

# In a Strange Land - Esther

## Queen Esther

### Foundation

#### Bible passage : Esther 1 & 2

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-09-11

Under threat : Mordecai and Esther lived in Susa, about 200 miles east of Babylon. The book shows us the hatred many had for the Jews, the potential dangers they faced, and how a plan arose to destroy them throughout the great empire.

“Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.”

Where is God? : The book of Esther tells us about what it was like for some of the Israelites (now called Jews, meaning of the nation of Judah) living in a foreign land years after the captivity. By now many had returned to Israel, but many had not. The book is very cleverly written because it never mentions God, it is as if the people were living without God because they were in exile. (At least one pre-Christian translation put God back in the text, presumably so that non-Jewish readers would not be confused by the book.) If the attempt to destroy the Israelites had succeeded then the promises of God to Abraham would have been broken. But we see in this book how God was at work to

#### Who was taken captive?

Some translations give the impression that Mordecai was taken captive with King Jeconiah more than 80 years before, which makes no sense. Rather it seems to mean that Mordecai's grandfather, Kish the Benjamite, was the one taken captive.



*Esther scrolls traditionally only have one roller because of the custom that it is read from beginning to end (twice) at the feast of Purim meaning there was no need to leave it open.*

protect His people even when it might seem that He had abandoned them.

What happened: King Ahasuerus, was a powerful leader who could do more or less what he wanted. We see in chapter 1 and 2 how this great man behaved a bit like a foolish and spoilt child when he did not get what he wanted. He reacted angrily and did great harm.

Esther found herself caught up in events which she could control. She was required to do things she probably did not want to do or likely face death. She went along with events but we are not told whether this was right or wrong. The Bible stresses her obedience to her uncle and his concern for her.

God is King: The end result was that Esther became Queen. In chapter 2 we see how Mordecai was therefore able to foil a plot against the king. Behind these two events the Lord was at work. Esther and Mordecai would both become important in ensuring that when the pressure against the people of Israel came to a head they were in position to do something about it.



**Though God is never mentioned we see His providential guiding so that Esther became Queen.**