

SANBALLAT - [san BAL uht] (the god sin has given life)

A leading opponent of the Jews after their return from the Captivity; he tried to hinder Nehemiah in his work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:10,19-20; 4; 6; 13:28).

Sanballat's designation as the Horonite probably indicates the town of his origin, possibly Horonaim of Moab (Isaiah 15:5; Jeremiah 48:3,5,34) or Beth Horon in Ephraim near Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 8:5). In papyri found at the Jewish settlement in Elephantine, Egypt, Sanballat is called the governor of Samaria. His daughter married "one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest" (Nehemiah 13:28). Nehemiah viewed such a "mixed marriage" as a defilement of the priesthood, so he drove Joiada away.

Sanballat's opposition to Nehemiah's work may have stemmed from jealousy. He may have felt that his authority was threatened by the reawakening of the land of Judah. After mocking Nehemiah and his crew, he tried to slip through the broken wall of Jerusalem with people from other enemy nations to kill the Jews. Nehemiah thwarted this plot, setting up guards of half the people while the other half worked (Nehemiah 4:7-23). Neither did he fall for Sanballat's ploy to come outside the wall for a "friendly" discussion (Nehemiah 6:3).

In spite of Sanballat's open opposition and trickery Nehemiah carried out the task, which he felt, called by God to accomplish. After the wall was completed, he reported that even the enemies of the project realized this work was done by our God (Nehemiah 6:16).

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**NEHEMIAH** - [KNEE uh my ah] (God is consolation)-the name of three men in the Old Testament:

1. A clan leader who returned with Zerubbabel from the Captivity (Ezra 2:2; Neh 7:7).

2. The governor of Jerusalem who helped rebuild the wall of the city (Neh 1:1; 8:9; 10:1; 12:26,47). Nehemiah was a descendant of the Jewish population that had been taken captive to Babylon in 587-586 B.C. In 539 B.C. Cyrus the Persian gained control over all of Mesopotamia. He permitted the Jewish exiles to return to the city of Jerusalem. Nearly a century later, in Nehemiah's time, the Persian ruler was Artaxerxes I Longimanus (ruled 465-424 B.C.). Nehemiah was his personal cupbearer (Neh 1:11).

In 445 B.C. Nehemiah learned of the deplorable condition of the returned exiles in Jerusalem (Neh 1:2-3). The wall of the city was broken down, the gates were burned, and the people were in distress. Upon hearing this, Nehemiah mourned for many days, fasting and praying to God. His prayer is one of the most moving in the Old Testament (Neh 1:5-11).

Nehemiah then received permission from Artaxerxes to go to Judah to restore the fortunes of his people. He was appointed governor of the province with authority to rebuild the city walls.

Once in Jerusalem, Nehemiah surveyed the walls at night (Neh 2:12-15). He gave his assessment of the city's condition to the leaders and officials and then organized a labor force to begin the work.

Nehemiah and his work crew were harassed by three enemies: Sanballat the Horonite (a Samaritan), Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab (Neh 2:10,19; 6:1-14). But neither their ridicule (Neh 4:3) nor their conspiracy to harm Nehemiah (Neh 6:2) could stop the project. The builders worked with construction tools in one hand and weapons in the other (Neh 4:17). To the taunts of his enemies, Nehemiah replied: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (Neh 6:3). Jerusalem's wall was finished in 52 days (Neh 6:14)-a marvelous accomplishment for such a great task. Nehemiah's success stems from the fact that he kept praying, "O God, strengthen my hands" (Neh 6:9).

Nehemiah's activities did not stop with the completion of the wall. He also led many social and political reforms among the people, including a return to pure worship and a renewed emphasis on true religion.

3. A son of Azbuk and leader of half the district of Beth Zur (Neh 3:16). After his return from the Captivity, Nehemiah helped with the repair work on the wall of Jerusalem.

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## BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

A historical book of the Old Testament that describes the rebuilding of the city walls around Jerusalem. The book is named for its major personality, a Jewish servant of a Persian king and effective leader, who organized and guided the building project.

### Structure of the Book

Nehemiah was serving as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes (1:11-2:1) in 444 B.C., when he received distressing news about his native land. Jerusalem's wall was still in ruins, although the project to rebuild the city and its beautiful Temple had been under way for many years. So Nehemiah went to Jerusalem himself on special assignment from the king to oversee the building project. In spite of harassment by their enemies, Nehemiah rallied the people to the challenge and completed the wall in less than two months.

Nehemiah remained as Persian governor of Jerusalem for the next 12 years, leading the people in several important religious reforms. The priest Ezra assisted Nehemiah in interpreting God's Law for His people. He had accompanied a group of captives back to Jerusalem about 13 years before Nehemiah arrived on the scene.

### Authorship and Date

As written originally in the Hebrew language, Nehemiah was connected to the books of First and Second Chronicles and Ezra. The material in these books formed one unbroken book, written probably by the priest Ezra. The purpose of this work was to show how God's blessings sustained his COVENANT PEOPLE after they returned to their native land following the years of captivity in Babylon and Persia. Most conservative scholars, however, believe Nehemiah contributed some of the material that appears in the book, which bears his name. This is the only logical explanation for chapters 1-7 and 11-Neh, which are written by Nehemiah as a first-person report. Ezra could have picked up these passages from Nehemiah's personal diary.

### Historical Setting

The Book of Nehemiah is set in that crucial time in Jewish history known as the post-exilic period. These were the years after the return of the Covenant People to their homeland in 536 B.C. following 70 years of CAPTIVITY in Babylon and Persia. At first the exiles were excited about rebuilding their lives and restoring their city; but the work was slow and tiring, and the living conditions were primitive. Their enemies often exploited them in their plight. These were the desperate circumstances that motivated Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to encourage his countrymen.

### Theological Contribution

Nehemiah is an excellent case study in courageous, resourceful leadership. Against overwhelming odds, he encouraged the people to "rise up and build" (2:18). Their rapid completion of the wall has been an inspiration to countless Christians across the centuries that have faced the challenge of completing some major task to the glory of God. Nehemiah also teaches that prayer is an important part of the faith of every follower of God. At several crucial points in his book, he prayed for God's direction (1:5-11; 2; 4:1-14; 6:9-14). If this courageous leader needed to claim God's strength and guidance through prayer, how much more fervently should we pray for God's will to be done through us as we face the important decisions of life? Nehemiah is an excellent object lesson on the power of prayer for all believers.

### Special Considerations

Scholars have debated who returned to Jerusalem first, Ezra or Nehemiah. But the Bible makes it plain that Ezra arrived about 13 years before Nehemiah. Ezra went back to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes' reign (Ezra 7:8), while Nehemiah returned during this Persian king's 20th year (Neh 2:1). The debate arises because of the account of the religious revival under Ezra, which is inserted as chapters 8-10 of Nehemiah.

Perhaps there is a simple reason why this "Ezra story" was included in the Book of Nehemiah. It was used to emphasize the truth that rebuilding the Law of God in the hearts of the people was just as important as rebuilding a wall of stone around the nation's capital city. This was a spiritual, life-sustaining wall that no enemy could batter down.

**ESTHER** [ESS ter] (a star)-the Jewish queen of the Persian king AHASUERUS (Xerxes)

Esther saved her people, the Jews, from a plot to eliminate them. A daughter of Abihail (Esther 2:15; 9:29) and a cousin of Mordecai (Esther 2:7,15), Esther were raised by Mordecai as his own daughter after her mother and father died. Esther was a member of a family carried into captivity about 600 B.C. that later chose to stay in Persia rather than return to Jerusalem. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means "myrtle" (Esther 2:7).

The story of Esther's rise from an unknown Jewish girl to become the queen of a mighty empire illustrates how God used events and people as instruments to fulfill His promise to His Chosen People. Following several days of revelry, the drunken king Ahasuerus-generally identified with Xerxes I (reigned 486-465 B.C.)-Asked his queen, Vashti, to display herself to his guests. When Vashti courageously refused, she was banished from the palace. Ahasuerus then had "all the beautiful young virgins" (Esther 2:3) of his kingdom brought to his palace to choose Vashti's replacement.

Scripture records that "the young woman [Esther] was lovely and beautiful" (Esther 2:7). The king loved Esther more than all the other women. He appointed her queen to replace Vashti (Esther 2:17).

At the time, HAMAN was Ahasuerus' most trusted advisor. An egotistical and ambitious man, Haman demanded that people bow to him as he passed-something which Mordecai, a devout Jew, could not do in good conscience. In rage, Haman sought revenge, not only on Mordecai but also on the entire Jewish population of the empire. He persuaded the king to issue an edict permitting him to kill all the Jews and seize their property.

With great tact and skill, Esther exposed Haman's plot and true character to the king. As a result, Ahasuerus granted the Jews the right to defend themselves and to destroy their enemies. With ironic justice, "they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai" (Esther 7:10).

Even today Jews celebrate their deliverance from this edict at the Feast of PURIM (Esther 9:26-32), celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the month of Adar.

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## BOOK OF ESTHER

A historical book of the Old Testament that shows how God preserved His Chosen People. The book is named for its main personality, Queen Esther of Persia, whose courage and quick thinking saved the Jewish people from disaster.

### Structure of the Book

The Book of Esther reports on actual events, but it is written like a short story. The main characters in this powerful drama are King Xerxes of Persia; his wife Queen Esther, a Jewish woman; his second in command, Haman, recently promoted by the king; and Mordecai, a leader among the Jewish people who are scattered throughout the Persian Empire. In an attempt to stamp out the Jews, Haman manipulates the king into issuing an order calling for their execution. But Esther uses her royal favor to intervene and expose Haman's plot. Ironically, in a dramatic twist of plot, Haman is hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai's execution, and Mordecai is promoted to prime minister. The Jewish people are granted revenge against their enemies. They also celebrate by instituting the Feast of PURIM to mark their miraculous deliverance.

### Authorship and Date

For centuries scholars have debated the question of who wrote the Book of Esther. The Jewish historian Josephus claimed it was written by Mordecai. But many modern scholars dispute this because Mordecai is mentioned in the past tense in the final chapter of the book. Until new evidence emerges, the author must remain unknown.

The question of date can be answered with greater certainty. The reign of the Persian king Xerxes (Esther 1:1, NIV) lasted for about 20 years, beginning about 485 B.C. So Esther must have been written some time shortly after 465 B.C.

### Historical Setting

The Book of Esther is valuable historically because it gives us a view of the Jewish people who were scattered throughout the ancient world about 475 B.C. The events in the book occurred about 100 years after the leading citizens of the Jewish nation were carried into exile by Babylon in 587 B.C. Shortly after the Persians overthrew the Babylonians, they allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their native land. Many did return to Jerusalem, but thousands of Jewish citizens chose to remain in Persia, probably because this had become home to them during their long separation from their native land. Thus, this book shows clearly that God protects His Chosen People, even when they are scattered among the nations of the world.

### Theological Contribution

The Book of Esther is a major chapter in the struggle of the people of God to survive in the midst of a hostile world. Beginning with the Book of Genesis, God had made it clear that he would bless His Covenant People and bring a curse upon those who tried to do them harm (Gen 12:1,3). The Book of Esther shows how God has kept this promise at every stage of history. Just as Haman met his death on the gallows, we can trust God to protect us from the enemy, Satan, and to work out His ultimate purpose of redemption in our lives.

### Special Considerations

One unusual fact about this book is that it never mentions the name of God. For this reason some people believe Esther has no place in the Bible. They see it as nothing but a fiercely patriotic Jewish book that celebrates the victory of the Jews over their enemies.

This harsh criticism is unfair to Esther. A careful reading will reveal that the book does have a spiritual base. Queen Esther calls the people to prayer and fasting (4:16), and God's protection of His people speaks of His providence. The book also teaches a valuable lesson about the sovereignty of God: although the enemies of the Covenant People may triumph for a season, He holds the key to ultimate victory.

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# Cyrus II

born 590, –580 BC, Media, or Persis [now in Iran]  
died c. 529, , Asia

*byname* **Cyrus The Great** conqueror who founded the Achaemenian empire, centred on Persia and comprising the Near East from the Aegean Sea eastward to the Indus River. He is also remembered in the Cyrus legend—first recorded by Xenophon, Greek soldier and author, in his *Cyropaedia*—as a tolerant and ideal monarch who was called the father of his people by the ancient Persians. In the Bible he is the liberator of the Jews who were captive in Babylonia.

## Life and legend

Cyrus was born between 590 and 580 BC, either in Media or, more probably, in Persis, the modern Fars province of Iran. The meaning of his name is in dispute, for it is not known whether it was a personal name or a throne name given to him when he became a ruler. It is noteworthy that after the Achaemenian empire the name does not appear again in sources relating to Iran, which may indicate some special sense of the name.

Most scholars agree, however, that Cyrus the Great was at least the second of the name to rule in Persia. One cuneiform text in Akkadian—the language of Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) in the pre-Christian era—asserts he was the son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teuspes, great king, king of Anshan, of a family [which] always [exercised] kingship.

In any case, it is clear that Cyrus came from a long line of ruling chiefs. The most important source for his life is the Greek historian Herodotus. The idealized biography by Xenophon is a work for the edification of the Greeks concerning the ideal ruler, rather than a historical treatise. It does, however, indicate the high esteem in which Cyrus was held, not only by his own people, the Persians, but by the Greeks and others. Herodotus says that the Persians called Cyrus their father, while later Achaemenian rulers were not so well regarded. The story of the childhood of Cyrus, as told by Herodotus with echoes in Xenophon, may be called a Cyrus *legend* since it obviously follows a pattern of folk beliefs about the almost superhuman qualities of the founder of a dynasty. Similar beliefs also exist about the founders of later dynasties throughout the history of Iran. According to the legend, Astyages, the king of the Medes and overlord of the Persians, gave his daughter in marriage to his vassal in Persis, a prince called Cambyses. From this marriage Cyrus was born. Astyages, having had a dream that the baby would grow up to overthrow him, ordered Cyrus slain. His chief adviser, however, instead gave the baby to a shepherd to raise. When he was 10 years old, Cyrus, because of his outstanding qualities, was discovered by Astyages, who, in spite of the dream, was persuaded to allow the boy to live. Cyrus, when he reached manhood in Persis, revolted against his maternal grandfather and overlord. Astyages marched against the rebel, but his army deserted him and surrendered to Cyrus in 550 BC.

## Cyrus' conquests

After inheriting the empire of the Medes, Cyrus first had to consolidate his power over Iranian tribes on the Iranian plateau before expanding to the west. Croesus, king of Lydia in Asia Minor (Anatolia), had enlarged his domains at the expense of the Medes when he heard of the fall of Astyages, and Cyrus, as successor of the Median king, marched against Lydia. Sardis, the Lydian capital, was captured in 547 or 546, and Croesus was either killed or burned himself to death, though according to other sources he was taken prisoner by Cyrus and well treated. The Ionian Greek cities on the Aegean Sea coast, as vassals of the Lydian king, now became subject to Cyrus, and most of them submitted peacefully. Several revolts of the Greek cities were later suppressed with severity. Next Cyrus turned to Babylonia, where the dissatisfaction of the people with the ruler Nabonidus gave him a pretext for invading the lowlands. The conquest was quick, for even the priests of Marduk, the national deity of the great metropolis of Babylon, had become estranged from Nabonidus. In October 539 BC, the greatest city of the ancient world fell to the Persians.

In the Bible (e.g., Ezra 1:1–4), Cyrus is famous for freeing the Jewish captives in Babylonia and allowing them to return to their homeland. Cyrus was also tolerant toward the Babylonians and others. He conciliated local populations by supporting local customs and even sacrificing to local deities. The capture of Babylon delivered not only Mesopotamia into

the hands of Cyrus but also Syria and Palestine, which had been conquered previously by the Babylonians. The ruler of Cilicia in Asia Minor had become an ally of Cyrus when the latter marched against Croesus, and Cilicia retained a special status in Cyrus' empire. Thus it was by diplomacy as well as force of arms that he established the largest empire known until his time.

Cyrus seems to have had several capitals. One was the city of Ecbatana, modern Hamadan, former capital of the Medes, and another was a new capital of the empire, Pasargadae, in Persis, said to be on the site where Cyrus had won the battle against Astyages. The ruins today, though few, arouse admiration in the visitor. Cyrus also kept Babylon as a winter capital.

No Persian chauvinist, Cyrus was quick to learn from the conquered peoples. He not only conciliated the Medes but united them with the Persians in a kind of dual monarchy of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus had to borrow the traditions of kingship from the Medes, who had ruled an empire when the Persians were merely their vassals. A Mede was probably made an adviser to the Achaemenian king, as a sort of chief minister; on later reliefs at Persepolis, a capital of the Achaemenian kings from the time of Darius, a Mede is frequently depicted together with the great king. The Elamites, indigenous inhabitants of Persis, were also the teachers of the Persians in many ways, as can be seen, for example, in the Elamite dress worn by Persians and by Elamite objects carried by them on the stone reliefs at Persepolis. There also seems to have been little innovation in government and rule, but rather a willingness to borrow, combined with an ability to adapt what was borrowed to the new empire. Cyrus was undoubtedly the guiding genius in the creation not only of a great empire but in the formation of Achaemenian culture and civilization.

Little is known of the family life of Cyrus. He had two sons, one of whom, Cambyses, succeeded him; the other, Bardiya (Smerdis of the Greeks), was probably secretly put to death by Cambyses after he became ruler. Cyrus had at least one daughter, Atossa (who married her brother Cambyses), and possibly two others, but they played no role in history. When Cyrus defeated Astyages he also inherited Median possessions in eastern Iran, but he had to engage in much warfare to consolidate his rule in this region. After his conquest of Babylonia, he again turned to the east, and Herodotus tells of his campaign against nomads living east of the Caspian Sea. According to the Greek historian, Cyrus was at first successful in defeating the ruler of the nomads—called the Massagetai—who was a woman, and captured her son. On the son's committing suicide in captivity, his mother swore revenge and defeated and killed Cyrus. Herodotus' story may be apocryphal, but Cyrus' conquests in Central Asia were probably genuine, since a city in farthest Sogdiana was called Cyreschata, or Cyropolis, by the Greeks, which seems to prove the extent of his Eastern conquests.

## The legacy of Cyrus

It is a testimony to the capability of the founder of the Achaemenian empire that it continued to expand after his death and lasted for more than two centuries. But Cyrus was not only a great conqueror and administrator; he held a place in the minds of the Persian people similar to that of Romulus and Remus in Rome or Moses for the Israelites. His saga follows in many details the stories of hero and conquerors from elsewhere in the ancient world. The manner in which the baby Cyrus was given to a shepherd to raise is reminiscent of Moses in the bulrushes in Egypt, and the overthrow of his tyrannical grandfather has echoes in other myths and legends. There is no doubt that the Cyrus saga arose early among the Persians and was known to the Greeks. The sentiments of esteem or even awe in which Persians held him were transmitted to the Greeks, and it was no accident that Xenophon chose Cyrus to be the model of a ruler for the lessons he wished to impart to his fellow Greeks.

In short, the figure of Cyrus has survived throughout history as more than a great man who founded an empire. He became the epitome of the great qualities expected of a ruler in antiquity, and he assumed heroic features as a conqueror who was tolerant and magnanimous as well as brave and daring. His personality as seen by the Greeks influenced them and Alexander the Great, and, as the tradition was transmitted by the Romans, may be considered to influence our thinking even now. In the year 1971, Iran celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the monarchy by Cyrus.

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## CYRUS

[SIGH russ] (meaning unknown)-the powerful king of Persia (559-530 B.C.), sometimes called "Cyrus the Great," who allowed the Jewish captives to return to their homeland in Jerusalem after he led the Persians to become the dominant nation in the ancient world. Within 20 years after becoming king of Persia, Cyrus had conquered the Medes, Lydians, and Babylonians (549, 547, and 539 B.C., respectively). He is praised most highly, in the Old Testament, in Isa 44:28 and 45:1, where he is called God's "shepherd" and His "anointed."

Cyrus first appears in the Old Testament in connection with the release of the Jewish captives (taken in the Babylonian captivity of Judah), when he proclaimed their return from CAPTIVITY (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). This restoration, which was highlighted by the rebuilding of the TEMPLE in Jerusalem, had been prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 29:10-14; also see Isa 44:28). The Book of Ezra contains a number of reports on the progress of the work related to the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 3:7; 4:3,5; 5:13,14,17; 6:3,14). The only other references to Cyrus occur in Dan 1:21; 6:28; 10:1.

Cyrus was known in Persia as a wise and tolerant ruler. He was able to gain the goodwill of the varied ethnic and religious groups within his large empire, which extended from India to the western edge of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Old Testament describes him as chosen by the Lord God of Israel as the deliverer of His people. It was not that Cyrus became a follower of Israel's God; rather, he described himself as the one who received "all the kingdoms of the earth." He declared that God "commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem" (2 Chron 36:23). The famous Cyrus Cylinder containing records of Cyrus' reign, revealed that Babylon's chief god, Marduk, had accepted Cyrus as "righteous prince," and had appointed him ruler "over the whole world."

Ezra 6:1-12 gives some idea of the careful organization carried out by Cyrus in relation to the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Its dimensions and the materials and supplies required are carefully described, along with the specification of severe penalties for anyone who would change his orders regarding its construction.

Cyrus' reign ended in 530 B.C., when he was killed in battle. His tomb still stands at Pasargadae in southwestern Iran. He was succeeded by his son, Cambyses II..

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## **MALACHI** [MAL ah kie] (my messenger)

Old Testament prophet and author of the prophetic book, which bears his name. Nothing is known about Malachi's life except the few facts that may be inferred from his prophecies. He apparently prophesied after the CAPTIVITY, during the time when NEHEMLAH was leading the people to rebuild Jerusalem's wall and recommit themselves to following God's Law. The people's negligence in paying tithes to God was condemned by both Nehemiah and Malachi (Neh 13:10-14; Mal 3:8-10).

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## **MALACHI, BOOK OF**

A short prophetic book of the Old Testament written to rebuke the people of Israel for their shallow worship practices. The name comes from the Hebrew word Malachi (1:1), meaning "my messenger" or "messenger of Jehovah."

### **Structure of the Book.**

Portions of Malachi are written in the format of a debate, unlike any other book of the Bible. God first makes a statement of truth that is then denied by the people. God then refutes their argument in great detail, restating and proving the truth of His original statement (1:2-7; 2:10-17; 3:7-10). Malachi also uses questions and answers freely to focus his accusations toward the priesthood as well as the people. These features make Malachi one of the most argumentative books of the Bible.

### **Authorship and Date.**

Some scholars believe the word Malachi should be interpreted as a description ("my messenger") rather than as the name of a specific person. This line of reasoning concludes that the book was written by an unknown author. But no other book of prophecy in the Old Testament was written anonymously. Although nothing else is known about this person, the weight of tradition has assumed the book was written by a prophet named Malachi. The prophecy can be specifically dated at about 450 B.C.

### **Historical Setting.**

Malachi was addressed to the nation of Israel about 100 years after its return from captivity in Babylon. At first the people had been enthusiastic about rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple and restoring their system of worship. But their zeal soon began to wane. They wondered about God's love for them as His Chosen People. They began to offer defective animals as sacrifices and to withhold their tithes and offerings. Malachi was written to call the people back to authentic worship of their Redeemer God.

### **Theological Contributions.**

The prophecy of Malachi is noted for its vivid portrayal of the love of God as well as His might and power. Israel needed to be reminded of these truths at a time when widespread doubt had dashed its expectations of the Messiah.

### **Special Considerations.**

Malachi leaves us with the feeling that the story is not yet finished, that God still has promises to fulfill on behalf of His people. After Malachi came 400 long years of silence. But when the time was right, heaven would burst forth in song at the arrival of the Messiah.

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## Persia Empire

**PERSIA** [PURR zyah]-An ancient world empire that flourished from 539-331 B.C. The Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians, setting the stage for the return of the Hebrew people to Jerusalem about 538-445 B.C., following their long period of captivity by the Babylonians.

The Old Testament contains many references to the nation of Persia and its representatives. Ezra 9:9 refer to the "kings of Persia." Ezra 6:14 cite "Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." Dan 8:20 speak of the "kings of Media and Persia." Dan 10:13 mentions the "prince of the kingdom of Persia." The Book of Esther refers to the "powers of Persia and Media" (1:3), the "seven princes of Persia and Media" (1:14), and the "ladies of Persia and Media" (1:18). Dan 5:28 prophesied that Belshazzar's kingdom would be "given to the Medes and Persians."

The Persians apparently sprang from a people from the hills of Russia known as Indo-Aryans. As early as 2000 B.C., they began to settle in Iran and along the Black Sea coast. Two of these Indo-European tribes settled on the Elamite border and to the east of the Zagros Mountain ranges. The first references to them are made in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.). They are noted as the Parsua (Persians) and Madai (Medes).

The first mention of a Persian chieftain refers to his role as an ally aligned against Sennacherib of Assyria. His son was called "King, Great King, King of the City of Anshan." His grandson fathered Cyrus II, who was one of the most celebrated kings of history. He is called by the prophet Isaiah "My shepherd" (Isa 44:28). In another passage he is referred to as "His [the Lord's] Anointed" (Isa 45:1), a term used in the Old Testament of the Messiah.

Cyrus II, founder of the mighty Persian Empire, ascended the throne in Anshan in 559 B.C. He conquered the Median King Astyages. Then he defeated Lydia (about 546 B.C.) and Babylon (about 539 B.C.), finally establishing the Persian Empire. This last conquest is referred to in Dan 5. Cyrus' rule was a result of the sovereignty of God. In contrast to previous rulers, especially the Assyrians, Cyrus was humane and benevolent toward those whom he defeated. Cyrus was the Persian king who issued the decree restoring the Jews to their homeland, following their long period of captivity by the Babylonians (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).

Cyrus was the founder of the system under which each province, or Persian satrapy, was governed by an official who answered to the great king. However, he allowed a remarkable degree of freedom of religion and customs for the vassal states, including Palestine. He developed roads, cities, postal systems, and legal codes, and treated the subject nations kindly and humanely. Cyrus accomplished all of this because he was God's tool-just as Assyria, who conquered Israel, was God's rod of anger. Hence the Bible refers to Cyrus in favorable terms (Isa 44:28-45:3).

Cambyes II (530-522 B.C.), the son of Cyrus, reigned after his father. During his reign, Egypt was added to the list of nations conquered by Persia. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Cambyes accidentally wounded himself with his own sword in 522 B.C. Some believe he committed suicide.

The next Persian king, Darius I (521-486 B.C.), was not a direct descendant of Cyrus but was of royal, Achaemenid blood. He defeated nine kings to claim all 23 Persian satrapies. This was recorded on the famous Behistun Inscription, which was written in the Akkadian, Elamite, and Old Persian languages.

Darius I further unified the Persian Empire by using an efficient gold coinage, state highways, and a more efficient postal system. He was defeated by the Greeks at the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. This is the same Darius who, in his second

year, ordered the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem to be rebuilt after work on it had been discontinued for 14 years (Ezra 4:24; 6:1). He also gave a generous subsidy that made it possible to complete the Temple. The extent of the Persian Empire under Darius is reflected in Est 1:1 and 10:1. The vast territory was nearly 4,900 kilometers (3,000 miles) long and 800-2,400 kilometers (500 to 1,500 miles) wide.

Xerxes ruled Persia from 486 to 465 B.C. He was the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Esther did not become queen until the seventh year of his reign, which would be about 478 B.C. This was two years after his devastating defeat at Salamis (480 B.C.), which ended Persia's last hope for conquering Greece.

Another Persian king, Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464-424 B.C.), illustrates one of the ironies of history. This minor Persian king was of major importance because of his connection with the Hebrew people. Apparently two of the three returns of the Jewish people from captivity in Babylon occurred during his reign. The second return was apparently under Ezra. This was made possible because of the generosity of Artaxerxes. The third return occurred in 445 B.C. (Neh 1:1). The specific purpose of this return to Jerusalem was to rebuild the city walls.

Among the kingdoms of the ancient world, Persia is remembered because it built many important cities. PERSEPOLIS was a showpiece of Persian power. Pasargadae was the ancestral capital rapidly supplanted in importance. ECBATANA served as the capital of the Median Empire and became a resort area for the Persians. SUSA (the Shushan of Esther) was the former capital of the Elamite Empire.

The religion of the Persians centered around a reformation of the old Iranian religions developed by Zoroaster. He believed in a dualism in which Ahura Mazda (or Ormazd) headed the gods of goodness (Amesha Spentas) and Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) headed the gods of evil (daevas). Some of this is revealed in the Jewish apocryphal literature, which developed from the fifth century B.C. to the time of Christ.

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## Roman Empire

The powerful pagan empire that controlled most of the known world during New Testament times, Rome was founded in 753 B.C. by Romulus, who became its first king. The little kingdom grew in size and importance, absorbing its immediate neighbors through the reign of seven kings, until the tyranny of Tarquinius Superbus drove the people to revolt and to take the government into their own hands. A republic was established, and Roman citizens had a voice in governmental affairs. During the period of the republic, Rome extended her borders throughout all of Italy and the known world.

In 63 B.C., Judea became formally subject to Rome and this was the case during the entire New Testament period. The republic was subject to internal strife, which eventually led to the decline of a people-oriented government. The emperor Octavian, who was also known as Augustus, became emperor in 27 B. C. He was still reigning at the time of Jesus' birth.

### **Roman Religion**

The religion that was native to Rome was basically primitive in nature. The Romans believed that impersonal spirits or supernatural powers inhabited such natural objects as trees, streams, and earth. They believed that these spirits affected one's personal life for good or evil.

But the most striking feature of Roman religion was its ability to merge the best features of several religions. As the empire expanded, it imported and assimilated many religious ideas and pagan gods from Greece and the Orient. Roman gods were fused and identified with the gods of the Greeks. Buildings, temples, and monuments to these gods were erected. Astrological beliefs and magical practices flourished.

An "imperial ruler cult" developed in the first century B.C. when the Roman senate voted to deify Julius Caesar and to dedicate a temple to his honor. Among all the emperors, only Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Claudius were deified. This phenomenon apparently had more political than religious meaning.

Throughout the entire New Testament period, various emperors ruled over the Roman Empire. During the reign of Augustus, Christ was born. His crucifixion occurred during the reign of the succeeding emperor Tiberius. The martyrdom of James, the brother of John, took place in the reign of the emperor Claudius (Acts 11:28; 12:1-2). It was to the emperor Nero that Paul appealed (Acts 25:11). The destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jesus (Matt 24; Mark 13:1; Luke 19:41-44) was accomplished in the year A.D. 70 by Titus, who later became emperor. Thus, the entire New Testament story unfolded under the reign of Roman emperors.

The Roman Empire reached the height of its power from about A.D. 100 to 175. By the end of the century, however, the Romans and their power had begun to decline. Because of the vast expanse of its territory, the Empire grew increasingly difficult to administer. High taxation and political infighting also took their toll.

Morally, Rome was also a sick society; its life of sin and debauchery served to hasten its collapse from within, even as barbaric tribes moved in to challenge the Romans' military rule. By A.D. 450 the Roman Empire was only a skeleton of its former self, reduced to a third-rate power among the nations of the ancient world.

### **The Jews Within the Empire**

Contact between Rome and the Jews took place when some of the Jews were scattered to various parts of the Mediterranean world and when Rome moved into Palestine as a part of its eastern expansion. Technically, however, contact between the Romans and the Jews began in 63 B.C., when Pompey marched into the land of Palestine.

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From the time of the Captivity in Babylon-or perhaps even earlier-many Jews made their homes outside Palestine. While some of them did this for economic reasons; others had been deported as prisoners of war to such places as Assyria and Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah indicated that some Jews had settled in Egypt during his time (Jer 44:1).

Under Roman rule the Jews were given a special status with certain legal rights. They were permitted to practice their own religion and to build their synagogues. They also were exempt from military service and were not required to appear in court on the Sabbath.

Relationships between the Jews and the Romans were mostly positive. But a few major disturbances did occur. The emperor Caligula alienated the Jews by opposing their belief in one God and forcibly erecting a statue of himself in their synagogues. Also, in A.D. 19, the emperor Tiberius expelled some Jews from Italy. This edict was renewed under Claudius in A.D. 49 (Acts 18:2). Apparently this edict did not last long, because Jews were living in Rome when Paul arrived there about A.D. 62.

The situation of the Jews varied considerably under the different Roman rulers. Basically, the Romans treated the Jews fairly. Herod the Great rebuilt the Temple in 20 B.C., and Herod Agrippa sought Jewish favor by persecuting the Christians (Acts 12:1-3). Archelaus, on the other hand, was a cruel and tyrannical ruler who massacred many Jews (Matt 2:22).

Resentful of the presence of these foreign oppressors, the Jews refused to recognize anyone but God as sovereign. Revolutionary activities of Jewish nationalists such as the ZEALOTS increased and threatened the peace in Palestine. By A.D. 66, Rome was forced to subdue a Jewish revolt in Judea. And in A.D. 70, Titus, a Roman general who later became emperor, marched on the city of Jerusalem to destroy Jewish resistance. Many Jews lost their lives by crucifixion and other violent means. A small group of freedom fighters held out at Masada, but they took their own lives just before the Roman soldiers broke into their fortress.

The destruction of Jerusalem did not wipe out the Jewish state or religion. In some ways, it made the Jews more determined to resist. During the next 60 years Rome and the Jews clashed on a number of occasions. From A.D. 132-135 a second rebellion was led by a self-proclaimed messiah, Simon Bar Cochba. Hadrian, emperor at the time, issued an edict, which virtually destroyed Judaism. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Roman colony, complete with a pagan Roman temple, erected on the site of the Jewish Temple. The province of Judea was replaced by Syria Palestine. In this rebellion, some 500,000 Jews were killed and many others were sold into slavery. Those who survived were scattered beyond this new province.

Christianity Within the Empire. The birth and development of Christianity took place within the borders of the Roman Empire. The New Testament contains several references to Romans who were ruling at this time. Among them were CAESAR AUGUSTUS (Luke 2:1), QUIRINIUS (Luke 2:2), and TIBERIUS CAESAR (Luke 3:1; 20:22). Other minor officials ruled on behalf of Rome, particularly those of the Herodian dynasty.

The Book of Acts shows how Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Under Paul, the great missionary to the Gentiles, the gospel may have been preached as far west as Spain (Rom 15:28). A Christian church existed in Rome as early as A.D. 50 (Acts 18:2-3). By the time Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans (A.D. 58), a large Christian community existed in the imperial city.

Paul's appearance in Rome was ironic, because he came as a prisoner and not as a missionary (Acts 25:12; 27:1; 28:19-31). Here he was held in confinement awaiting a trial that apparently never took place. According to tradition, Paul lost his life under Nero's persecution about A.D. 64.

In its early stages, Christianity was regarded by Rome as a sect of Judaism. This is why it was ignored during its early years. On several occasions, Roman authorities viewed conflicts between Jews and Christians as an internal matter, not worthy of their attention (Acts 18:12-17). When Christians were accused by the Jews of breaking the law, they were acquitted (Acts 16:35-39). Rome even protected Christians from Jewish fanatics (Acts 19:28-41; 22:22-30; 23:23-24) and assured Paul the right of a proper trial (Acts 23:26; 28:31).

Most Christians had a positive and respectful attitude toward Roman authority. They were careful not to promote any revolutionary or treasonous acts. Jesus spoke about paying taxes (Mark 12:17). Paul reminded his readers to respect, pray for, and honor governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Titus 3:1). Peter admonished the churches: "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

The first known persecution of Christians by the Roman authorities took place under Nero. But this was an isolated case and not a general policy. Many Christians, including Paul, lost their lives at this time. Tacitus, a Roman historian, refers to vast multitudes of Christians who were arrested, tortured, crucified, and burned.

Hardships came to Christians in parts of Asia while Domitian was emperor. Later, under Trajan, there were further problems, especially in Bithynia, where Pliny was governor (A.D. 112). Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was martyred during this persecution. Rome may have feared that Christians could become a political threat because they would not acknowledge Caesar as lord.

Marcus Aurelius took official action against Christianity. As emperor, he was responsible for the death of Justin Martyr (A.D. 165). Celcius (A.D. 249-251) launched attacks against Christians and, like Nero, used them as scapegoats for his own failures.

Under Diocletian intense persecution of the church took place for three years (A.D. 303-305). Many churches were destroyed. Bibles were burned, and Christians were martyred. With the coming of Constantine, however, this policy of persecution was reversed. His Edict of Milan in A.D. 313 made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

## Name of the Book

In our English Bibles the title of this portion of Scripture is "The Book of Daniel." In the Hebrew Bible the title is simply, "Daniel," which, in accordance with the custom followed in the Major and Minor Prophets, is the name of the author of the book. As in several other books of prophecy (e.g., Jeremiah and Hosea), the author is also the chief actor in the events recorded. These Old Testament writings bear these names in the very earliest lists and references. Jesus referred to the prophecies of this book as "spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). Our Lord's testimony is not simply that the book was named after Daniel, but that its prophecies were spoken by him.

The name Daniel has been identified in literature of several other ancient languages - Akkadian, Sabaeen, Palmyrene, Nabataean (J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC., p. 128), and in the Canaanite literature of Ras Shamra, where a hero named Daniel appears (Tale of Aqhat, ANET, 149-155).

Evangelical scholars usually identify the author of our book with the Daniel of Ezek 14:14,20; 28:3, where he is cited, along with Noah and Job, as an example of a righteous man. Those who deny the authenticity of Daniel claim that the Daniel of Ezekiel is "a figure of antique and cosmopolitan tradition, like the Noah-Utnapishtim of the flood story," etc. (Montgomery, ICC, p. 2). The Job and Noah of Ezekiel, however, are Biblical, not cosmopolitan, figures. We may therefore assume that the Daniel in Ezekiel is also the author of our book. (For the meaning of the name, see notes on Dan 1:6).

## Date and Authorship

Since the third century of the Christian era the date and authorship of Daniel have been a battleground between those who accept the Bible's claims for itself and those who do not. So far as is now known, every Jew and Christian of early antiquity accepted the book as having been written in the Babylonian and Persian periods of the sixth century, in and near the city of Babylon, as the book claims. The New Testament, as well as several non-Biblical works, unquestioningly accepts the genuineness of the book. A Neo-Platonist philosopher, Porphyry (A.D. 233-304), in controversy with Christians, saw that the book accurately relates the story of events that took place between the fifth century and the early second century. Specifically, it tells of the advent of the Medo-Persian and Greek empires, and especially the details of the career of one Antiochus Epiphanies, king of Syria 175-163 B.C., in his conflict with the king of Egypt and with the Jews in Palestine. So Porphyry, denying that the book was written as claimed, asserted that it was written in Palestine by a Jew living in the time of Antiochus, and that what was written as prophecy was really history. He further claimed that the book is accurate as history down to Antiochus, but inaccurate after him. Eusebius of Caesarea, Apollinaris, Methodius, and most notably, Jerome, wrote answers to Porphyry (see Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*, Prologue).

In modern times the rise of unbelief in church circles has brought about the resurrection of the arguments of both Porphyry and his opponents. As E. B. Pusey wrote, nearly a century ago: "Human inventiveness in things spiritual or unspiritual is very limited. It would be difficult probably to invent a new heresy. Objectors of old were as acute or more acute than those now; so that the ground was well-nigh exhausted" (Daniel the Prophet, p. iii).

The basic reason why some scholars deny the genuineness of Daniel is that they have previously rejected the possibility of predictive prophecy (see J. E. H. Thomson, *Daniel in Pulpit Commentary*, p. xliii). This, though usually left unstated, is sometimes frankly admitted (e.g., Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 755). Arguments advanced in support of the negative view are chiefly these: (1) The author makes historical blunders. (2) The Hebrew and Aramaic of Daniel are of types much later than the sixth century. (3) Several terms used are Persian and Greek words that a Jewish author of the sixth century could not have known. (4) The position of the book in the third section (Writings or Hagiographa) of the Old Testament indicates late origin, after the prophetic canon was closed. (5) There is no external testimony to the existence of Daniel prior to the second century. (6) The theological ideas of the book are too advanced for the sixth century. (7) The stories are fanciful, unhistorical, and unreal. (8) Apocalyptic literature, of which Daniel is an example, did not arise until "well down in the Hellenistic period" (Montgomery, ICC, p. 80).

Arguments used by modern apologists in support of the genuineness of Daniel are these: (1) the *prima facie* evidence of the testimony of the book; (2) its reception into the canon, which witnesses to the fact that Jews of the pre-Christian centuries believed in its authenticity; (3) the uniform testimony of the New Testament, including our Lord's own expressed opinion; (4) ancient direct external testimony (including Ezek 14:14,20; 28:3; I Macc 2:59,60; and several passages in Josephus); (5) evidence of the influence of Daniel before 165 B.C.; (6) rebuttal of the negative arguments regarding the ideas and history of the book. These have found especially strong support from archaeology. Most of the historical objections have been silenced by Boutflower and Dougherty (Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*; R. H. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*). Note particularly Montgomery's rather damaging admission (ICC, p. 72, 2nd full paragraph).

## Structure of the Book

A superficial examination might yield a division of the book into two main parts, each having six subdivisions of a chapter each: chapters 1-6, the Histories of Daniel; chapters 7-12, the Prophecies of Daniel. As is usual with such neat outlines, however, this two-part division is more apparent than real. Chapters 10-12, in fact, constitute an important unit by themselves.

The true basis of division must be sought in the fact that Section Dan 1:1-2:4 is in Hebrew, Section 2:4 b-7:28 is in Aramaic (Syriac, Chaldean), and Section Dan 8 is in Hebrew. This strange use of two languages, mysterious as it may be, is of divine intention and means something. Following C. A. Auberlen (*The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John*, 1857) and S. P. Tregelles (*Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, 1857) in seeing the shift in languages as the key to the thought structure - insofar as there is a structure -, we observe that the Book of Daniel carries a message of judgment and defeat for the Gentile world, of which the chief representatives at the time of the prophet were Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. The appropriate language in this Gentile-slanted portion (2:4 b-7:28) is Aramaic, the diplomatic and commercial language of the epoch. The book bears another message, one of hope and deliverance for God's oppressed but precious holy people, the Hebrews. For the Hebrew-slanted portion the language is, appropriately, Hebrew. This is not to say that Hebrews do not appear in chapters 2-7 nor Gentiles in chapters 8-12. It means only that the basic standpoint changes.

All of Daniel is a book of prophecy. This, from the Biblical standpoint, means merely that its author was a prophet (Matt 24:15; cf. Heb 1:1-2). Hence, while Biblical prophecy includes prediction, it is more than prediction. It may relate to events past, present, or future. It is always presented from a divinely given moral and spiritual point of view. So, the historical and hortatory portions are quite as prophetic as the predictive. On these grounds the following analysis appears.

## Historical Background

Ezekiel and Daniel were written in the Exile, a name customarily given to that period during which the Jews of the Judean kingdom were displaced from their country after the destruction of their temple, capital city, and commonwealth by Nebuchadnezzar. This destruction came in three stages: First, in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar brought Jehoiakim to his knees and carried off hostages, among them Daniel and his three associates (Dan 1:1-6; see below on 1:1). Later, 597 B.C., on another expedition to Palestine, after certain rebellious acts of the Judean kings Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin made punishment necessary, Nebuchadnezzar again made Jerusalem submit. This time he carried off 10,000 captives, among them king Jehoiachin and the young prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1-3; cf. 2 Chron 36:10; 2 Kings 24:8-20). Finally, in 587 B.C., after a long siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the Temple and broke up the entire Jewish community (2 Kings 25:1-7; Jer 34:1-7; 39:1-7; 52:2-11).

Restoration to the land began in 538 B.C., when the victorious Cyrus, king of the new Medo-Persian empire and conqueror of Babylon, in harmony with a general policy of restoring displaced peoples to their lands, decreed that the Jews might return (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Though some Jews remained in exile many years after permission was granted to return (indeed, a majority never returned as residents), the Exile as such, during which residence in Jerusalem by exiles was forbidden, lasted only about forty-eight years. The Temple, however, remained unrestored until about 515 B.C. (see Ezra 6:15), about seventy years after its destruction in 587. Jeremiah's prophecy of "seventy years," however, related to the period of servitude to Babylon (Jer 25:11) and included not only Judah but her neighbors. This was the period from 605 to 538, in round numbers, "seventy years" (cf. Dan 9:1-2, the date of which is 539/538 B.C.).

Many cultural and religious changes were thrust upon the Jews by their exile. Among these were the rise of synagogue worship in lieu of temple worship, and at least a beginning toward adoption of a second language - Aramaic (also called Syriac or Chaldean). A number of evidences lead to the conclusion that Abram's language was originally Aramaic. Biblical notices (Deut 26:5; Gen 31:47) show that the family from which Abram, Isaac, and Jacob sprang spoke Aramaic. Archaeological evidences (e.g., Moabite Stone, Ras Shamra tablets) demonstrate that the Canaanites spoke a language almost identical with Hebrew. So the Jews, ages earlier, even before the settlement in Canaan, had adopted "Canaanite," which, with minor evolution, became Hebrew. In Babylon they found Aramaic the language of commerce. It had also been the language of diplomacy for some time (cf. Isa 36:11-12). So, likely the Jews picked up the Aramaic, really very similar to Hebrew (although not identical with it by any means; see 2 Kings 18:26) and were for some time bilingual. This circumstance apparently lies behind the fact that six chapters of Daniel are in Hebrew.

