

Unpacking the Book

#16: The Neighbors and Israel's Exile

I. Assyria

- A. Located along the banks of the Tigris River – north of the region of Babylon.
- B. Its name comes from its capital city “Asshur”
- C. Other cities also appear in the biblical record:
See Gen. 10:11-12 for Calah and Ninevah. See Jonah for Ninevah.
- D. Its aggressive expansion:
 1. Under Tiglath-Pilser I (1115-1077 BC) Assyria expanded to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.
 2. This expansion was followed by 166 years of decline.
 3. Ashurasirpal II (883-859 BC) and his son Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC) continued the expansion through a series of campaigns in every direction. In 841 BC Shalmaneser received tribute from the kings of Tyre, Sidon and King Jehu of Israel.
 4. After another period of decline, Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BC) caused both Menahem of Israel and Rezin King of Aramea to give tribute and become vassals of Assyria (2 Kings 15). Ahaz also became an Assyrian vassal. (2 Kings 16, 2 Chron. 28)
 5. Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC) besieged Samaria for three years after Hoshea refused to pay tribute (2 Kings 17). Samaria (capital city of Israel) finally fell in 722 BC. Sargon II (722-705 BC) took credit for the victory and deported 27, 290 inhabitants of Samaria. The 10 tribes in the North were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire. They did not maintain their identity.
 6. Sennacherib (704-681 BC) after dealing with widespread revolt with Babylon, Phoenicia and Palestine, invaded Judah in 701 BC. (2 Kings 20, 2 Chron. 32, Isa. 22). Hezekiah resisted (with the encouragement of Isaiah – 2 Kings 19:1-7, 20-35) and although he was at one point a “prisoner... like a bird in a cage,” God delivered Judah (2 Kings 19:35-37) and the army withdrew.

7. Assyria had a series of wars with Egypt and Babylon until 614 BC when the Medes sacked the capital city of Asshur. In 612 BC the combined army of the Medes and Babylonians captured Ninevah. By 605 BC “Assyria was no more.”

E. Other historical events in this time frame:

1. Homer wrote Illiad and Odyssey 750 BC
2. Rome was founded in 753 BC
3. First Olympic games in 776 BC

II. Babylon (the Neo-Babylonian Period – 606-536 BC)

A. Located along the river Euphrates about 50 miles south of the modern Babylon.

B. Its name is the same Hebrew word for “Babel” (Gen. 10:10, 11:9)

C. Its expansion:

1. Assyrian domination of the region ended with Ashurbanipal in 627 BC.
2. Egypt challenged Babylon for the right to inherit Assyria’s vast empire. In 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish (Jer. 46:2-12).
3. The Babylonians then turned their attention to Judah. 2 Kings 20:16-18

