

The Persians and Esther

The Book of Esther records events that occur in Susa, one of the four capitals of the ancient Achaemenid Persian empire (559–330 BC). The Persians were a nomadic people who lived what is Iran today. Under Cyrus the Great, they conquered the Babylonian kingdom in 559 BC and ruled over a kingdom reaching “from India to Kush” (Esther 1:1) until the rise of Alexander the Great.

Because there were several Persian empires through history, this first empire is called the Achaemenid. The kings took the title *Šāhe Šāhān*, literally “King of Kings” (Ezra 7:12; Dan 2:37), because they ruled over many people who once had kings but now were under him.

The portrayal of the Achaemenid court in Susa in Esther is accurate, indicating that it was most likely written soon after the events recorded in the book. Unlike the Assyrians and Babylonians before them, the Persians were very tolerant of the people they conquered. They allowed exiled people to return to their homelands and even rebuild their capitals and religious sites, as they did with the Jews in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This was foretold centuries before by the prophet Isaiah, who said Cyrus would be God’s anointed one (Isa 44:28–45:1).

Esther’s Hebrew name was Hadassah (“myrtle”) but like most Jews living in Babylonian or Persian settings, she was given a second name, rooted in the name of the ruling culture’s pantheon of deities. (The same happened with Daniel and his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Esther is really the Akkadian *Ishtar*, probably pronounced *stāreh* in Persian. Although there is no extra biblical evidence for a Jewish queen named Esther, there is also no evidence *disproving* that she existed. Achaemenid kings could have many wives, and these wives often had many titles, so it is entirely possible that Esther appears in their records under a different name.

Financial Summary

2023 Budget	\$224,885	Budget to Date	\$69,200
Weekly Budget	\$4,325	Giving to Date	\$76,632

Thank you again to all for your generous stewardship. You can give via the offering box in the back of the sanctuary, via mail, or online at bedfordroad.org/giving.



*Creating environments where people
encounter Jesus and journey together*

Today's Worship

"Mighty to Save"

© 2006, Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, CCLI# 4591782

"God of Wonders"

© 2000, Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong, CCLI# 3118757

"The Same Love"

© 2011, Paul Baloche and Michael Rossback, CCLI# 6180933

- Join us at the Lord's Table -

"Doxology" (815)

"Less Like Me"

© 2019, Hank Bentley, Mia Fieldes, and Zach Williams, CCLI# 7136017

- Exploring the Scriptures Together -

Upcoming Events

May

- 6 Southern NH Rescue Mission
- 7 Youth Group Interest Meeting, after worship
- 14 Mothers' Day
- 21 Music Team Meeting, after worship

Group Bible Studies

At 7:00pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, there are group Bible studies that are open for everyone.

"Glad You Asked" - Summer Series

Have a Bible question you've always wanted answered? Or a part of the Bible you wish someone would explain? Email your question or idea to pastor@bedfordroad.org for inclusion in our summer topical series (June 4-July 9).

Seven Banquets in Persia

King from India to Kush (Esther 1:1~22)

The Big Idea:

Nursery is provided 9:30-11:30am for children ages 0-3.
On the first Sunday of each month, older children stay with their families.
On all other weeks, there is an age-appropriate teaching time for children ages 4-10.