## Form of Literature

Daniel is the first great book of Apocalypse. Though apocalypse is simply a Greek word meaning "unveiling" or "revelation" and is therefore quite properly a name for all of Scripture, especially the predictive portions, it is customary for the theologians and exegetes now to apply it exclusively to a certain type of literature of which Daniel is the only Old Testament example and Revelation the only New Testament example. There are apocalyptic portions in other books



(e.g., Zech 1:7-6:8), but no other Biblical books of Apocalypse. No conservative scholar could frame a definition of Apocalypse acceptable to the naturalistic temper of much present-day Biblical scholarship. For rationalists hold that falsely ascribed authorship and dates, as of the non-Biblical Jewish apocalyptic literature of the two centuries immediately before Christ, are of the essence of the Apocalyptic.

Those who view both Daniel and Revelation as authentic and truthful, hold Biblical Apocalyptic literature to be a form of predictive prophecy. It is distinguished chiefly by: (1) The employment of visions reported as seen (rather than digested and summarized, as with most prophecy). (2) Use of symbols predominantly as the vehicle of revelation - either interpreted (as the ram and goat of Dan 8), or left uninterrupted (as the woman clothed with the sun of Rev 12). (3) Prediction of the future of God's people (whether Israel or the Church) in relation to the nations of earth as consummated with the coming of Messiah. (4) Prose style rather than the poetic style characteristic of the other prophetic portions of the Old Testament.

### **Interpretation of Apocalypse**

The special character of Apocalypse requires the best effort of the interpreter and his humble dependence on God. No special hermeneutical rules for dealing with Apocalyptic literature have yet been successfully brought forth. Especially great care must be exercised that the rules for interpretation of non-Biblical apocalypse be not uncritically carried over into interpretation of Biblical Apocalypse. After all, only the inspired writings of Daniel and John are true Apocalypses. The others are false; and, however useful in supplying New Testament backgrounds or interesting in themselves to those who enjoy fanciful literature, they are still pseudepigrapha, i.e., spurious writings. They are all conscious imitations of true Apocalypse, of which Daniel is a shining Biblical model.

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## CITY OF BABYLON

[BAB uh lon]-ancient walled city between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and capital of the Babylonian Empire. The leading citizens of the nation of Judah were carried to this city as captives about 587 B.C. after Jerusalem fell to the invading Babylonians. Biblical writers often portrayed this ancient capital of the Babylonian people as the model of paganism and idolatry (Jer 51:44; Dan 4:30).

Babylon was situated along the Euphrates River about 485 kilometers (300 miles) northwest of the Persian Gulf and about 49 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of modern Baghdad in Iraq. Its origins are unknown. According to Babylonian tradition, it was built by the god Marduk. The city must have been built some time before 2300 B.C., because it was destroyed about that time by an invading enemy king. This makes Babylon one of the oldest cities of the ancient world. Gen 10:10 mentions Babel as part of the empire of Nimrod.

Some time during its early history, the city of Babylon became a small independent kingdom. Its most famous king was HAMMURABI (about 1728-1686 B.C.), who conquered southern Mesopotamia and territory to the north as far as Mari. He was known for his revision of a code of law that showed concern for the welfare of the people under his rule. But the dynasty, which he established, declined under his successors. It came to an end with the conquest of Babylon by the Hittite king Murshilish I about 1595 B.C. Then the Kassites took over for a period, ruling southern Mesopotamia from the city of Babylon as their capital. The Assyrians attacked and plundered Babylon about 1250 B.C., but it recovered and flourished for another century until the Assyrians succeeded in taking over the city with their superior forces about 1100 B.C.

After Tiglath-Pileser I of Assyria arrived on the scene, the city of Babylon became subject to Assyria by treaty or conquest. Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) declared himself king of Babylon with the name Pulu (Pul, 2 Kings 15:19), deporting a number of its citizens to the subdued territory of the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17:24).

In 721 B.C. a Chaldean prince, Marduk-apal-iddin, seized control of Babylon and became a thorn in Assyria's side for a number of years. He apparently planned a large-scale rebellion of eastern and western parts of the Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 20:12). In retaliation against this rebellion, Sennacherib of Assyria (704-681 B.C.) attacked Babylon in 689 B.C., totally destroying it, although it was rebuilt by his successor Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.). After this, Assyrian power gradually weakened, so the city and kingdom of Babylon grew stronger once again.

In 625 B.C. Nabopolassar seized the throne of Babylon. He was succeeded by Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.), the greatest king of Babylon, who enlarged the capital city to an area of six square miles and beautified it with magnificent buildings. This period of the city's development has been the focal point of all archaeological research done in ancient Babylon. The city's massive double walls spanned both sides of the Euphrates River. Set into these walls was eight major gates. One of the numerous pagan temples in the city was that of the patron god Marduk, flanked by a ZIGGURAT or temple-tower. To this temple a sacred processional way led from the main gate, the Ishtar Gate. Both the gate and the walls facing the way were decorated with colored enameled bricks, which were decorated with lions, dragons, and bulls.

The city of Babylon also contained a palace complex, or residence for the king. On the northwest side of this palace area, the famous terraced "hanging gardens" may have been situated. According to tradition, Nebuchadnezzar built these gardens for one of his foreign wives to remind her of the scenery of her homeland.

Babylon's glory reflected the king's imperial power. Captured kings were brought to his court at Babylon. These included the Judean kings Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:15) and Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:7). During the reign of Nabonidus (555-539 B.C.), while Belshazzar was co-regent (Dan 5), the city surrendered to the Persians without opposition.

Eventually the balance of power passed from the Persians to Alexander the Great of Greece, to whom Babylon willingly submitted in 331 B.C. Alexander planned to refurbish and expand the city and make it his capital, but he died before accomplishing these plans. The city later fell into insignificance because one of Alexander's successors founded a new capital at Seleucia, a short distance away.

In the Old Testament the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the downfall of the city of Babylon. This would happen as God's punishment of the Babylonians because of their destruction of Jerusalem and their deportation of the citizens of Judah (Isa 14:22; 21:9; 43:14; Jer 50:9; 51:37). Today, the ruins of this ancient city stand as an eloquent testimony to the passing of proud empires and to the providential hand of God in history.

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# BOOK OF JEREMIAH

A major prophetic book of the Old Testament directed to the southern kingdom of Judah just before that nation fell to the Babylonians. The book is named for its author and central personality, the great prophet Jeremiah, who faithfully delivered God's message of judgment in spite of fierce opposition from his countrymen.

## Structure of the Book

Jeremiah, consisting of 52 chapters, is one of the longest books in the Bible. It is also one of the hardest to follow and understand. Unlike most of the other prophetic books, which have a chronological arrangement, the material in Jeremiah seems to follow no logical pattern. Prophecies delivered in the final years of his ministry may appear at any point in the book, followed by messages that belong to other periods in his life. Mingled with his prophecies of God's approaching judgment are historical accounts of selected events in the life of Judah, personal experiences from Jeremiah's own life, and poetic laments about the fate of his country. It is important to be aware of this if one wants to understand the message of this great prophetic book.

Perhaps the best way to get a big picture of the Book of Jeremiah is to break it down by types of literature. Basically, the first half of the book (chaps. 1-25) consists of poetry, while the second half (chaps. 26-52) is in prose or narrative-style writing. The poetry section of the book contains Jeremiah's prophecies of God's approaching judgment against Judah because of its sin and idolatry. The prose section contains a few of his prophecies, but the main emphasis is on Jeremiah and his conflicts with the kings who ruled in Judah during his ministry. Also included near the end of his book is a report on the fall of Jerusalem and Judah's final days as a nation (chaps. 39-41; 52), along with a narrative about Jeremiah's flight into Egypt with other citizens of Judah following its fall (chaps. 42-44)?

## Authorship and Date

Most conservative scholars agree that the author of the Book of Jeremiah was the famous prophet of that name who ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah during the final four decades of that nation's existence. But some scholars claim the book's disjointed arrangement proves it was compiled by an unknown author some time after Jeremiah's death. The book itself gives us a clue about how it may have taken its present form.

After prophesying against Judah for about 20 years, the prophet Jeremiah was commanded by God to put his messages in written form. He dictated these to his scribe or secretary, Baruch, who wrote them on a scroll (36:1-4). Because Jeremiah had been banned from entering the royal court, he sent Baruch to read the messages to King Jehoiakim. To show his contempt for Jeremiah and his message, the king cut the scroll apart and threw it in the fire (36:22-23). Jeremiah promptly dictated his book to Baruch again, adding "many similar words" (36:32) that had not been included in the first scroll.

This clear description of how a second version of Jeremiah came to be written shows the book was composed in several different stages during the prophet's ministry. The scribe Baruch was probably the one who added to the book at Jeremiah's command as it was shaped and refined over a period of several years. This is a possible explanation for the disjointed arrangement of the book. Baruch must have put the book in final form shortly after Jeremiah's death. This would place its final writing not long after 585 B.C.

We can learn a great deal about the prophet Jeremiah by reading his book. He was a sensitive poet who could weep over the sins of his nation: "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears" (9:1). But he was also a courageous man of God who could endure persecution and affliction. He narrowly escaped death several times as he carried out God's command to preach His message of judgment to a wayward people. A patriot who passionately loved his nation, he drew the tough assignment of informing his countrymen that Judah was about to fall to a pagan power. Many of his fellow citizens branded him a traitor, but he never wavered from the prophetic ministry to which God had called him.

With the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., most of the leading citizens of the nation were carried away as captives to Babylon. But Jeremiah was allowed to remain in Jerusalem with other citizens of Judah who were placed under the authority of a ruling governor appointed by Babylon. When the citizens of Jerusalem revolted against this official, Jeremiah and others were forced to seek safety in Egypt, where he continued his prophetic ministry (chaps. 43-44). This is the last we hear of this courageous prophet of the Lord.

## Historical Setting

The Book of Jeremiah belongs to a chaotic time in the history of God's Covenant People. Jeremiah's native land, the southern kingdom of Judah, was caught in a power squeeze between three great powers of the ancient world: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. As these empires struggled for dominance with one another, the noose grew tighter around Judah's neck.

To protect its borders, Judah entered into an alliance with Egypt against the Babylonians. But Jeremiah realized the alliance was too little and too late. For years his beloved nation had risked disaster as it rejected worship of the one true God and turned to pagan gods instead. Immorality, injustice, graft, and corruption prevailed throughout the land. God revealed to the prophet that he intended to punish His Covenant People by sending the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and carry the people into captivity. Jeremiah preached this message of judgment faithfully for about 40 years. At the beginning of his prophetic ministry, it appeared briefly that conditions might improve. King Josiah (ruled 641/40-609 B.C.) began reforms based on God's Law, but at his death the dark days of paganism returned. Josiah's successors continued their reckless pursuit of idolatry and foolish alliances with Egypt against the Babylonians. At the decisive battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., the Egyptians were soundly defeated. About 18 years later the Babylonians completed their conquest of Judah by destroying the capital city of Jerusalem. Just as Jeremiah had predicted, the leading citizens of Judah were carried to Babylon, where they remained in captivity for half a century.

### **Theological Contribution**

Jeremiah's greatest theological contribution was his concept of the new COVENANT (31:31-34). A new covenant between God and His people was necessary because the old covenant had failed so miserably; the captivity of God's people by a foreign power was proof of that. Although the old covenant had been renewed again and again throughout Israel's history, the people still continued to break the promises they had made to God. What was needed was a new type of covenant between God and His people—a covenant of grace and forgiveness written in man's heart, rather than a covenant of law engraved in stone.

As Jeremiah reported God's plan for this new covenant, he anticipated the dawning of the era of grace in the person of Jesus Christ more than 500 years in the future: "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the Lord. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (31:34).

