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# Rose Bible e-Chart

## Esther

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## ONE QUEEN, TWO IDENTITIES

After Vashti is stripped of her crown, the king finds a new queen: a young, beautiful woman whose identity seems irrelevant at the time. Her name is Esther. On Mordecai's instructions, Esther hides her Jewish identity and successfully blends into to the Persian culture. The king is so pleased with his new queen that he throws a great banquet in her honor and proclaims a holiday throughout all the provinces.

### What's In A Name?

The books of Daniel and Esther both depict life for Jews in exile. They show that Jews in prominent places had both Hebrew and Babylonian names.

HEBREW NAME	MEANING	ALTERNATE NAME	MEANING
Daniel	God is my judge	Beltshazzar	Bel protect his life. (Bel is another name for Marduk.)
Hadassah	Myrtle	Esther	Star
(No Jewish name mentioned)		Mordecai	Related to the Babylonian chief god Marduk

### Why Were the Jews in Persia?

In 722 BC the powerful king of Assyria, Sargon II, conquered and destroyed Samaria. Almost two hundred years later, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered the kingdom of Judah.

From 597 BC through 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar systematically undermined Judah until he destroyed Jerusalem and its temple.

To avoid rebellion and exert complete dominance, both Assyria and Babylonia deported people. By uprooting people from their land and their gods, they were easier to control. Some of the Jews who were taken from their homes during these years went to Persia.

God's presence in the Jerusalem temple was a direct source of assurance and security for the Israelites, God's chosen people. If God was with them and dwelt among them, who could dare challenge them? However, the Babylonians not only conquered them but also destroyed their temple. Because every region had its own local gods, wars were also representations of divine wars. In conquering Judah, the Babylonians could claim that their god, Marduk, was superior to the Jewish God, Yahweh—a tremendous spiritual blow to the Jews (see for example 2 Kings 18:31–35).

Exiled Jews not only lost their homes and their land, but also the certainty of God's presence. In light of this desperation and spiritual grief, the words of the prophet Isaiah echo powerfully: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God" (Isaiah 40:1).

When King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem about 70 years later, an event Isaiah prophesied as God's own action (Isaiah 44:28–45:13), many who had already begun a new life in exile stayed in Babylon and Persia.



## PERSIA

Persia became the dominant power of the ancient world in the 6th century BC. Under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, the Persian Empire (also known as the Achaemenid Empire) conquered Babylon in 539 BC. Besides being a brilliant warrior and conqueror, Cyrus was also a great politician. He created a policy to send people previously conquered in Babylonian and Assyrian times back to their homelands.



The "Cyrus Cylinder" proclaims Cyrus as the legitimate king of Babylon. It also describes how Cyrus won the respect and favor of the Babylonian priests when he restored the temples in Babylon.

The Bible portrays Cyrus as God's instrument to free and restore the Jews to the Promised Land (Ezra 1:1–6, 6:1–5; Isaiah 44:23–45:8; 2 Chronicles 36:22–23). Thus, a group of Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and the temple around 515 BC. Other Jews, like Mordecai and Esther, remained in Persia.

The Persians remained in power until 330 BC when Alexander the Great, the Macedonian conqueror, defeated the armies of Darius III and occupied Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire.

## KING XERXES (486–465 BC)

- Called Ahasuerus in the Bible
- Known for his war against the Greeks: Despite his famous loss at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC (the basis for the famed Leonidas of Sparta and his 300 warriors), Xerxes led his armies to sack Athens.
- A year later, however, the Greeks expelled the Persian army from the Greek islands to Asia Minor.
- Much of the information about this war comes from the accounts of the historian Herodotus.





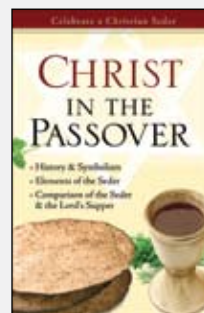
### ***Esther pamphlet***

The story of Queen Esther helps us answer the question: Where is God when things go wrong? For Esther, life was unfair. But her story brings a message of hope to all who face trouble by showing how God works even through the fears and dangers. There are happy endings in perilous times!

This 14-page pamphlet includes a summary of the story, map of Persia and the Middle East, a time line, the historical background of the biblical feast of Purim, comparison charts on the key people, Hebrew/Persian meanings of their names, and the spiritual insights between the two banquets.

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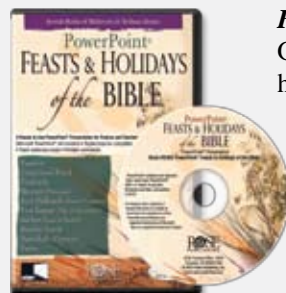
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The Passover is the Old Testament feast that celebrates and remembers God's liberation of Israel from Egypt. Shows the parallels between the Passover in the Old Testament and the work of Jesus Christ. Includes a Christian Passover Seder script, with everything you will need, including the recipes. Gives insights into the symbolism in the Lord's Supper and the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples.

Passover is April 9 (starts at sundown on April 8), 2009, but you can celebrate the Seder anytime.  
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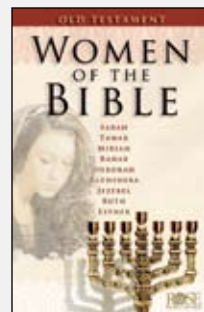
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God commanded Israel to observe these feasts and holy days as memorials to the great things that he had done. These are holidays that Jesus observed all through his life. Learn about Passover/ Unleavened Bread (April 9, '09), the Feast of Weeks (May 29, '09), Rosh HaShanah (Sept. 30, '08), Yom Kippur (Sept. 28, '09), Sukkot (Oct. 14, '08), Simchat Torah (Oct. 22, '08), Chanukah (Dec. 22, '08). See how these special days point to Jesus as the promised Messiah.

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