

RUSSELL SANDERS

3-6-2023

FEAST OF PURIM – PART 1

The Jewish feast of Purim begins this evening at sundown or 6:00 p.m. It is not one of God's seven ordained feasts given through Moses. Rather, it is one of the two feasts established by the Jews themselves. Each are based on a miraculous historical event. The two are Purim (one month before Passover) and Hanukkah (approximately two months after Tabernacles). Purim is celebrated on two days, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Jewish religious calendar that God gave them.

Purim is based on the story written in the Book of Esther. Let us set the historical background for it.

The seventy years of Babylonian captivity (605-586 B.C.) had ended when Cyrus captured Babylon in 586 B.C. and Darius (under Cyrus) took rulership. This established the Medo-Persian Empire which was from India all the way to northern Africa. Cyrus issued several decrees, one of which released the captivity of the Jews which allowed them to return to Judea or to remain in the Persian Empire. Other decrees authorized the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and the rebuilding of the Temple. These decrees remained in force throughout the reigns of the successive Persian emperors including Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes.

The Jew, Mordecai, and his niece, Hadassah, were among the Jews who chose to remain in the Babylonian provinces under Persian rule. It appears that the majority of the Jews had chosen this life. They were well established peacefully in their homes and businesses. We do not know the exact time frame. Bishop Ussher's time dates (used in the KJV) indicate the Book of Esther to be between 521-509 B.C., although some historians may put it around 465 B.C. or later. The exact time does not really matter. What happened in this historical incident is what matters. It demonstrates how God looked after His people to preserve them. So, likewise, will He preserve us, His Church.

Tomorrow we will look at what happened and how God delivered the Jews from virtual extinction.