



Artist's depiction of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar just before the fall of Israel

THE DESTRUCTION of JERUSALEM and ISRAEL (586 BC)

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Concluding segments of the series, Monarchy of Israel

with Pastor Dan Betzer

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1 It is a help to one reading the Old Testament in the Bible, to have an
2 understanding not only of the book titles (such as Genesis, etc.) but of the
3 sections of scripture.

4

5 I have given you the list of those divisions in the following chart:

6

7	TORAH	HISTORY	POETRY	MAJOR PROPHETS	MINOR PROPHETS
8	Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah	Hosea
9	Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah	Joel
10	Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentations	Amos
11	Numbers	1 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Obadiah
12	Deut.	2 Samuel	Song of	Daniel	Jonah
13		1 Kings	Solomon		Micah
14		2 Kings			Nahum
15		1 Chronicles			Habakkuk
16		2 Chronicles			Zephaniah
17		Ezra			Haggai
18		Nehemiah			Zechariah
19		Esther			Malachi

20

21 Our current study of the monarchy (list of kings and the history of Israel)
22 finds its scriptural setting in the history books. Our study tonight also finds
23 substantial setting in the prophetic book of Daniel, which also
24 incorporated much of the history of Israel when she went into 70 years of
25 bondage in Babylon.

26

27 The prophets and their books are interspersed throughout later writings in
28 the historical books.

29

30 We now come to the sad and final days of Israel in the Old Testament.
31 Prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and others had warned the people
32 that divine judgment was coming because the people had turned from God
33 to their own idols and disobedience to the Lord. The last king to attack
34 Israel would be King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the last Israeli king
35 would be Zedekiah.

36

37 A list of prominent “world powers” to this point in history (around 600
38 BC) would include Egypt and Assyria. But now the great kingdom of

1 Babylon would emerge following the historic war at Carchemesh (when
2 Assyria, allied with Egypt, fought Babylon and emerged triumphant).
3 The rulers of Babylon did not want any uprising from Egypt and
4 determined utter destruction for the land of the Nile. Which brought their
5 armies through Israel on three separate occasions, the last of which ended
6 Israel for decades to come - a story given us not only in secular history,
7 but in the biblical accounts in the historical books of the Old Testament.

8
9 NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Pronounced NEB-u-kad-nez-zar)
10 King 605-562 BC until the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire
11 prophesied by Daniel decades earlier
12

13 Nebuchadnezzar is considered the greatest king of the Babylonian Empire
14 and is usually credited with the construction of the famed Hanging
15 Gardens of Babylon (one of the seven ancient wonders of antiquity).
16

17 **He is mentioned 90 times in the Bible, in both the historical section and**
18 **the prophets.**

19
20 The book of Daniel makes Nebuchadnezzar one of its primary references
21 and gives us a great deal of vital information concerning this
22 powerful monarch.
23

24 Although Nebuchadnezzar did not utterly destroy Judah until 586 BC, he
25 had conquered it in earlier wars, making it a vassal state. But when Judah
26 (the southern nation) rebelled against him in 597 BC during the reign of
27 Jewish king Jehoiachin and again in 588 BC during the reign of Zedekiah,
28 that was the last straw for Nebuchadnezzar. So he invaded, conquered and
29 destroyed Judah, destroying Solomon's temple and most of Jerusalem.
30 The great, now elderly, prophet, Jeremiah saw it all and reported:

31
32 Lamentations 1:1-5

33 ***How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people how is she become***
34 ***as a widow she that was great among the nations, and princess among***
35 ***the provinces, how is she become tributary [2] She weepeth sore in the***
36 ***night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath***

1 *none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,*
2 *they are become her enemies. [3] Judah is gone into captivity because*
3 *of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the*
4 *heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between*
5 *the straits. [4] The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the*
6 *solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are*
7 *afflicted, and she is in bitterness. [5] Her adversaries are the chief, her*
8 *enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her*
9 *transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.*

10
11 Secular history records Nebuchadnezzar as a brutal, powerful and
12 ambitious king. The Bible concurs for the most part, although the book of
13 Daniel gives additional insight into his character. In my opinion, if we had
14 only Daniel, chapter 2, it would be sufficient for me to understand that the
15 Bible is a holy and supernaturally created volume of truth. In that chapter,
16 God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream about the empires that would follow
17 his Babylonian rule.

