Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

- NOW** it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,
- 2 in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which *was* at the citadel in Susa,
 - 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of his provinces being in his presence.
 - 4 And he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days.
 - 5 When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.
 - 6 *There were hangings of* fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, *and* couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones.
 - 7 Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty.
 - 8 The drinking was *done* according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.
 - 9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.
 - 10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

- 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with *her* royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.
- 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.
- 13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times—for it was the custom of the king so *to speak* before all who knew law and justice
- 14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom—
- 15 “According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *delivered* by the eunuchs?”
- 16 In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but *also* all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.
- 17 “For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.’
- 18 “This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in *the same way* to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.
- 19 “If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she.

- 20 “When the king’s edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small.”
- 21 *This* word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.
- 22 So he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

ESTHER 2

Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

- AFTER** these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.
- 2 Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.
 - 3 "Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given *them*.
 - 4 "Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.
 - 5 *Now* there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,
 - 6 who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled.
 - 7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.
 - 8 So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

-
- 9 Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.
- 10 Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make *them* known.
- 11 Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.
- 12 Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women—
- 13 the young lady would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.
- 14 In the evening she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.
- 15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.
- 16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.
- 17 The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

-
- 18 Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.
- 19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.
- 20 Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.
- 21 In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.
- 22 But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.
- 23 Now when the plot was investigated and found *to be so*, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

BANQUETS IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

ESTHER AT A GLANCE

Book Theme:

	Segment Divisions	Chapter Themes
<p>Author:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <p>Key Words:</p>		1
		2
		3
		4
		5
		6
		7
		8
		9
		10

THE TIMES OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER

