

**EPISODE 9: Exile and Diaspora: Babylon and Persia**

Jeremiah 43-44; Daniel 1-5; Esther 1-3; Acts 2:5-11

10/26-10/27

1. **Nebuchadnezzar’s Nightmare (Daniel 2:31-45)**

***31****“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.* ***32****The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze,* ***33****its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.* ***34****As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.* ***35****Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**The Traditional View of Daniel’s Visions**

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|  | **Babylonian Empire (625–539 b.c.)** | **Medo–Persian Empire (539–331 b.c.)** | **Greek Empire (331–63 b.c.)** | **Roman Empire (63 b.c.–a.d. 476)** | **Future Events** |
| **Vision of Statue (ch. 2)** | head of gold (vv. 36–38) | chest and arms of silver (vv. 32, 39) | middle and thighs of bronze (vv. 32, 39) | legs of iron; feet of iron and clay (vv. 33, 40–43) | *messianic kingdom* stone (vv. 44–45) |
| **Vision of Tree (ch. 4)** | Nebuchadnezzar humbled (vv. 19–37) |  |  |  |  |
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**Rulers During the Time of Daniel**

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| **Babylon** | Nebuchadnezzar | 605–562 b.c. |
| Nabonidus | 556–539 |
| Co-regent Belshazzar | 550–539 |
| **Persia** | Cyrus | 539–530 |
| Darius I | 522–486[[2]](#footnote-2) |

**BABYLON**

1. **The Coming of Babylon and the Fall of Judah**
   1. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians c.733 B.C. The people assimilated, deported and scattered. Israel loses its identity.
   2. The Coming of Babylon: *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. (Daniel 2:1-2)*
   3. **In 598 B.C. open revolt broke out in Judah.** 
      1. *King Jehoiakim …” turned and rebelled against [Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon]” (2 Kings 24:1).*
      2. *And Nebuchadnezzar, came against the city and his servants did besiege it…. And he carried away all Jerusalem…. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon” (2 Kings 24:8-15).”*
      3. “After the first conquest in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar allowed Judah to continue its existence as a vassal-state. Werner Keller:
      4. *“[King] Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon” (2 Kings 24:20).*
      5. **The Fall of Jerusalem (588 B.C.).**
   4. *In the “tenth month” (2 Kings 25:1) of the same year 587 B.C. — it was “the ninth year” of King Zedekiah — Nebuchadnezzar arrived with an army from Babylon. With the speed of lightning the punitive campaign against rebellious Judah was unfolded.”*
   5. King Zedekiah was taken. His children were “slaughtered” before his eyes, he himself had his eyes put out (II Kings 25:6f; Jer. 52:9–11).
   6. Jerusalem was given over to plundering: the royal palace and the temple were set on fire; the city walls and fortifications were razed to the ground.
   7. A substantial portion of the population was deported.

1. **The Babylonians**
   1. Who were the Babylonians? Historically and ethnically Babylonia was a product of the union of the Akkadians and the Sumerians (Semites).
   2. “Early Babylon and Hammurabi (1792-1750 b.c.; See Episode 2)
   3. **New Babylon** (The “Chaldeans”= Neo Babylonians)
   4. Nabopalassar (747-734 b.c.).
   5. Nebuchadrezzar II (605-562 b.c.).
2. **The gods - Babylon**
   1. *Anu—Oldest God*
   2. *Marduk*—Storm God, head of the pantheon
   3. *Enlil*— storm
   4. *Ea-Enki*— fresh water and subterranean water
   5. *Sin* (*Nanna*)— moon
   6. *Utu*— Sun
   7. *Ishtar*—Fertility
   8. *Nurgle*—death, disease, underworld
   9. *Ninurta*— War
   10. *Tiamat*— Salt Water (Evil)
   11. William Durant: *“Never was a civilization richer in superstitions. Every turn of chance from the anomalies of birth to the varieties of death received a popular, sometimes an official and sacerdotal, interpretation in magical or supernatural terms.” “Every movement of the rivers, every aspect of the stars, every dream, every unusual performance of man or beast, revealed the future to the properly instructed Babylonian. The fate of a king could be forecast by observing the movements of a dog,100 just as we foretell the length of the winter by spying upon the groundhog.”*
3. **Babylonian Science**—
   1. Astronomy
   2. The Calendar
4. **God’s People in Babylon**
   1. *“Build ye houses, and dwell in them: and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them… that ye may be increased there and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives” (Jer. 29:5-7).”*
   2. In Babylon, the exilic and postexilic Jewish community developed its own character and left a legacy still felt today.
   3. The prophetic writings in the Bible, heavily concerned with the exilic experience, naturally present several viewpoints about Babylon.
      1. Instrument of divine judgment against Judah.
      2. Babylon itself is brought for judgment in Jer. 51:59–64.
      3. In Babylon during the subsequent centuries that many of the legal and religious institutions of Judaism developed.
      4. The Babylonian Talmud
   4. **The Fall of Babylon (**562 B.C.)

