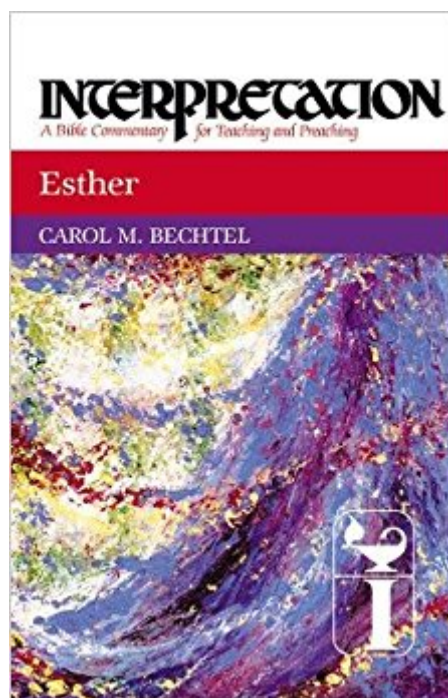


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# Esther: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary For Teaching And Preaching (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary For Teaching & Preaching)



## Synopsis

The biblical queen Esther is one of Scripture's most fascinating persons, and the drama of the book bearing her name is clearly captured in this superb commentary. Carol Bechtel expertly explores the historical settings, literary structures, and theological themes that emerge in the book of Esther. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* is a distinctive resource for those who interpret the Bible in the church. Planned and written specifically for teaching and preaching needs, this critically acclaimed biblical commentary is a major contribution to scholarship and ministry.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Carol M. Bechtel is Professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. She is the author of *Life After Grace*, *Glimpses of Glory*, and *Esther* in the *Interpretation* commentary series, all published by WJK.

I do not think *Esther Interpretation* is a bad commentary. It does provide insightful historical and contextual information that will help all readers visualize the story behind the story. The only problem is that where the book has decided to focus its attention, it subsequently neglects to extract key theological meaning to the detriment of teachers and preachers (like me). The result is that you step away from this commentary with a better understanding of the book of Esther, but that

knowledge is not necessarily preachable on Sunday morning. I finished this commentary still asking myself, "So what does this all mean?" "what's the big picture?" Many of points made in this volume do not go further than what one may find in footnotes if a typical study Bible (e.g., the Zondervan NASB). Furthermore, after the Introduction, Esther Interpretation repeatedly re-describes events as opposed to extracting meaning from the text itself. Resultantly the interpretation is lacking. As a general example, there is a lack of cross-reference to larger Biblical themes and stories (e.g., the many similarities in Esther's story with that of Joseph). As a specific example, in the discussion of Esther's three-day total fast (5:1-8; pg. 51-54), there is a complete absence of discussion on the significance of fasting, Jewish identity and communal obedience in pursuit of a common cause, and the literary omission of God in execution of these activities as rhetorical device that points directly to Yahweh. What this book does do well is construct a map (literally and figuratively: pg. 6) that highlights the great reversals and symmetry in the narrative. Also, the main commentary is based upon the Masoretic text (MT) that is found in standard Protestant Bibles. The Appendix contains a commentary on the Apocryphal additions to Esther. The linguistic analysis of the words for "destruction" and "kill" is also quite helpful. I have read over 15 books in the Interpretation Series and while the series in general is very solid, in my opinion, this volume falls a bit short where others have excelled. As with the other books in the series, this is not a word-for-word technical commentary. Esther Interpretation is short (

a happy surprise, bringing true delight!. to every male I wd say, I'm sure Esther has never been revealed/presented in quite the same way. hugely informative, tragically contemporary, you will have a tool for a challenging bible-study, which will prompt all present to offer a view. in closing, after joyful reading, humbly I must say thank-you cmb for your solid work.

The John Knox Press INTERPETATION COMMENTARY series provides thoughtful but highly readable insights into the various books of the Bible. I haven't picked up a volume yet which disappointed me. But Carol Bechtel's commentary on ESTHER really goes the extra mile. It's chock full of fresh perspectives well stated. (Although she borrows many of these insights from the recently published commentaries of Adele Berlin and Jon Levenson, she is quick to credit her sources. And she is very selective about what she restates.) The commentary is directed primarily to Christians, and to Protestants specifically. She raises an interesting point that Christians who "get their Scripture" solely from the lessons that are read aloud as part of Sunday services, are only exposed

to a reading from Esther once every three years: Esther 7:1-6,9-10; 9:20-22. This clearly is not the best way to experience a book of the Bible that is a cleverly constructed "novella" with exciting characters, court intrigues, and dizzying plot reversals. She encourages Christians to imitate Jews by reading the book repeatedly, aloud, and in its entirety. As Bechtel points out, "It is a book, after all, about the struggle to be faithful in the midst of an increasingly unfaithful culture. It is a story of courage, faith, and deliverance. It is the story of men and women working together with a God who is not always obvious, but who is always gracious." To use this commentary most effectively, you need to have a copy of the New Revised Standard Version Bible (preferably with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books) since the biblical text is not printed in the commentary. You do not need any knowledge of Hebrew (or Greek), however. Where an understanding of the Hebrew is essential, Bechtel provides clear explanations. One example, her explanation of how the Hebrew words for "enslavement" and "destruction" are homophones, serves as a very plausible explanation of why the King could have been so easily duped into signing a death warrant for the Jewish people. Although Bechtel presents the shorter, Hebrew version of Esther as the "best text," she does examine the Additions to Esther (those passages that are found only in the Greek and Latin versions of the text) in a brief Appendix.

It was very interesting!

Excellent study to be used for teaching the book of Esther.

Excellent commentary - easy to read and use - insightful and illuminating.

Excellent help in understanding the book of Esther in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

I have used Interpretation commentaries before and this is rather less scholarly than I am accustomed to. The author treats the book of Esther in a rather flippant manner. Even if she considers the story to be overly dramatic and exaggerated, she could have treated the subject with more respect.

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