18
19 Daniel 2:39-44

20 *And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another*
21 *third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. [40]*
22 *And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron*
23 *breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all*
24 *these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. [41] And whereas thou sawest*
25 *the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom*
26 *shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron,*
27 *forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. [42] And as the*
28 *toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall*
29 *be partly strong, and partly broken. [43] And whereas thou sawest iron*
30 *mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men:*
31 *but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with*
32 *clay. [44] And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up*
33 *a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not*
34 *be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these*
35 *kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

1 This was, of course, exactly what happened in the centuries that followed.
2 Babylon was a rather short-lived empire of less than a century. It was
3 followed by the Medo-Persian Empire and it, in turn, was followed by the
4 Greeks (and the advent of Alexander the Great) and then the Roman
5 Empire. No human being on earth would have been so foolish as to predict
6 that short of thing, except that God did it through His servant Daniel.

7
8 Nebuchadnezzar demanded of his advisors that they interpret the dream
9 outlined in Daniel 2. They could not; nor could Daniel. But God used
10 Daniel to reveal the awesome prophecy. The king then promoted Daniel
11 to be one of his most influential advisors. Nebuchadnezzar understood the
12 divine source of the information:

13
14 Daniel 2:47

15 *The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God*
16 *is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing*
17 *thou couldst reveal this secret.*

18
19 Nebuchadnezzar had a number of spiritual ups and downs; but he seemed
20 to have a sense of divine destiny and Daniel served him well until the
21 king's death around 562 BC.

22
23 The reason Daniel was in Babylon is because, as a rather young Jew living
24 in Jerusalem, he was captured by Nebuchadnezzar's armies in their first
25 attack on the Holy Land. He not only served this Babylonian monarch,
26 but, when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, Daniel's life was
27 preserved and he became a choice counselor to King Cyrus.

28
29 The king's personal spiritual journey took another nosedive in Daniel 3 in
30 which Nebuchadnezzar created a gold statue of himself and required all
31 his citizens to bow down to it. Three young Jewish captives, Shadrach,
32 Meshach and Abednego, refused and the king had them thrown into a
33 blazing furnace. God protected them and they were brought out of the
34 inferno unscathed. This really impressed Nebuchadnezzar and he made
35 a declaration:

1 Daniel 3:28-29

2 *Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach,*
3 *Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his*
4 *servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and*
5 *yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god,*
6 *except their own God. [29] Therefore I make a decree, That every*
7 *people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the*
8 *God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and*
9 *their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God*
10 *that can deliver after this sort.*

11

12 Once again, Nebuchadnezzar's spiritual life was short-lived. In Daniel 4,
13 God again warned him in a dream to humble himself and give the Lord
14 all the credit for his vast empire and wealth. The king did alright for a year
15 or so and then began exalting himself. This is a familiar story. How many
16 people turn to God as a last resort? They want the church for baby
17 dedications (often not even staying for the remainder of the service!), for
18 marriages and of course for proper burials. But for day in and day out
19 consistency, alas, they fall away. They starve to death spiritually. This
20 was the case with King Nebuchadnezzar. Scripture relates the story:

21

22 Daniel 4:29-33

23 *At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of*
24 *Babylon. [30] The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that*
25 *I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and*
26 *for the honour of my majesty? [31] While the word was in the king's*
27 *mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar,*
28 *to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. [32] And they*
29 *shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of*
30 *the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall*
31 *pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom*
32 *of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. [33] The same hour was*
33 *the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men,*
34 *and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven,*
35 *till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like*
36 *birds' claws.*

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So what’s the truth about this man? Saved? Lost? History records he became a follower of the Babylonian gods Nabu and Marduk. Is it possible that he renounced those gods and instead worshiped only the one true God? Yes, it is possible. If nothing else, he became a henotheist; that is, he believed in many gods but worshiped only one God as supreme. It is interesting that in the book of Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar was referred to as “my servant:”

Jeremiah 25:9

Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

Jeremiah 27:6

And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

Jeremiah 43:10

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

So, the great king died and was followed by succeeding weaker kings until his grandson Belshazzar sat on the throne. Babylon was routed by the Medes and Persians under his weak leadership and despite the warnings of old Daniel. This is one of the strangest yet true stories ever told!

Next week.