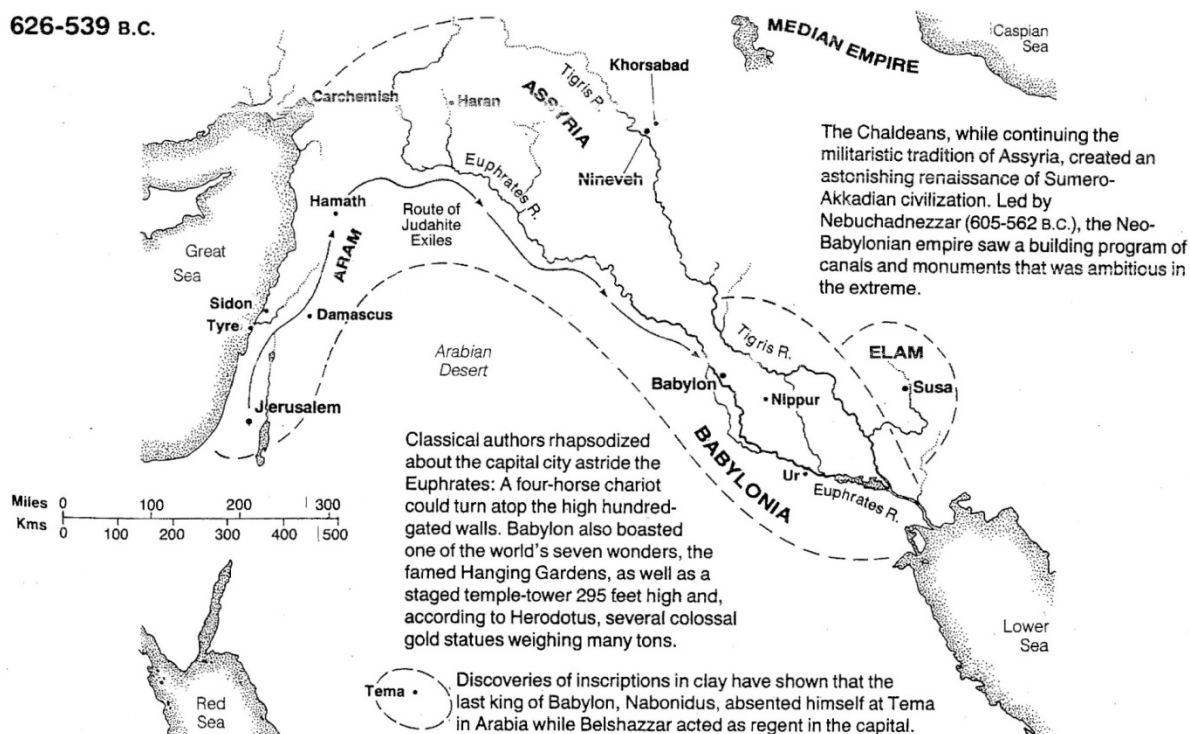
“In 604 and 603 Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC), campaigned along the Palestinian coast. At this time Jehoiakim, king of Judah, became an unwilling vassal of Babylon. A Babylonian defeat at the border of Egypt in 601 probably encouraged Jehoiakim to rebel. For two years Judah was harassed by Babylonian vassals (2 Kings 24:1-2). Then, in December of 598 BC, Nebuchadnezzar marched on Jerusalem (30 months under siege). Jehoiakim died that same month, and his son Jehoiachin surrendered the city to the Babylonians on March 16, 597 BC. The temple was looted and burned. Many Judeans, including Daniel, Ezekiel and members of the royal family, were deported to Babylon (2 Kings 24:6-12). Ultimately released from prison, Jehoiachin was treated as a king in exile (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31-34). Texts excavated in Babylon show that rations were allotted to him and five sons.” (*Holman Bible Atlas*, p.222)

The Judeans were exiled to one area where they maintained their identity in Jewish colonies.

4. Israel’s exile
 - a. 1st deportation: 597 BC
 - b. 2nd deportation: 589 BC (fall of Jerusalem)
 - c. 3rd deportation: 582-551 BC