**PERSIA**

1. **Who were the Persians?** 
   1. Origins: The Medes and the Persian
   2. The Descendants of Japheth
      1. Indo-European stock perhaps from South Russia; and its language and early religion reveal its close kinship with those people who crossed Afghanistan to become the ruling caste of northern India.
      2. The ancient Persians spoke of a primitive homeland known as Airyana-vaejo—*Aryan*
      3. *Ariana*=Iran to what is now called by essentially the same word—Iran. 18
2. **Kings:** 
   1. The rulers of the Empire were:
      1. Cyrus (king of Anshan ca. 560 b.c., d. 530);
      2. Cambyses (530-522);
      3. Darius I (522-486);
      4. Xerxes I (486-465);
      5. Artaxerxes I (465-424);
      6. Xerxes II (424);
      7. Sogdianos (424-423);
      8. Darius II (423-405/4);
      9. Artaxerxes II (405/4-359/8);
      10. Artaxerxes III (359/58-338/37);
      11. Artaxerxes IV (338/37-336);
      12. and Darius III (336-330).
   2. **Cyrus (**ca. 560 b.c., d. 530)
      1. “The Bible remembers him as an enlightened monarch. His unparalleled, swift and brilliant rise to power was marred by no deed of violence. His able and humane policy made him one of the most attractive figures in the ancient orient.
      2. Founder of the Achaemenid dynasty (ruled Babylonia 539-530 b.c.)
      3. Cyrus’s military victories eventually put him in possession of the largest empire the world at that time had yet seen. They began with the conquest of Media (549), followed by Lydia (546) and Babylonia (539). It would seem that the Babylonian provinces of Eber nāri (today’s Syria, Lebanon, and Israel) fell to him after the conquest of Babylonia, although no specific mention of them is extant in contemporary records.
      4. Cyrus’s policy toward the peoples of his empire was one of tolerance and understanding. His authorization of the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple by returning Judeans (end of 2 Chronicles; beginning of Ezra) accords well with what we know from contemporaneous documents.
      5. Cyrus was followed by his son Cambyses II (530-522 B.C.). With the conquest of Egypt Persia became under him the greatest empire that the world had ever seen: it stretched from India to the Nile.
   3. **Darius**
      1. **Became** one of the wisest administrators in history, and set himself to reestablish his realm in a way that became a model of imperial organization till the fall of Rome.
      2. At its greatest extent, under Darius, the Persian Empire included twenty provinces or “satrapies,” embracing Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, Lydia, Phrygia, Ionia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Armenia, Assyria, the Caucasus, Babylonia, Media, Persia, the modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan, India west of the Indus, Sogdiana, Bactria, and the regions of the Massagetæ and other central Asiatic tribes.

1. **Life in Persia**
2. **The Religion of Persia**
   1. Originally polytheistic pagan until the advent of the Prophet Zoroaster (Zarthusra) c.600 BC.
   2. Principle Deities
      1. *Ahura-Mazda.* Belief in divine beings, *Ahuras,* was probably part of the older Aryan religion. Zoroaster appears in a new personal relationship to Ahura-Mazda, whom Zoroaster may have seen as the personification of all of the other divine qualities.[[3]](#footnote-3)
      2. *Angro-Mainyus* or *Ahriman*, Prince of Darkness and ruler of the nether world.
   3. Zoroastrianism
      1. According to Zoroaster, the history of the world was divided into three ages of three thousand years each. The first was the golden age of Ahura-Mazda. The second was a period of warfare with evil that ended with the coming of Zoroaster. The prophet brought a new force enabling humans to participate in separating truth from falsehood. The final period would extend until the renovation of the world.
      2. “By picturing the world as the scene of a struggle between good and evil, the Zoroastrians established in the popular imagination a powerful supernatural stimulus and sanction for morals. The soul of man, like the universe, was represented as a battleground of beneficent and maleficent spirits; every man was a warrior, whether he liked it or not, in the army of either the Lord or the Devil; every act or omission advanced the cause of Ahura-Mazda or of Ahriman.” (William Durant)
      3. Some elements of this belief appear to have influenced the development of angelology, dualism, belief in an evil power, Satan, and a periodized story of the world that we find in the Judaism of the Greco-Roman period, especially in apocryphal writings such as Daniel.[[4]](#footnote-4)
   4. The Magi
      1. “Wise Men.”
      2. A high reputation for wisdom.
      3. Origin of the word Magic.
   5. Zoroastrian elements in Persian religion faded away; they were revived for a time under the Sassanid Dynasty (226-651 A.D.), but were finally eliminated by the Moslem and Tatar invasions of Persia.
   6. Zoroastrianism survives today only among small communities in the province of Fars, and among the ninety thousand Parsees of India.

1. **Persia and the People of God**
   1. Cyrus conquered the Babylonians - He allowed the people to return. Ezra, Nehemiah tell of Judah’s return—first of the rebuilding of the Temple and then (In Nehemiah) the rebuilding of the wall and the city, beginning in 538 B.C.
   2. Cyrus is hailed as the chosen deliverer of the Jews from Babylon (Isa. 44:28, ‘my shepherd’; 45:1, ‘my anointed’) and as stirred up by God to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple (2 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–2; 3:7; 4:3).
   3. The reign of Darius I provides the dating framework for the books of Haggai and Zechariah. Artaxerxes is mentioned in Ezra 6:14; 7:1; and 9:9 and in Neh. 2:1; 5:14; and 13:6. The story of Esther is set in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes, 1:1–2). A later Darius (II or III) is named in Neh. 12:22.

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Da2.31&off=0&ctx=ghts+of+your+mind.+%0a~Daniel+Interprets+th). (2016). (Da 2:31–35[45]). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Crossway Bibles. (2008). [*The ESV Study Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esvsb?ref=BibleESV.Da2.2&off=339&ctx=nterpreting+dreams.%0a~Rulers+During+the+Ti) (p. 1587). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In [*Harper’s Bible dictionary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hbd?ref=Page.p+1167&off=5119&ctx=het+whose+followers+~worshiped+the+deity+) (1st ed., pp. 1167–1168). San Francisco: Harper & Row. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In [*Harper’s Bible dictionary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hbd?ref=Page.p+1168&off=420&ctx=ould+acquire+later.%0a~According+to+Zoroast) (1st ed., p. 1168). San Francisco: Harper & Row. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)