

THE RETURN

Wednesday, September 7, 2020 / First Assembly of God / Ft. Myers, FL
 Finale in the series Monarchy of Israel
with Pastor Dan Betzer

Tonight we conclude our study in the Old Testament historical books Joshua through Esther. To better study this amazing story would have taken several years to accomplish. Last week we dealt with Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and his conquest of the Assyrians and then Israel. In a series of three attacks around 600 B.C., he destroyed Jerusalem, took the Temple treasures, and captured thousands of Jewish people he thought could help him govern his empire, including Daniel and Ezekiel. For 70 years the Jews lived in exile, longing for the time they would somehow be freed to return to Israel and rebuild their nation.

Psalm 137:1-2

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. [2] We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

Their melancholy was obvious to all:

Psalm 137:4-6

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? [5] If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. [6] If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

So, after decades of captivity and devastation, in 550 B.C. a man named Cyrus became the king of the Medes and Persians. He was an amiable and generous man whom God used! In short time, he used a series of rapid conquests to take possession of the country from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. The old city of Babylon was considered impregnable, but Cyrus took it quickly and Babylon perished. Cyrus freed all the prisoners taken by the Babylonians and told the Jews they could return to Israel.

1 Ezra 1:2-4

2 *Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given*
3 *me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him*
4 *an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. [3] Who is there among you*
5 *of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem,*
6 *which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is*
7 *the God,) which is in Jerusalem. [4] And whosoever remaineth in any*
8 *place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver,*
9 *and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill*
10 *offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.*

11

12 As proof of his sincerity and kindness, Cyrus returned the sacred Temple
13 treasures. This resulted in a wave of Jewish rejoicing, which is summed
14 up in the following psalm:

15

16 Psalm 126:1-3 – A Song of degrees.

17 *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them*
18 *that dream. [2] Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue*
19 *with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done*
20 *great things for them. [3] The Lord hath done great things for us;*
21 *whereof we are glad.*

22

23 The reign of Cyrus (the Great) last for about thirty years. It is believed he
24 died in battle. He was succeeded on the throne by his son, Cambyses II,
25 who conquered Egypt and other areas, as well. His reign was not as long
26 as his father's. Cyrus had been anointed by God to do what he did and we
27 know that because the Bible clearly says so:

28

29 Isaiah 45:1

30 *Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have*
31 *holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings,*
32 *to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.*

33

34

35

1 There were several other Persians kings, none of whom had Cyrus's
2 stature or wisdom. But finally, Persia had a king named Darius. During
3 all these years, the Persian monarch had a brilliant advisor. His name?
4 Daniel. More about him and Darius in a moment.

5
6 Below, you will find a picture of the tomb of King Cyrus. It is believed to
7 have been discovered by none other and Alexander the Great many years
8 later. It is located in southern Iran. It remains in remarkable condition.
9 Simply constructed and standing about 38 feet high, it is certainly in
10 marked contrast to the huge pyramids build by the Egyptians for their
11 pharaohs. Even more remarkable is the statement given by Cyrus just
12 before his death. He remained humble even in his last hours, as his
13 statement so declares.

14



15

16

17 Unlike Greek poet Shelley's Ozymandias, "Look upon me, ye mighty and
18 despair," this great man of history understood his place before God and
19 after conquering perhaps the largest landmass empire ever known, had
20 commented in burial stone: **"O man, whoever you are and wherever**

1 you come from, for I know that you will come—I am Cyrus, son of
2 Cambyses, who founded the Empire of the Persians and was king of
3 the East. Do not grudge me this spot of earth which covers my body.
4 – Cyrus”

5
6 On the previous page, it is noted that historians credit Alexander the Great
7 with discovering Cyrus’ tomb. The Bible prophesied Alexander long
8 before he was born:

9
10 Daniel 11:2-4

11 *And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three*
12 *kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by*
13 *his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of*
14 *Grecia. [3] And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great*
15 *dominion, and do according to his will. [4] And when he shall stand up,*
16 *his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds*
17 *of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which*
18 *he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others*
19 *beside those.*

20
21 The story of how the Babylonians were defeated and destroyed by the
22 Persians is clearly laid out for in scripture. This is how Cyrus came into
23 power. The last ruler of the Babylonians was Belshazzar, son of
24 Nabonidus, the true king who was on a sort of sabbatical the night that
25 empire was destroyed. Daniel, by now getting middle-aged or older, was
26 called into Belshazzar’s drunken orgy to tell what the handwriting on the
27 wall meant:

28
29 Daniel 5:22-30

30 *And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though*
31 *thou knewest all this; [23] But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of*
32 *heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and*
33 *thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in*
34 *them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron,*
35 *wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in*
36 *whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not*

1 *glorified: [24] Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this*
2 *writing was written.*

3 *[25] And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL,*
4 *UPHARSIN. [26] This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God*
5 *hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. [27] Tekel; Thou art*
6 *weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. [28] Peres; Thy*
7 *kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. [29] Then*
8 *commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a*
9 *chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him,*
10 *that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.*

11
12 So - was Belshazzar a cheapskate, making Daniel only the third ruler in
13 Babylon? Actually, it was the best offer he could make for he, himself,
14 was only the second in command. His father, Nabonidus, was the King.
15 So the ruling order in Babylon was: Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and Daniel.
16 Still not too bad for an exile from Israel. God's hand was always on this
17 outstanding Hebrew. And he would remain in a position of power and
18 influence for years to come after that.