### **Special Considerations**

Jeremiah was a master at using figures of speech, metaphors, and symbolic behavior to drive home his messages. He carried a yoke around his neck to show the citizens of Judah they should submit to the inevitable rule of the pagan Babylonians (27:1-12). He watched a potter mar a piece of clay, then reshape it into a perfect vessel. He applied this lesson to the nation of Judah, which needed to submit to the divine will of the Master Potter while there was still time to repent and avoid God's judgment (18:1-11).

But perhaps his most unusual symbolic act was his purchase of a plot of land in his hometown, Anathoth, about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jeremiah knew this land would be practically worthless after the Babylonians overran Jerusalem as he was predicting. But by buying the plot, he symbolized his hope for the future. Even in Judah's darkest hour, Jeremiah prophesied that a remnant would return from Babylon after their years in captivity to restore their way of life and to worship God again in the Temple (32:26-44). God directed Jeremiah to put the deed to the land in an earthen vessel so it would be preserved for the future: "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land' " (32:15).

Also see JEREMIAH.

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The year is 604 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon awakens after a disturbing dream. The dream was so disturbing that he hardly slept during the night. So he calls on his astrologers and demands that they not only interpret the dream but they are to tell him what the dream was! And if they can't tell him the dream and its interpretation, King Nebuchadnezzar is going to have them killed! Nebuchadnezzar wants to make sure that they tell him the truth and demonstrate proof of their powers by identifying the dream.

Certainly Nebuchadnezzar's demand was humanly impossible. But what is impossible with man is possible with God. Daniel inquires of God what the dream was and the interpretation thereof. Nebuchadnezzar grants Daniel an audience with the King and hears an amazing story.

God has chosen to reveal a staggering mystery to Nebuchadnezzar: God is showing him the future starting from the then-present time (604 B.C.) unto the End of the Age (the not-too-distant future). Now it is important to note that God does not reveal all nations that will exist throughout history. Rather, He reveals those nations significant in His plans for Israel, the Messiah Jesus Christ, and the final battle of the Ages known as Armageddon.

Here again, God is revealing and authenticating His Deity by revealing the future accurately before the future occurs. In fact, the events recorded in Daniel are so accurate that many non-believers have tried to date the Book of Daniel over 400 years later, after the events took place! This of course is incorrect and negates the startling and 100% accurate prophecies given by the Almighty God through His angels to Daniel.

Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was that of a metal man. The metal man had a head of GOLD, chest and arms of SILVER, waist and thighs of BRONZE, legs of IRON, and feet of IRON and CLAY. Notice that the metals decrease in value from precious, expensive and rare to ordinary, cheap and plentiful. Notice also that the metals increase in hardness from soft and malleable to hard and brittle.

The five partitions of metal represented are very significant to Bible prophecy. God is revealing that there are five Gentile Kingdoms that will rule over Israel. At least two important lessons are to be learned by this prophecy: 1) Israel can expect to be ruled by several kingdoms and 2) the world can gauge "what time it is" in God's prophetic clock by observing the Nation of Israel.

Of extreme significance is the absence of any reference to the Christian Church. Why? Because the Christian Church was a mystery not to be revealed to the Nation of Israel until a later date. This is reinforced later in Daniel when an Angel of God confirms that the prophecies are for Daniel's people (the Jews) and Daniel's Holy City (Jerusalem). Therefore, it is very important to understand these prophecies in the context of the Nation of Israel.

*(Pessimist View)*  
What are the five Gentile kingdoms that have ruled / will rule the Nation of Israel? They are easy to identify:

#	Gentile Kingdom	Image Symbol	Reign over Israel
1	Babylon (a)	Head of GOLD	625 B.C. TO 539 B.C.
2	Medo-Persia (b)	Chest and Arms of SILVER	539 B.C. TO 331 B.C.
3	Greece	Waist and Thighs of BRONZE	331 B.C. TO 164 B.C. (c)
4	Rome	Legs of IRON	164 B.C. - 70 A.D.
	Rise of Church, Decline of Israel	(Not represented in image)	32 A.D. - 70 A.D. (d)
	(Church Age)	(Not represented in image)	32 A.D. - Present (e)
	Rise of Israel, Decline of Church	(Not represented in image)	1948 - Future (d)
5	Antichrist	Feet of IRON and CLAY	7 Future Years (f)

#### Notes

- (a) Ancient Babylon was located where modern-day Iraq is now.
- (b) Medo-Persian empire eventually co-jointly ruled by Darius the Mede and Cyrus of Persia
- (c) Alexander the Great's general's (Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander and Seleucus) descendants Reign
- (d) Israel's temporary blindness to Gospel will cease at end of Church Age (Romans 11:25-29)
- (e) The Church, beginning at the Resurrection of Christ in 32 A.D., does NOT reign over Israel
- (f) The 7 Future Years do not begin until after the Church Age has ended and the focus is on Israel

As we now know, four of these kingdoms have come and gone. And we know that Israel was destroyed by the Roman Emperor Titus Vespasian in 70 A.D. Israel was scattered to all the nations of the world; just as prophesied by God. And now, in the 20th century, we have seen the rebirth of Israel as an independent nation in 1948. This is highly significant in light of Romans 11:25-29. Israel had not been in control of their Holy City Jerusalem, as an independent nation, since 586 B.C. After 2552 years, Israel recaptured the city of Jerusalem in 1967 during the Six-Day War. The Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is fertile again and the Fig Tree is putting forth her leaves.

What application does this have to modern man? We must recognize that the Church Age is winding down. Soon, the fifth and final Gentile kingdom to rule over the Nation of Israel will arise. It is this fifth and final Gentile kingdom that Jesus Christ destroys when He returns to Earth at the Battle of Armageddon.

## BOOK OF EZRA

A historical book of the Old Testament that describes the resettlement of the Hebrew people in their homeland after their long exile in Babylon. The book is named for its author and central figure, Ezra the priest, who led the exiles in a new commitment to God's Law after their return.

### Structure of the Book

The ten chapters of this book fall naturally into two main divisions, chapters 1-6, which report the return of the first wave of exiles to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, about 525 B.C., and chapters 7-Ezra, which describe the return of a second group under Ezra's leadership, about 458 B.C. One of the most unusual facts about the Book of Ezra is that its two major sections are separated by a time gap of about 80 years.

The book opens with a brief introduction that explains how the first return from exile happened. Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a proclamation allowing the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple and resettle their native land. About 50,000 of the people returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a Jewish citizen appointed by Cyrus as governor of Jerusalem (2:64-65). Arriving in about 525 B.C., they set to work immediately on the rebuilding project. In spite of some shrewd political maneuvering by their enemies, the work moved forward until the Temple was completed in 515 B.C. (6:14-15).

The second major section of the book (chaps. Ezra) reports on the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem with another group of exiles about 60 years after the Temple had been completed. Just as Zerubbabel had led the people to rebuild God's house, Ezra's mission was to lead his countrymen to rebuild the Law of God in their hearts. Ezra worked with another Jewish leader, Nehemiah, to bring about several reforms among the Jewish people in Jerusalem during this period. From the Book of Nehemiah (Neh 8:1-8), we learn that Ezra read the books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) aloud to the people. This led to a great religious revival throughout Jerusalem as the people committed themselves again to God's Law, confessed their sins (Neh 9:1-3), and renewed the covenant with their redeemer God (Neh 10).

We also learn from the final chapter of his book that Ezra was distressed at the Jewish men who had married non-Jewish women. He led these men to repent of their sin and divorce their pagan wives (10:17-44).

### Authorship and Date

Ezra has traditionally been accepted as the author of this book that bears his name, as well as the companion book of Nehemiah. In the Hebrew Old Testament, Ezra and Nehemiah appeared as one unbroken book, closely connected in theme and style to the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. The last two verses of 2 Chronicles are repeated in the first three verses of the Book of Ezra, probably indicating that they belonged together in the original version. For this reason, many scholars believe Ezra served as writer and editor compiler of all four of these books: 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. He probably drew from official court documents to compile 1 and 2 Chronicles.

This compilation theory also helps explain the strange 80-year gap between the two major sections of Ezra's book. He probably wrote about Zerubbabel's return many years after it happened, drawing from official court records or some other account of the event. To this he added his own personal memoirs, now contained in chapters Ezra of the Book of Ezra as well as chapters 8-10 of the Book of Nehemiah. The rest of the material in the Book of Nehemiah may have come from Nehemiah's memoirs, which Ezra incorporated into the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. The time for the final writing and compilation of all this material must have been some time late in the fifth century B.C.

### Historical Setting

The Book of Ezra belongs to the post-exilic period. These were the years just after a remnant of the nation returned to Jerusalem following their exile of about 50 years in Babylon. The return came about after the defeat of Babylon by the Persian Empire. Unlike the Babylonians, the Persians allowed their subject nations to live in their own native regions under the authority of a ruling governor. The Persians also practiced religious tolerance, allowing each nation to worship its own god. This explains the proclamation of Cyrus of Persia, which allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. Cyrus even returned the Temple treasures that the Babylonians took when they destroyed Jerusalem about 50 years earlier (1:7-11).

### **Theological Contribution**

The theme of the Book of Ezra is the restoration of the remnant of God's Covenant People in Jerusalem in obedience to his Law. The book shows clearly that God had acted to preserve His people, even when they were being held captives in a pagan land. But in their absence, the people had not been able to carry on the true form of Temple worship. Only in their Temple in Jerusalem, they believed, could authentic worship and sacrifice to their redeemer God be offered. This is why the rebuilding of the Temple was so important. Here they could restore their worship of God and find their true identity as God's people of destiny in the world.

The Book of Ezra also teaches a valuable lesson about the providence of God. Several different Persian kings are mentioned in this book. Each king played a significant role in returning God's Covenant People to their homeland and helping them restore the Temple as the center of their religious life. This shows that God can use the unrighteous as well as the righteous to work His ultimate will in the lives of His people.

### **Special Considerations**

Many scholars believe the Jewish people in Babylon and Persia must have numbered at least two million. Yet only about 50,000 chose to return to Jerusalem with the first group under Zerubbabel (2:64-65). This indicates that most of them probably had become comfortable with their lives in these foreign lands. Or perhaps the certainties of their present existence were more appealing than the uncertainties of life in Jerusalem—a city which most of them had never seen.

Some Bible readers are bothered by Ezra's treatment of the pagan women whom the Jewish men had married (10:10-19). How could he be so cruel as to insist that these wives be "put away" (divorced) with no means of support? His actions must be understood in light of the drastic situation that faced the Jewish community in Jerusalem following the Exile. Only a small remnant of the Covenant People had returned, and it was important for them to keep themselves from pagan idolatry and foreign cultural influences at all costs. Ezra must have realized, too, that this was one of the problems, which had led to their downfall and captivity as a people in the first place. Yet even the horrors of defeat and exile by the Babylonians had failed to teach the people a lesson. He was determined to stamp out the problem this time before it became a widespread practice among God's Covenant People.

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# Satrap

Provincial governor in the Achaemenian Empire. The division of the empire into provinces (satrapies) was completed by Darius I (reigned 522–486 BC), who established 20 satrapies with their annual tribute.

The satraps, appointed by the king, normally were members of the royal family or of Persian nobility, and they held office indefinitely. As the head of the administration of his province, the satrap collected taxes and was the supreme judicial authority; he was responsible for internal security and raised and maintained an army. To guard against abuse of powers, Darius instituted a system of controls over the satrap. Top satrapy officials and the commander of the garrison troops stationed in the province were directly responsible to the king, and periodic inspections were carried out by royal officials. With the weakening of central authority after the mid-5th century BC, however, the satraps often enjoyed virtual independence. The satrapal administration was retained by Alexander III the Great and his successors.

The title of satrap was also used to designate certain Saka chiefs who ruled over parts of northern and western India during the first half of the 1st millennium BC.

