

# PART V:THE FALL OF JERUSALEM & ITS RESTORATION

## The Fall of Jerusalem

- 604 BC** Nebuchadnezzar (reign 604-562 BC), Chaldean King of Babylon, invades Jerusalem as a direct result of their alliance with Egypt. He returns to Babylon with certain of the children of Israel, of the king's seed and princes (including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) are deported, together with some vessels from the Temple. **Dan.1:1-6**
- 597 BC** Nebuchadnezzar returns to Jerusalem; carries off Jehoiakim (608-597 BC) to Babylon. Jehoiachin (597 BC), Jehoiakim's son, begins to reign in Jerusalem, (II Chron.36:6-9), but Nebuchadnezzar returns within the year to remove Jehoiachin, appointing Zedekiah (597-586 BC) king in his stead. **II Chron.36:9-10**
- 586 BC** The king of the Chaldeans (Nebuchadnezzar ?) breaks down the walls of Jerusalem, burns the Temple and the palaces, slays the priests and takes the remaining Temple vessels and furniture and a large part of the Judaeen population to Babylon. **II Chron.36:17-21**

## The Fall of Babylon

- 5?? BC** Babylon under Belshazzar (562-5?? BC) falls. Darius the Mede\*, aged 62, son of Astyages (594-?) receives the kingdom of Babylon. He appoints 120 princes with 3 presidents over them; Daniel is chief.

\* The etymological origin of the name Darius is not known.

Scripture is clear that this Darius, king of Babylon, (not to be confused with Darius Hystaspes of Persia, see below) was a Mede and the son of Ahasuerus the Mede (Aramaic for "king"). This Ahasuerus may be Astyages, king of the Medes from 594 BC.

[Cyrus the Persian is clearly the deliverer of the captivity. **II Chron.36:20-23**  
Some readers have suggested that Darius was a vassal **Ezra 1:1-4,7-8**  
of Cyrus; maybe Gobryas (Gubaru) whom Cyrus is known **Is.44:28, 45:1-4**  
to have made ruler of Babylon after his conquest (c.538 BC).  
However, the record clearly indicates a period in which **e.g. Dan.6:28**  
Babylon was ruled by Darius the Mede in his own right.

This idea is confirmed by Daniel's vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, in which a two horned ram is seen as representing the Medo-Persian Empire; one horn (the lesser) speaking of the kings of the Medes and the other (the greater) speaking of the kings of the Persians. The intercession of Daniel is a further indication that, in the time of Darius, though the power of the Chaldeans had been broken, time had still to pass before 'the word of the Lord to Jeremiah' would be fulfilled.]

**Dan.8:3,20**  
**Dan.9:2ff**  
**II Chron.36:21,**  
**Jer.25:9-12, 29:10**

**538 BC** Commencement of reign of Cyrus the Great of Persia (559-529 BC) over Babylon.

**535 BC** Daniel received his final vision 70 years after his deportation.

### **The Restoration of the Temple**

**538 BC** Cyrus announces God's instruction to him that the Temple at Jerusalem be rebuilt, Ezra 1:1ff. The first group of returnees\*, numbering 42 360 departs for Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, son of Johozadak, the priest. In the seventh month the altar of the Lord is set up and sacrifices recommence.

**Ezra 2:64**  
**Neh.7:66**  
**Ezra 3:1ff**

[\* The time of captivity for this group would be 66 years maximum (604-538 BC) and 48 years minimum (586-538 BC). This author thinks that the seventy years of Jeremiah, from God's perspective, should be taken from the fall of the Temple (586 BC) to the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple (516 BC) - exactly 70 years.]

**537 BC** The foundation of the Temple is re-laid and work on the restoration of the Temple continues amidst growing opposition#. Eventually the work ceases.

**Ezra 4:23**

[# Opposition commenced and continued through the reign of Cyrus and his successors until the second year of Darius Hystaspes (522-486 BC), i.e. 520 BC. The Ahasuerus (i.e. king) of 4:6 in this case must be Cambyses, (529-522 BC). Some assume the references to Artaxerxes to refer to Xerxes, (486-465 BC), and argue, therefore, that this section (4:7-23) must be parenthetical. But 'arta-xerxes' simply means 'great king' and Cambyses was certainly that. It is no confusion to say that this Artaxerxes, to whom Bishlam and others wrote letters of protest, was Cambyses.]

