Introduction

- Is the Bible history?
- Esther's Checkered Reception
- A Complex Book about a Complex Situation

Esther's Biblical and Historical Context

Kings of the Persian Empire (minus two)				
Cyrus the Great	Cambyses II	Darius the Great	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	Artaxerxes I
539*–530 BC	530–522 BC	522–486 BC	486–465 BC	465–424 BC

- Biblical Context
  - 2 Chronicles 36:22-23
    - Now in the **first year** of **Cyrus** king of Persia…"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.'"
  - Ezra 6:13-15
    - …and their associates did with all diligence what **Darius** the king had ordered. And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of **Cyrus** and **Darius** and **Artaxerxes** king of Persia; and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the **sixth year** of the reign of **Darius** the king.
  - Esther 1:1-3
    - Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, in the **third year of his reign** he gave a feast for all his officials and servants.
  - Esther 2:1, 16-17
    - After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her…And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the **seventh year of his reign**, the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

The Message of Esther

- Names are prevalent in the book…but God's is absent
    - Ahasuerus = 29
    - Esther = 53
    - Mordecai = 58
- Like all of Scripture, God is the main character

Important Takeaways from Chapter 1

- Immutability of the King's decrees
- Ahasuerus' character
- Void left by Vashti