

¹⁸But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁹Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwallied towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another. ²⁰And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, ²¹to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, ²²as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. ²³So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, ²⁴because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; ²⁵but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, ²⁷the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time, ²⁸that these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants. ²⁹Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. ³⁰And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth, ³¹to confirm these days of Purim at their *appointed* time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. ³²So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

1. A new feast day established

- a. Immediately after their great victory over their enemies, the Jews in every province held celebrations, gave gifts to the poor, & made a special holiday
- b. Several unique features of this event arise:
 - a1. This is the first feast established by the Jews that is not mandated by the Torah
 - a2. Mordecai & Esther decree an annual celebration called Purim (the lots)
 - a3. No priest is involved, nor are any sacrifices or special thanksgiving to God prescribed
 - a4. Not only is feasting & gift giving prescribed, but

lamentations and fasting is also commanded by Esther
 b1. We do not know if *Esther's Fast* came before the celebration, remembering *Haman's Edict* or after the celebration

b2. Was the fast & lamentations a remembrance of the fast the Jews undertook before Esther entered the king's court to plead for the Jews?

c. Mordecai with the confirmation of Esther send out their decree in the name of the king

a1. No priest or prophet is involved

a2. This is more like a national celebration (like Independence Day) than a thanksgiving to God

d. The decree is established under the authority of a Persian king rather than Jewish religious leaders or even a Jewish king

a1. Unlike the 3 feasts in Lev. 20-21 there is no admonition to offer sacrifice to the Lord, read Psalms, or sing hymns to the Lord

a2. Even though the decree calls this a day of remembrance, it is not a day of praise to God

2. A look back at Esther

a. Esther is a story of tremendous tension & great deliverance where God preserved his people

a1. The tone of the book is not centered on the workings of God as in Ruth, Ezra, & Nehemiah

a2. Since the remembrance is not specifically directed toward God the theme is providential (*come to the palace for such a time as this*) rather than personal (*the Lord is my Shepherd*)

b. The mystery of lack of seeking & praising God implies that the Jews were not overly devout or reverent

a1. God preserved them anyway for future plans

a2. The deliverance was a testimony to others

3. The final assessment

a. The 3 verses in chapter 10 summarize the greatness of Xerxes & his power (confirmed in history)

b. The greatness of Mordecai & his influence was confirmed in the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media & Persia*, which we do not have

c. The only surviving testimony of Mordecai & Esther is in the Book of Esther & the Feast of Purim

d. Mordecai held the same position as Joseph, which he used to benefit the Jews (a continuing providence)