

RUSSELL SANDERS
3-18-2022
ESTHER – PART 5
HISTORICAL SETTING

Before going into the celebration of Purim (this being its second day in some places), I wish to better set the historical setting for Esther. I will use dates from Halley's Bible Handbook with understanding that not all writers agree on dates for Old Testament historical events.

King Ahasuerus reigned over the Persian Empire, formerly the Babylonia Empire from 485 -465 B.C. Esther became queen in 478 B.C. When King Darius and King Cyrus took Babylon for Persia, one of the first acts was to release all Jews who wished to return to their homeland. This was in 536 B.C. All who wished to remain were welcome to stay and many did stay scattered throughout the 127 Persian provinces.

When Nebuchadnezzar had carried them captive to Babylon in three or four separate waves from 605-586 B.C., the prophet Jeremiah wrote to the Jews to tell them what God said. In Jeremiah 29:4-7 they were told to make themselves at home there for they would be there seventy years. They were to build houses, plant gardens, take wives, have children to raise there, seek increase, and in verse 7 it said, *"Seek the peace of the city"* where you live (i.e., blend in).

So, when they were released to return to Israel, many of them chose to stay in Babylon under a benevolent Persian rule. That is why Esther and Mordecai were still there more than 50 years after they had been granted their freedom. Babylon was now their home.

Although the Persian Empire was kind in their rulership, there were still many people who disliked the Jews. Haman was just one of many of tens of thousands who hated them. In spite of this hatred God was still their protector. He delivered them from total annihilation.

Tomorrow we will see how they celebrated that deliverance and how it is observed today.