19 20 **REQUIEM FOR BABYLON - FOR NOW**

21
22 I added the words "for now" in the heading because Babylon will play a
23 major role, in my opinion, during the Tribulation, headed by the world
24 false religion (Islam) and an amalgamation of supporting Godless nations.

25
26 In our lifetime, we remember the terrors imposed by Iraqi strongman
27 Saddam Hussein. His execution took place on Saturday, December 30,
28 2006. He had been sentenced to death by hanging, after being convicted
29 of crimes against humanity by the Iraqi Special Tribunal for the murder
30 of 148 Iraqi Shi'ites in 1982, in retaliation for an assassination attempt
31 against him.

32
33 The Iraqi government released an official video of his execution (easily
34 still found on the Internet) showing him being led to the gallows and
35 ending after the hangman's noose was placed over his head.

1 A witness to the hanging reported, “Before the rope was put around his
2 neck, Saddam shouted, “Allahu Akbar – the Muslim Ummah will be
3 victorious and Palestine is Arab!”” In actuality, there is no such place as
4 Palestine today; it is Israel, which is a sovereign state and has been since
5 1948. While Hussein’s death was gruesome to watch, it pales compared
6 to the death of ancient king Belshazzar, the last of the then-ruling
7 Babylonian monarchs. The Old Testament book of Daniel (chapter 5)
8 gives all the chilling details of Babylon’s last sunset.

9

10 From my Revivaltime sermon, preached on the network in 1980:
11 *There is a railroad system that carries passengers and freight between*
12 *Baghdad and Bassorag, Iraq. As the train chugs along, the passengers*
13 *can look out the windows to see a curious and enormous mound of earth.*
14 *Probably very few of them are aware that they are gazing upon the ruins*
15 *of one of the world’s most colossal cities, perhaps the most splendid city*
16 *of all time. Babylon!*

17

18 The king, Nabonidus, was away in a military operation, and his drunken
19 son Belshazzar was unfortunately (for them) at the helm. He felt quite safe
20 from the marauding Persian forces. This Medo-Persian military had
21 besieged Babylon for several years but could not find a way into the city.
22 The famed walls were too great – well over 300 feet high and 85 feet wide.
23 The Euphrates River fed the deep moat that made an attack almost
24 impossible. Nor could a siege affect the city much because all the produce
25 needed for human sustenance was grown inside the walls.

26



1
2 *Some of the ruins of ancient Babylon, located 59 miles southwest of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq.*

3
4 Small wonder Belshazzar felt safe. He decided on that fateful night (539
5 BC) to throw an orgy and flaunt his supposed safety in the enemy's face.
6 He showed complete contempt for God by taking the captured sacred
7 vessels of God (stolen earlier by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar from
8 Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem) and filling them with his booze.
9 Vessels once dedicated to worship of Jehovah were now used to fill
10 blasphemous mouths and raging passions. On the night Belshazzar most
11 needed to seek the Living God, he had turned his back on everything
12 sacred and holy and dared God to do anything about it.

13
14 Sitting on his raised dais before a thousand of his lords, Belshazzar raised
15 the sacred vessel to his lips. Suddenly the color drained from his face, the
16 vessel slipped from his grasp and clattered to the floor. The king's eyes
17 were frozen in sheer terror and he began to shake like a leaf in a
18 windstorm. His guests tried to figure out what their king beheld. They
19 followed his faze to the wall where they saw a huge hand, disconnected
20 to an arm or body, writing huge letters.

21

1 Where was their protection now? Where was the safety of the great walls
2 now? Where was their supposed fearless leader now? Look at him –
3 holding on to the table to keep from falling on his face. Fear was stamped
4 all over him. And the hand kept writing on the wall.

5
6 What was written had gone down in history: “Belshazzar... you have been
7 weighed in the eternal balances - and found wanting!” And before the sun
8 rose the next day, the king was dead and the Persian Empire had begun!

9
10 The new king would be Cyrus, the Great, whom God used mightily,
11 alongside Daniel. He would free the Jews to return to Jerusalem and the
12 rebuilding of that city would begin under Ezra, Zerubbabel, and others.

13
14 The time between Malachi and Matthew had begun - 400 years of
15 apparent silence from the Heavens. It is a fearful thing to flaunt our human
16 ideas against the God of eternity! The Persians would rule until Greece
17 became strong with Alexander the Great. Then Pompey and the Romans
18 ruled the world for hundreds of years, even after Christ ascended back
19 to Heaven.

20
21 But on the most fateful day in history,
22 John 1:11-14

23 *He (Jesus Christ) came unto his own, and his own received him not.*
24 *[12] But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the*
25 *sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: [13] Which were*
26 *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,*
27 *but of God. [14] And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,*
28 *(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)*
29 *full of grace and truth.*

30
31 And we know... HE IS COMING AGAIN!