**520 BC** In the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are raised up by God to exhort the people **Hag.1:1, 2:1,10** to complete the work. **Zech.1:1,7**

Application is made to Darius who, finding the decree of Cyrus in the archives at Achmetha in Babylon, orders that the Temple be 'built speedily'.

**518 BC** Further word comes to Zechariah. **Zech.7:1**

**516 BC** The Temple is completed+ on the third day of Adar. **Ezra 6:15**  
**exactly 70 years after its destruction.** During the next month the people separate themselves from 'the filthiness of the nations of the land' and celebrate the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread.

[+ According to our time scale, the actual reconstruction of the Temple took 22 years by the Jewish reckoning (537-516BC). Compare this with John 2:20 in which the Jews at the time of Christ claim that it took 46 years, i.e. 45 years on our reckoning. We must remember though that the bare Temple without furniture and active sacrificing would not constitute a completed job. The whole program, including getting the people in order and disposing of Tabor the Ammonite, took the best part of 50 years which agrees with the claim of the 1st Century Jews.]

**515 BC** Ezra returns to Jerusalem with authority from the king plus the remainder of the Temple artefacts; the journey takes four months, **Ezra 7-8,11**  
In the tenth month Ezra proclaims a fast and proceeds to sort out the tribes and families, Levites and servants. Temple treasurers are reappointed and the people called upon to separate from their foreign wives .

### **Restoration of the Walls**

**502 BC** Nehemiah, serving Artaxerxes (Darius) in Susa (Shushan), learns of the plight of the remnant in captivity, also that the walls of Jerusalem are still down. He seeks and is granted leave to make the journey to Jerusalem, with letters from the King. **Neh.1:1, 2:1**

**501 BC** Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, meets opposition but the walls are completed in 52 days, in the month of Elul (sixth month) **Neh.6:15**  
The gates are set up and porters appointed; also singers and Levites for the Temple worship. **Neh.7:1**

God puts it in Nehemiah's heart to check the genealogies of the people. He finds the register of the first group under Zerubbabel. **Neh.7:7:5ff**

In the seventh month the people gather 'to a man' to hear Ezra read the Law. This leads to fasting and repentance, followed by praise **Neh.8:1ff** and confession by the Levites and the signing of a covenant by the princes, Levites and priests; the names of the signatories and **Neh.9** the covenant itself being recorded. **see Neh.10**

Further ordering of the people follows. **Neh.11-12**

**492 BC** John 2:20 suggests that the Temple was 'completed' by this date.

**489 BC** Nehemiah returns to Babylon to report to the king but soon returns to Jerusalem for further restoration work. This includes cleansing of the Temple, restoration of the sabbath and the enforcement of the law against foreign marriages.

The total time of restoration, by Hebrew reckoning, 50 years (538-489 BC); from one Jubilee to another.

### **Post Restoration Times: Esther and the feast of Purim**

**483 BC** The Persian King\* makes a feast. Vashti refuses the King and the way is made open for Esther. **Esther 1:3ff.**

**474 BC** Haman persuades the King to approve the killing of all Jews on the 13th day of Adar.

Through the intervention of Esther, Haman is put down and Mordecai exalted. The Jews avoid death and in turn destroy their enemies on the 13th-15th of Adar. Because lots have been cast before Haman until this time, the Jews celebrate the victory as the Feast of Purim, **Esth.3:7** i.e. 'pur' = lot.

\* This must be Xerxes (486-465 BC). The scripture states that "this is the Ahasuerus (i.e. king) who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia", Esther 1:1. The Persian Empire was never the same after the defeat and death of Xerxes at the hands of the Greeks in 465 BC.

## **Post Restoration Prophecy: Malachi**

The dating of the Book of Malachi is not certain but most agree that it was written somewhere between 450 and 400 BC. This is the last word to the Jews from heaven prior to the advent of Jesus the Messiah. The message of the book confirms the exhortations of Nehemiah: the call is for righteousness amongst the priests (Mal.1:6-14, 2:1-9; purity of line (2:11-16); respect for God's portion (3:8-12).

Promises include:

- ♦ A 'messenger of the covenant' who will 'suddenly come to his temple' to purify the sons of Levi (Mal.3:1-6).
- ♦ Coming judgement on the unrighteous (Mal.4:1-4).
- ♦ The spirit of Elijah to come to turn the hearts of the children to the parents and the hearts of the parents to the children BEFORE THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD (Mal.4:5-6).