

FOREWORD

Did you realize that the country of Iran and the Iranian people are mentioned constantly in the Christian's Bible? Four of the first kings of Persia: Cyrus, Darius, Khashayarshah, and Ardashir are mentioned many times. Iran was one of the early nations God chose to carry out His holy will.

Iran, known as Persia in the Bible, is the land of the famous Bible people Esther and Daniel! Also, the Bible tells us that this nation was established by God to deliver the Jewish people from Babylonian captivity. The king who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem was Persia's first monarch, King Cyrus. In fact, his name, life and deeds were foretold by the prophet Isaiah 150 years before His birth.

The Old Testament (commonly referred to as the "torat") mentions other Persian kings. King Darius was a contemporary of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Queen Esther and her husband, Khashayarshah, reigned over the Persian Kingdom which spanned from India to Ethiopia. King Ardashir gave Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls. Persians not only recognize these people as biblical characters but also, as part of their own history. Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah were people of high esteem who lived in the Iranian Empire as God-fearing citizens.

Iranians are mentioned again in the New Testament (commonly referred to as the "injl"). Persians were present at the Feast of Pentecost which was celebrated forty days after the ascension of Jesus to heaven. They heard Peter's spirit-filled sermon, repented of their sins, and accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Church history confirms Persia's role in the spread of the gospel message throughout Asia. An Iranian missionary named Alopen arrived in China in 635 A.D. to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Because of his ministry there was a strong Christian church in central China for several hundred years.

I had the privilege of working in Iran from 1962-1978 along with my fellow workers through International Missions (now named Christar). Together we ministered doing evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. We conducted a Bible correspondence course ministry in the Persian language as well. An English-speaking expatriate fellowship, Tehran Bible Church, was organized in the 1960's. I was pastor of that church for several years. Since most of the foreign Christians in Iran never connected present day Iran with biblical Persia, several times I taught a special three-month Sunday school class called, "Iran and the Bible." Eventually, I was asked to put my class notes into booklet form and in 1977 Iran and the Bible was born.

Recently I was asked to update this booklet. Many chapters have been revised, new material has been added and the material pertaining to expatriates living in Tehran has been eliminated. The English updated version was printed in May 2001 and has the new title, "Persians in the Bible". In 2002 and 2003 I rewrote some sections for translation into Persian so my booklet would be suitable for my Persian friends, both Christian and non-Christian.

I would like to point out to my Persian Christian friends that God is stirring up new interest in the spiritual needs of Persian people. May this booklet increase your appreciation for how God used Persians in the past, excite you about what God is doing in the present and incite you to pray for what He will do in the near future. You, too, can be a part of God's work! May your appreciation become a passion to pray for other Iranians and burden you to seek other ways to be involved. My desire is that many Persian Christians will read this booklet and gain a deeper understanding of God's working in their nation and in the lives of individuals like Esther and Daniel. My prayer is for them to desire to be like these godly believers. Only this generation of Persian believers holds the key to spreading the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to the current 67 million Persians in Iran and the four or five million scattered throughout the world.

I would like to mention to my Iranian friends who are not Christians that the Christian's Bible is not a Western book. It was written in the Middle East in places such as Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Much of the ending part of the Old Testament occurs during the rule of four different Persian kings. As you read about this ancient Persian history I trust you will discover the joy of knowing God in a personal way through Jesus Christ. In times of great trouble it was Jesus that said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

The sections from the Bible listed in the book are from the Standard Farsi translation of 1895 A.D. In situations where old words or phrases are used, modern Persian will be used instead. Also, some of the verses used may be from the Commentary translation of the Bible published in 1995 A.D. or today's Persian version of the New Testament first published in 1976 A.D. The Commentary translation of the Bible can be found at www.gospelcom.net/ibs/bibles/farsi/. When sections from the Bible are quoted, first the name of one of the 66 books of the Bible will be given, second, a number will be given which tells the chapter where it is found, and the third, the number of the verse or verses will be given showing the exact section where God's word is found. These numbers were not given in the original inspiration by God but were added later to help believers find different sections of the books quickly.

I would like to give special thanks to my wife, Diane. When I proposed to her, she knew that her acceptance included a commitment to serve our Lord Jesus Christ together in Iran. We studied the Farsi language our first two years in Iran and then ministered together while raising a family of three children who were all born in Iran. In addition, she has helped bring this booklet to you, rewriting many of my scattered thoughts--making them clearer, more precise and understandable.

Also, Nancy Maurer, in the English version, has given valuable advice and corrections as a copy editor on selected chapters. I appreciate Christar, the organization where I work, for allowing some of the secretarial time, especially Judy Butler's, to be used in revising this manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank the many churches and individual supporters, who with their prayers and finances have faithfully supported us over these many years enabling us to minister to Persians.

I would like to thank Persian World Outreach (PWO) for overseeing the translation and the formatting of this book into Farsi. Their organization will be a key factor in helping to reach Iranians with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, discipling them, and helping to see local

Iranian churches formed. See www.persianwo.org for more information about their valuable work.

My heart's concern is for the spiritual needs of Persian people around the world continues. If I can help you or your church in reaching Persians or becoming informed about ministries among them, please let me know. You may contact me at Al@imi.org or Allyn@pastors.com. Or you may write to Allyn Huntzinger, c/o Christar, P.O. Box 14866, Reading, PA 19612.

You will notice that you are free to photocopy any or all sections in this booklet to give to friends or others. The author receives no money from the sale of this booklet, but all monies received are used for further printing of 'Persians in the Bible.' Feel free to send portions of this book to Iranian friends around the world, including Iran. Credit should be given that this section is from 'Persians in the Bible.' Also, if you would like this book in PDF Adobe or Microsoft Word 97 format or Word Perfect format (except for a few illustrations), e-mail Allyn at Al@imi.org and I will send the book as an e-mail attachment after you specify which format you want. The contents of this book in English are on the www.farsinet.com/persiansinbible/ web site, and can be downloaded. This Farsi translation should also be available on the same website in the near future.

My prayer is that this booklet will be used to bring honor and glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Allyn Huntzinger
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