## DARIUS

[duh RYE us] (meaning unknown)-the name of several kings of ancient Persia:

1. Darius I, the Great, who reigned from about 522 to 485 B.C. He was one of the most able Persian kings, and is also known as Darius Hystaspis, or Darius, son of Hystaspis.

Darius spent the first three years of his reign putting down rebellions in the far-flung regions of his empire. After he had secured his power, he divided the empire into 29 satrapies, or provinces, each ruled by Persian or Median nobles. He made SHUSHAN, or Susa, his new capital and created a code of laws similar to the Code of HAMMURABI; this code of Darius was in effect throughout the Persian Empire.

An effective organizer and administrator, Darius developed trade, built a network of roads, established a postal system, standardized a system of coinage, weights, and measures, and initiated fabulous building projects at Persepolis, Ecbatana, and Babylon.

Darius continued Cyrus the Great's policy of restoring the Jewish people to their homeland. In 520 B.C., Darius' second year as king, the Jews resumed work on the still unfinished Temple in Jerusalem. Darius assisted with the project by ordering it to continue and even sending a generous subsidy to help restore worship in the Temple (Ezra 6:1-12). The Temple was completed in 515 B.C., in the sixth year of Darius' reign.

The final years of Darius' reign were marked by clashes with the rising Greek Empire in the western part of his domain. He led two major military campaigns against the Greeks, both of which were unsuccessful.

2. Darius II Ochus, the son of Artaxerxes I, who ruled over Persia from about 424 to 405 B.C. He was not popular or successful, and he spent much time putting down revolts among his subjects. His rule was marked by incompetence and misgovernment. Darius II may be the ruler referred to as "Darius the Persian" (Neh 12:22).

3. Darius III Codomannus, the king of Persia from 336 to 330 B.C. This Darius is probably the "fourth" king of Persia mentioned by the prophet Daniel (Dan 11:2). Darius III underestimated the strength of the army of ALEXANDER the Great when the Macedonians invaded Persia. He was defeated by Alexander in several major battles. He attempted to rally the eastern provinces of his empire, but he was hunted down in 330 B.C. and assassinated by his own followers. For all practical purposes, these events brought the Persian Empire to an end and marked the beginning of the period of Greek dominance in the ancient world.

4. Darius the Mede, successor of Belshazzar to the throne of Babylon (Dan 5:31). He is called the "son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes" (Dan 9:1). Darius the Mede has not been identified with certainty; he is not mentioned by Greek historians or in any Persian literature.

Darius the Mede was the Persian king who made Daniel a governor, or ruler, of several provincial leaders (Dan 6:1-2). Daniel's popularity with his subjects caused the other governors and the satraps under them to become jealous of Daniel and to plot against him. It was Darius the Mede who had Daniel thrown into the den of lions (Dan 6:6-9), but who ultimately issued a decree that all in his kingdom "must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (Dan 6:26). Much confusion and mystery have clouded the identity of Darius the Mede. Some scholars have denied the existence of such a ruler, concluding that the writer of the Book of Daniel was historically inaccurate in saying that Darius the Mede was the person who "received the kingdom" (Dan 5:31) when Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. Persian cuneiform inscriptions show that Cyrus II ("the Great") was the successor of Belshazzar.

One possible answer to this problem is that "Darius the Mede" was an alternative title used by the writer of the Book of Daniel for Cyrus the Persian (Cyrus II, the Great). Indeed in Dan 11:1, the SEPTUAGINT-the Greek translation of the Old Testament-has Cyrus instead of Darius. Thus, a quite legitimate translation of Dan 6:28 might read: "Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (NIV, margin) Such a logical and reasonable interpretation silences the skepticism about this passage in the Book of Daniel.

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# Darius I

Born 550 BC  
died 486

*byname* **Darius The Great** king of Persia in 522–486 BC, one of the greatest rulers of the Achaemenid dynasty, who was noted for his administrative genius and for his great building projects. Darius attempted several times to conquer Greece; his fleet was destroyed by a storm in 492, and the Athenians defeated his army at Marathon in 490.

## Ascension to monarchy.

Darius was the son of Hystaspes, the satrap (provincial governor) of Parthia. The principal contemporary sources for his history are his own inscriptions, especially the great trilingual inscription on the Bisitun (Behistun) rock at the village of the same name, in which he tells how he gained the throne. The accounts of his accession given by the Greek historians Herodotus and Ctesias are in many points obviously derived from this official version but are interwoven with legends.

According to Herodotus, Darius, when a youth, was suspected by Cyrus II the Great (who ruled from 559 to 529 BC) of plotting against the throne. Later Darius was in Egypt with Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus and heir to his kingdom, as a member of the royal bodyguard. After the death of Cambyses in the summer of 522 BC, Darius hastened to Media, where, in September, with the help of six Persian nobles, he killed Bardiya (Smerdis), another son of Cyrus, who had usurped the throne the previous March. In the Bisitun inscription Darius defended this deed and his own assumption of kingship on the grounds that the usurper was actually Gaumata, a Magian, who had impersonated Bardiya after Bardiya had been murdered secretly by Cambyses. Darius therefore claimed that he was restoring the kingship to the rightful Achaemenid house. He himself, however, belonged to a collateral branch of the royal family, and, as his father and grandfather were alive at his accession, it is unlikely that he was next in line to the throne. Some modern scholars consider that he invented the story of Gaumata in order to justify his actions and that the murdered king was indeed the son of Cyrus.

Darius did not at first gain general recognition but had to impose his rule by force. His assassination of Bardiya was followed, particularly in the eastern provinces, by widespread revolts, which threatened to disrupt the empire. In Susiana, Babylonia, Media, Sagartia, and Margiana, independent governments were set up, most of them by men who claimed to belong to the former ruling families. Babylonia rebelled twice and Susiana three times. In Persia itself a certain Vahyazdata, who pretended to be Bardiya, gained considerable support. These risings, however, were spontaneous and uncoordinated, and, notwithstanding the small size of his army, Darius and his generals were able to suppress them one by one. In the Bisitun inscription he records that in 19 battles he defeated nine rebel leaders, who appear as his captives on the accompanying relief. By 519 BC, when the third rising in Susiana was put down, he had established his authority in the east. In 518 Darius visited Egypt, which he lists as a rebel country, perhaps because of the insubordination of its satrap, Aryandes, whom he put to death.

## Fortification of the empire.

Having restored internal order in the empire, Darius undertook a number of campaigns for the purpose of strengthening his frontiers and checking the incursions of nomadic tribes. In 519 BC he attacked the Scythians east of the Caspian Sea and a few years later conquered the Indus Valley. In 513, after subduing eastern Thrace and the Getae, he crossed the Danube River into European Scythia, but the Scythian nomads devastated the country as they retreated from him, and he was forced, for lack of supplies, to abandon the campaign. The satraps of Asia Minor completed the subjugation of Thrace, secured the submission of Macedonia, and captured the Aegean islands of Lemnos and Imbros. Thus, the approaches to Greece were in Persian hands, as was control of the Black Sea grain trade through the straits, the latter being of major importance to the Greek economy. The conquest of Greece was a logical step to protect Persian rule over the Greeks of Asia Minor from interference by their European kinsmen. According to Herodotus, Darius, before the Scythian campaign, had sent ships to explore the Greek coasts, but he took no military action until 499 BC, when Athens and Eretria supported an Ionian revolt against Persian rule. After the suppression of this rebellion, Mardonius, Darius' son-in-law, was given charge of an

expedition against Athens and Eretria, but the loss of his fleet in a storm off Mount Athos (492 BC) forced him to abandon the operation. In 490 BC another force under Datis, a Mede, destroyed Eretria and enslaved its inhabitants but was defeated by the Athenians at Marathon. Preparations for a third expedition were delayed by an insurrection in Egypt, and Darius died in 486 BC before they were completed.

## Darius as an administrator.

Although Darius consolidated and added to the conquests of his predecessors, it was as an administrator that he made his greatest contribution to Persian history. He completed the organization of the empire into satrapies, initiated by Cyrus the Great, and fixed the annual tribute due from each province. During his reign, ambitious and far-sighted projects were undertaken to promote imperial trade and commerce. Coinage, weights, and measures were standardized and land and sea routes developed. An expedition led by Scylax of Caryanda sailed down the Indus River and explored the sea route from its mouth to Egypt, and a canal from the Nile River to the Red Sea, probably begun by the chief of the Egyptian delta lords, Necho I (7th century BC), was repaired and completed. While measures were thus taken to unite the diverse peoples of the empire by a uniform administration, Darius followed the example of Cyrus in respecting native religious institutions. In Egypt he assumed an Egyptian titulary and gave active support to the cult. He built a temple to the god Amon in the Kharga oasis, endowed the temple at Edfu, and carried out restoration work in other sanctuaries. He empowered the Egyptians to reestablish the medical school of the temple of Sais, and he ordered his satrap to codify the Egyptian laws in consultation with the native priests. In the Egyptian traditions he was considered as one of the great lawgivers and benefactors of the country. In 519 BC he authorized the Jews to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, in accordance with the earlier decree of Cyrus. In the opinion of some authorities, the religious beliefs of Darius himself, as reflected in his inscriptions, show the influence of the teachings of Zoroaster, and the introduction of Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia is probably to be attributed to him.

Darius was the greatest royal architect of his dynasty, and during his reign Persian architecture assumed a style that remained unchanged until the end of the empire. In 521 BC he made Susa his administrative capital, where he restored the fortifications and built an audience hall (apadana) and a residential palace. The foundation inscriptions of his palace describe how he brought materials and craftsmen for the work from all quarters of the empire. At Persepolis, in his native country of Fars (Persis), he founded a new royal residence to replace the earlier capital at Pasargadae. The fortifications, apadana, council hall, treasury, and a residential palace are to be attributed to him, although not completed in his lifetime. He also built at Ecbana and Babylon.

## The Kings of Medes and Persian Empire

### **Ahasuerus (634-??? B. C.)**

He was known in history as Cyaxares I who conquered Nineveh. He is thought to be the father of Darius the Mede.

### **Darius the Mede (???-??? B. C.)**

He is not found in history. In Daniel 6 his is mention in connection with throwing Daniel in the lion's den. Some think that Darius is another name for Cyrus the Great.

### **Cyrus "Cyrus the Great" (559-530 B.C.)**

He released the Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem. Ezra talks of his decree to rebuild the temple.

### **Ahasuerus (529-521 B. C.)**

He was known in history as Cambyses the son of Cyrus the Great.

### **Darius I 'The Great' (522 – 485 B.C.)**

He continued Cyrus policy of restoring the Jewish people to their homeland. In 520 B.C., Darius second year as king, the Jews resumed the work on the temple. Darius gave an order to continue the building a large subsidy to restore worship in the temple (Ezra 6:1-12). The temple was completed 515 B.C.

### **Ahasuerus or Xerxes I 'The Great' (486-465 B. C.)**

Xerxes is the Greek name for Ahasuerus. The king who divorced queen Vashti, married Esther, and made her queen.

↳ ~~המלך~~

### **Artaxerxes I 'Longimanus or long handed' (464-425 B.C.)**

Ezra and Nehemiah served in his court. Ezra returned in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah's first returned in 445 B. C. He first halted the rebuilding of Jerusalem but later restarted it.

