

## Women of the Bible: Esther

Pilgrim Lutheran Church Mary/Martha Society Gathering – 2025 October 19

Rev. Dr. Jayson S. Galler, Pastor

- Invocation and Prayer
- Last time, August 17, 2025, we considered how God worked through Hulda the prophetess in order to communicate a message to King Josiah of Judah. Today we jump both forward another 200 years or so in time and from the southern kingdom of “Judah” to the city of Susa in the Persian Empire, spanning from India to Ethiopia. (See the page on Pilgrim’s website with the working chronological list of all the women whom we both have studied and will study, linking our handouts when available: [www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible](http://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible).) We consider Esther today in view of the Bible’s book named after her, Esther (none of which book is appointed to be read by *Lutheran Service Book*’s Three-year Lectionary Series).
- The book of Esther can be broken down into two main parts: enemies’ threats to the Judeans (1:1-5:14) and God’s deliverance of the Judeans (6:1-10:3), pivoting on the events of chapter 6, and with banquets and other events in the book’s first half’s having somewhat parallel incidents in the book’s second half. Esther, a Jew living among the exiles in Persia, became queen of the empire in about 480 B.C., and Haman, a Persian official, sought to eradicate the Jewish minority, but God used Esther to save His people. Perhaps decades later, God inspired the book through an unidentified author, perhaps Esther’s cousin Mordecai, who is a key person in the book, or someone else using Mordecai’s writings and records. The book was traditionally read on the Jewish observance called “Purim”, which celebrates the described episode of Israel’s survival and God’s faithfulness. Although the book of Esther never mentions God’s Name, though some versions add His Name, throughout the book we can see God’s preserving His people, even, as Horace Hummel says, “hidden ‘in, with, and under’ the fumbles and foibles of mankind, the sum of their actions, whether laudable or reprehensible.”
- If you were able to read the whole book, what comments and questions do you have?
- Esther 4:1-17
- Esther is not mentioned or alluded to anywhere else in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, and Purim found no counterpart in Christian calendars. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther reportedly made a negative *Table Talk* comment about the book, but there is no evidence that he ever attempted to eliminate the book from his translation of the Bible.
- Some potential topics for our further discussion include the following: Esther’s marrying an infidel; God’s use of us in our vocations; election to salvation and the lack of necessity of our role in its fulfillment; the inappropriateness of violent vengeance for Jews, even the State of Israel, and for Christians; and especially God’s delivering His people, ethnically Jew and ethnically Gentile, through Christ and His faithfulness to us to eternal life. About what else does our consideration of Esther raise questions or prompt discussion?

- If you are interested in watching the Sight & Sound show *Queen Esther*, visit the following URL: <https://www.sight-sound.tv/season-pass-queen-esther>.
- Concluding Prayer, *LSB* 855 (stanzas 1, 3, and 4), and Benediction.
- Next time (November 16 or December 21?) on Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25, 39-45, 57-66, 80).