

The Life of Jesus Christ, Part 5

Setting the Stage, Part 4

The Medo-Persian Empire

List of prophets/prominent people during different empires

Assyrian Empire (934-605 BC) (but mainly intersected with Israel around 700's)

- Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah
- Jeremiah, Habakkuk

Babylonian Empire (626-539 BC)

- Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah

Medo-Persian Empire (550-330 BC)

- Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai

Medo-Persian Empire

Medes/Persians

Cyrus II ("the Great") (559-530 BC):

- Created Medo-Persian Empire
- His father ruled some territories in Persia; Cyrus allied himself with other neighboring peoples to consolidate Persian power (near Persepolis on map)
- 550 BC: Conquered Median Empire ruled by his grandfather (Ecbatana)
- 546 BC: Conquered Lydia (under King Croesus, capital Sardis) in the west (modern-day Turkey)
- 539 BC: Conquered Babylon
- 530 BC: Apparently died in battle

Cyrus and the Jews:

- Assyrians, Babylonians took conquered territories into exile, trying to dilute ethnic ties and possibility of rebellion
- Cyrus allowed those conquered by the Babylonians to restore the worship of their gods, including returning vessels taken during capture.
- Ezra 1:1-4
- Walt Kaiser: Cyrus "mixed, in almost perfect balance, a knack for knowing when to be firm and when to be charitable, eventually gaining the admiration of both friend and foe." (*A History of Israel*, p. 428)
- Isaiah 44:28-45:7: Cyrus Lord's shepherd and anointed: This was written ~700 BC, more than 100 years before Cyrus came to power!
- 536 BC: Jews laid foundation of temple (Ezra 3:10-13), but work on the temple was stopped for a time (Ezra 4:4-5)

Cyrus/Medo-Persian Empire in Daniel:

- Daniel 5:31-6:1ff.: Daniel in lions' den: old man by this time; not sure who Darius was, but probably not Cyrus, but a high-ranking official under Cyrus
- Daniel 7:5: bear, raised up on one side: Persians/Medes; 3 ribs, may be Lydian kingdom, Babylon, and Egypt
- Daniel 8:1-4, 20

Darius I (Hystaspes) (522-486 BC):

- Next ruler of importance in the Bible, not the Darius of Daniel
- Not a descendant of Cyrus, but an army officer who took over after a rebellion in 522
- 519 BC: Haggai 1:1ff., 12-15; Tattenai the governor wrote to Darius about the temple building: Ezra 5:6ff.; Darius responds: Ezra 6:1ff.
- 515 BC: Temple completed: Ezra 6:15, about 20 years after the foundations were built
- Pushed boundaries of empire to Libya and India, all of Asia Minor
- 490 BC: Tried to defeat Athens and other Greek city-states, but was defeated at Marathon by a much smaller Greek force: showed that Persia could be defeated

Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) (486-465 BC):

- 481 BC: Tried to avenge father's defeat by the Greeks
- 480 BC: Defeated Spartans at Thermopylae (narrow pass through which Xerxes wanted to attack Greece)
- 480 BC: Salamis: defeated, lost 200 ships and blamed the loss on Phoenician and Egyptian mercenaries; these mercenaries abandoned Xerxes
- After this, Xerxes spent his time in building projects, including his palace in Susa
- 483-480 BC: gap in Esther 1:3; 2:16
- 479 BC: Esther becomes queen

Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC):

- 458 BC: Allowed return under Ezra (Ezra 7:1, 11ff.) (though some believe Ezra was under Artaxerxes II)
- 444 BC: Nehemiah was cupbearer (Nehemiah 2:1)

Other rulers, until finally defeated by Alexander the Great in 330 BC

Extent of Persian Empire: Libya, Egypt, Greece, across to India