### **Darius II Ochus son of Artaxerxes I (424 – 405 B.C.)**

### **Artaxerxes II 'The thoughtful' (404-358 B.C.)**

### **Artaxerxes III (358-338 B.C.)**

He is the son of Artaxerxes II. His original name was Ochus

### **Arses (338-336 B.C.)**

He was the son of Artaxerxes III. Bagoas one of his ministers poisoned Artaxerxes III. Bagoas then put Arses as king. Two years later Bagoas removed him as king and put Darius III in his place

### **Darius III Codomannus (336 – 330 B.C.)**

Last King before Alexander the Great

## BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

An Old Testament prophetic book that portrays the coming glory of the MESSIAH. Many scholars describe Zechariah as "the most Messianic of all the Old Testament books" because it contains eight specific references to the Messiah in its brief 14 chapters.

### Structure of the Book

The 14 chapters of Zechariah fall naturally into two major sections: chapters 1-8, the prophet's encouragement to the people to finish the work of rebuilding the Temple, and chapters 9-14, Zechariah's picture of Israel's glorious future and the coming of the Messiah.

In the first section, Zechariah introduces himself as God's prophet and calls the people to repent and turn from their evil ways. Part of their sin was their failure to finish the work of rebuilding the Temple after returning from the Captivity in Babylon. In a series of eight symbolic night visions that came to the prophet (1:7-6:8), Zechariah encourages the people to finish this important task. These visions are followed by a coronation scene (6:9-15), in which a high priest named Joshua is crowned as priest and king, symbolizing the Messiah who is to come. This is considered one of the classic Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Chapters 7 and 8 also continue another important element of the Messianic hope: the One to come will reign in justice from Zion, the city of Jerusalem (8:3,15-16).

The second major section of Zechariah's book, chapters 9-14, contains God's promises for the new age to come. Chapter 9 has a remarkable description of the manner in which the ruling Messiah will enter the city of Jerusalem: "Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey" (9:9). These were the words used by Matthew to describe Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem about 400 years after Zechariah made this startling prediction (Matt 21:5; Mark 11:7-10).

Other promises for the future in this section of the book include the restoration of the nation of Israel (chap. 10) and Jerusalem's deliverance from her enemies (chap. 12), as well as her purification as the holy city (chap. 13). Like the Book of Revelation, Zechariah closes on the theme of the universal reign of God. All nations will come to worship Him as He extends His rule throughout the world (chap. 14).

### Authorship and Date

Most conservative scholars agree that the entire book of Zechariah was written by the prophet of that name, who identifies himself in the book's introduction as "the son of Berechiah" (1:1). But some scholars insist an unknown author wrote the second major section of the book, chapters 9-14. These scholars believe this section was added to the book about 30 or 40 years after Zechariah the prophet wrote chapters 1-8.

It is true that these two sections of the Book have their own unique characteristics. In the first section Zechariah encourages the people to finish the Temple, while in the second section he is more concerned about the glorious age of the future. The language and style of these two sections of Zechariah are also quite different. And the prophecies in these two sections seem to be set in different times.

Chapters 1-8, Zechariah tells us, were delivered as prophecies "in the eighth month of the second year of Darius" (1:1), and "in the fourth year of King Darius" (7:1). These references to Darius I of Persia (ruled 521-486 B.C.) date these prophecies clearly from 520 to 518 B.C. But chapters 9-14 contain a reference to Greece (9:13), probably indicating it was written after 480 B.C., when the balance of world power was shifting from the Persians to the Greeks. How can these major differences between these two sections of the book be explained unless we accept the theory that they were written by two different people?

One possible explanation is that Zechariah was a young man when he delivered his prophecies in the first section of the book. The book itself contains a clue that this may have been the case. In one of his visions, two angels speak to one another about the prophet, referring to him as "this young man" (2:4). Thus, it is quite possible that Zechariah could have encouraged the Jewish captives in Jerusalem in the early part of his ministry and could have delivered the messages about the future, contained in the second section of the book, during his final years as a prophet.

After all the evidence is examined, there is no convincing reason to dispute the traditional view that Zechariah the prophet wrote the entire book that bears his name. These prophecies were first delivered and then reduced to writing over a period of about 45 years—from 520 to 475 B.C.

As for the prophet himself, very little is known about him beyond the few facts he reveals in his book. He was a descendant, perhaps the grandson, of Iddo the priest (1:1) one of the family leaders who returned from the Captivity in Babylon (Neh 12:16). This means that Zechariah probably was a priest as well as a prophet—an unusual circumstance because most of the prophets of Israel spoke out against the priestly class. Since he was a young man when he began to

prophesy in 520 B.C., Zechariah was probably born in Babylon while the Jewish people were in captivity. He probably returned with his family with the first wave of captives who reached Jerusalem under Zerubbabel about 536 B.C.

### Historical Setting

The setting at the beginning of the Book is the same as the setting of the Book of Haggai. The prophet Haggai spoke directly to the issue of the rebuilding of the Temple, encouraging those who returned from captivity in Babylon to finish the task. Zechariah spoke to that issue as well, according to the Book of Ezra (Ezra 5:1). But Zechariah wished to bring about a complete spiritual renewal through faith and hope in God. He spoke about the nature of God's Law and of the hope, which God promised, to those who were faithful to Him.

The second portion of Zechariah was written in the period between the times of the prophets Haggai (520 B.C.) and Malachi (450 B.C.). Two great kings ruled the Persian Empire during these years, Darius I (522-486 B.C.) and Xerxes I (485-465 B.C.). This was a period when the Jewish people in Jerusalem were settled in their new land with a walled city and their beloved Temple. But they were unhappy and dissatisfied. Some of the people had expected that Zerubbabel, governor of Jerusalem, might be the Messiah, but this had proven to be false. The people needed a new word concerning God's future for them. The great prophet Zechariah gave this message from God in a most dramatic fashion.

### Theological Contribution

One of the greatest contributions of the Book of Zechariah is the merger of the best from the priestly and prophetic elements in Israel's history. Zechariah realized the need for both these elements in an authentic faith. He called the people to turn from their sins. He also realized that the Temple and religious ritual played an important role in keeping the people close to God. Because he brought these elements together in his own ministry, Zechariah helped prepare the way for the Christian community's understanding of Christ as both priest and prophet.

Zechariah is also noted for his development of an apocalyptic-prophetic style-highly symbolized and visionary language concerning the events of the end-time. In this, his writing resembles the Books of Daniel and Revelation. The visions of lamp stands and olive trees, horsemen and chariots, measuring lines and horns place him and these other two books in a class by themselves. Zechariah also has a great deal to say about the concept of God as warrior. While this was a well-established image among biblical writers, Zechariah ties this idea to the concept of the Day of the Lord (see Joel 2). His description of the return of Christ to earth as the great Warrior in the Day of the Lord (14:1-9) is one of the most stirring prophecies of the Old Testament.

On that day, according to Zechariah, Christ will place His feet on the Mount of Olives, causing violent changes throughout the land (14:3-4). The day will be changed to darkness and the darkness to light (14:5-8). The entire world will worship Him as the Lord spreads His rule as King "over all the earth" (14:9).

### Special Considerations

Zech 12:10 is a remarkable verse that speaks of the response of the nation of Israel to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It describes a day in the future when the Jewish people (the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) will recognize the significance of the death of Jesus. This recognition will lead to mourning, repentance, and salvation (compare Rom 11:25-27).

But the most startling thing about this verse is the phrase, "Then they will look on Me whom they have pierced." In speaking through the prophet Zechariah, the Lord identifies Himself as the one who will be pierced. Along with Ps 22 and Isa 53, these words are a wonder of inspiration as they describe the result of Jesus' death as well as the manner in which He died to deliver us from our sins.

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## BOOK OF HAGGAI

A short prophetic book of the Old Testament written to encourage the people of Israel who had returned to their native land after the captivity in Babylon.

### Structure of the Book

The two short chapters of Haggai contain four important messages from the prophet to the people. He called on the people to rebuild the Temple, to remain faithful to God's promises, to be holy and enjoy God's great provisions, and to keep their hope set on the coming of the MESSIAH and the establishment of His kingdom.

### Authorship and Date

The prophet Haggai, whose name means "festive", wrote this book. Like those whom he encouraged, he probably spent many years in captivity in Babylon before returning to his native land. A contemporary of the prophet Zechariah. He must have worked constantly as a prophetic voice among his countrymen in Jerusalem. He delivered these messages of encouragement "in the second year of King Darius" (1:1), a Persian ruler. This dates his book precisely in 520 B.C.

### Historical Setting

Haggai takes us back to one of the most turbulent periods in Judah's history-their captivity at the hands of a foreign power, followed by their release and resettlement in Jerusalem. For more than 50 years the Babylonians held them captive. But they were allowed to return to their native land, beginning in 538 B.C., after Babylon fell to the conquering Persians. At first, the captives who returned worked diligently at rebuilding the Temple, but they soon grew tired of the task and gave it up altogether. Haggai delivered his messages to motivate the people to resume the project.

### Theological Contribution

Haggai urged the people to put rebuilding the Temple at the top of their list of priorities. This shows that authentic worship is a very important matter. The rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem was important as a place of worship and sacrifice. Centuries later, at the death of Jesus "the veil of the Temple was torn in two" (Luke 23:45), demonstrating that He had given Himself as the eternal sacrifice on our behalf.

### Special Considerations

The Book of Haggai ends with a beautiful promise of the coming of the Messiah. Meanwhile, God's special servant, ZERUBBABEL, was to serve as a "signet ring" (2:23), a sign or promise of the glorious days to come. As the Jewish governor of Jerusalem under appointment by the Persians, Zerubbabel showed there was hope for the full restoration of God's Covenant People in their native land.

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## Greece Empire

A region or country of city-states in southeastern Europe between Italy and Asia Minor. Greece was bounded on the east by the Aegean Sea, on the south by the Mediterranean Sea, on the west by the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea, and on the north by Mount Olympus and adjacent mountains. The Old Testament name for Greece was JAVAN (Gen 10:2,4; Isa 66:19).

In the early years of its history, Greece was a country of self-governing city-states. Politically and militarily, the Greek city-states were weak. Their varied backgrounds led to frictions and rivalries that kept them from becoming one unified nation. In 338 B.C., Philip II, king of Macedon, conquered the southern peninsula of Greece. Under Philip's son, Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.), the Greek Empire was extended from Greece through Asia Minor to Egypt and the borders of India. Alexander's military conquests and his passion to spread Greek culture contributed to the advancement of Greek ideas throughout the ancient world. This adoption of Greek ideas by the rest of the ancient world was known as HELLENISM. So thoroughly did Greek ideas penetrate the other nations that the Greek language became the dominant language of the known world.

Greek learning and culture eventually conquered the ancient Near East and continued as a dominant force throughout the New Testament era. Even after the rise of the Romans, about 146 B.C., the influence of Greek language, culture, and philosophy remained strong, even influencing the Jewish religion.

Greek religion included many gods. The religions of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Persia were more appealing than the old Greek gods because they promised immortality. However, the Greeks did not abandon their former gods; they simply adopted new gods and gave them old names. A renewed interest in astrology among the Greeks also led to widespread belief that the planets governed the lives and fates of human beings. The Greeks sought to control any turn of fate through worship. They even erected an altar inscribed "to the unknown god" in their capital city of Athens (Acts 17:23).

The peninsula of Greece fell to the Romans in 146 B.C. and later became the senatorial province of Achaia with Corinth as its capital. The apostle Paul visited this area on his second missionary journey, delivering his famous sermon to the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:22-34). Later he appeared before the proconsul Gallio at Corinth (Acts 18:12-17). On his third missionary journey, he visited Greece for three months (Acts 20:2-3).

Greece is important to Christianity because of its language. In New Testament times Greek was the language spoken by the common people of the ancient world, as far west as Rome and the Rhone Valley, in South Eastern France. Most of the New Testament was written originally in Greek. This precise and expressive language provided the most capable vehicle for expressing thought of any in the ancient world.

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