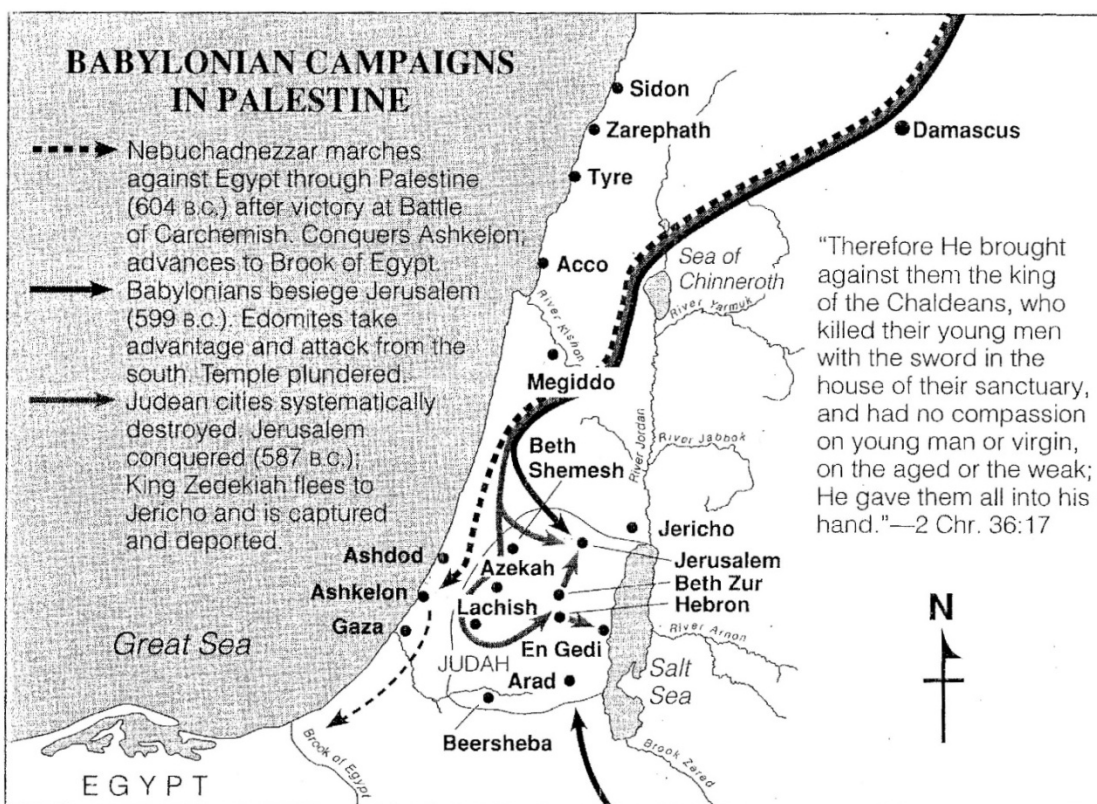
The Neo-Babylonian Empire

626-539 B.C.



5. Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king in this period. His successors were "insignificant." In 539 BC the Persian king, Cyrus II (the great) took Babylon without a fight.

Babylonians Invade Palestine



(Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, p. 219)

D. Other historical events in this time frame:

1. Lives of Buddha (563-483 BC) and Confucius (551-479 BC)
2. Hanging gardens of Babylon (600 BC)

III. Persia

- A. The Persian Empire extended from Greece to India and from Southern Russia to the Gulf of Omar.
- B. Its name comes from its southern most region called Parsis.
- C. Its expansion:
 1. Cyrus II (539-530 BC) ruled a combined kingdom of Medes (located to the Northeast and east of Babylonians) and Persians. He allowed the Jews to return to Judah (Ezra 1:1-4).

2. Once Darius I (522-486 BC) came to the throne, the empire extended well into India. He organized this vast empire into satrapies and then into smaller groups of provinces. Extensive roads were built and conquered people were given a measure of self rule. This meant “official support for keeping Jewish Law in the land of the Jews.”

Darius supported the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 6:15)

The restoration of Israel was prophesied by Jeremiah in Jer. 29:10-14.

- D. The books of Daniel and Esther occur during the Persian Rule.
- E. The prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi helped the Jews to hope for restoration of their land.
- F. Other historical events in this time frame:
 1. Foundation of Roman Republic (510 BC)
 2. Caste system in India established (500 BC)

Persian Kings	Dates	Biblical Events
Cyrus the Great	539-530 BC	Daniel, Ezra 1-3, Isaiah 45
Cambyses	530-522 BC	Ezra 4-6
Darius I	522-486 BC	Ezra 4:7-23
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	486-465 BC	Esther
Artaxerxes	464-423 BC	Nehemiah 7-10
Artaxerxes II	404-359 BC	
Darius III	336-331 BC	
Rebuilding of Jerusalem	537-516 BC	
1 st return of exiles	583 BC	
2 nd return of exiles	525 BC	
Ezra returns	458 BC	
Nehemiah rebuilds walls	445-433 BC	

IV. So what?

Consider that all things (personal, biblical, national and international) are under the sovereign control of God. He “turns” them as he sees fit. See Prov. 21:1 and 2 Chron. 20:6

Discussion Question:

How does the principle of God’s using foreign powers in the life of Israel impact your understanding of how God uses things like elections in the life of our country?