

Adventures in Truth:

04: Bible Numbers and Our Choices

The Prophecy of Cyrus and the Downfall of Babylon

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” Isaiah 44:28.

One hundred and thirteen years before Cyrus saw the light of day, his name was written in the prophecies of the Bible. It was also predicted that he would become a mighty general; and one hundred and seventy four years before he was born an exact prediction was made of the work he would do when he was sixty one years old. It also showed the way he would accomplish the task. That task, the greatest feat of his life, was the capture of Babylon, the mightiest city of the ancient world.

Babylon was called in the Scriptures “the praise of the whole earth,” “the golden city,” “the glory of kingdoms,” “the lady of kingdoms,” and “the beauty of the Chaldee’s excellence.” It was surrounded by a series of gigantic walls and a giant moat or trench, so made that it could be flooded from an artificial lake. The enclosed area of the city covered twenty five square miles, which provided ample space for gardens and orchards, so that if it were besieged its inhabitants could easily grow sufficient food to amply support them. Yes, Babylon was impregnable! Yet God’s infallible prophecies declared it was doomed to be overthrown and finally to sink into ruin and oblivion.

Five decades before, Jeremiah the prophet foretold in amazing detail the unique method of attack and even the conditions inside the city on Babylon’s fateful night. This prophecy is found in the fiftieth and fifty first chapters of Jeremiah. The very nations that would capture the proud city were also named.

“The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon.” Jeremiah 51:11. “Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes.” Jeremiah 51:28.

“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.” Isaiah 45:1-3. “Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.” Isaiah 45:11-13.

So it was foretold that Cyrus the king of Persia would be the general who would lead the armies against Babylon, and also restore the Jesus to Jerusalem. This prophecy mentions Cyrus by

name over a century before he was born. History confirms prophecy! It always does. In the year, 559 BC war broke out between the Babylonians and the Medes. Darius, the king of the Medes, sought the aid of his nephew, Cyrus the Persian king, who laid siege to Babylon. The Babylonians had no fears or concern, as they gathered within the impregnable walls. They had provisions for twenty years, besides land to furnish food for an indefinite period. Well may they scoff at Cyrus and mock his efforts to capture "the golden city". Cyrus knew that spears, arrows, or battering rams were powerless against this greatest of fortresses.

Cyrus determined to use strategy for he well knew force was useless. He determined to gain entrance by means of the river Euphrates which flowed diagonally through the city. The river would be his highway for it entered and emerged as it flowed beneath the city walls. The river was diverted into an artificial lake so that the river would be fordable. Fifty or more years before, the prophecy had foretold that this would be the method the Medes and Persians would adopt in the capture of Babylon.

"A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up." Jeremiah 50:38. "I will make her springs dry." Jeremiah 51:36.

When all this preparation was completed for diverting the Euphrates, the attack was made on the night of the annual Babylonian festival. The city would be given over to an orgy of feasting and drunken revelry. The fifth chapter of Daniel describes that night of wine, women and song. Babylon could have known and should have known, for God had sent this warning to them. The Divine prophecies had foretold it all, but I like many modern so-called 'intellectuals', they were above that old Bible and too big to heed it's messages.

So Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, made "a great feast to a thousand of his lords". It was a gay night, but it suddenly became a very gloomy one. If they were too big to be worried by God, they were not too big to be wounded by His judgment. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand", and wrote the final message of Babylon's doom on the palace wall. The same fingers that wrote the ten commandments on Sinai's stone, now writes it so that all Babylon can see.

In defiance of God they had "worshipped and praised the gods of wood and stone, silver, gold and brass, that see not, nor hear, nor know and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast not glorified". Lovers of sin and the ways of transgression, love a god that cannot see, hear or know. But now the time of reckoning had come. Death, judgment and perdition. "That night they slew him on his father's throne, The deed un-noticed and the hand unknown. Powerless and scepterless Belshazzar lay, A robe of purple on a form of clay."

The most amazing fact of all is that this too was foretold in the "Scriptures of Truth." One hundred and fifty years before, the prophet had foretold that Babylon would go down at the time of feasting and drunkenness. **"And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground."** Isaiah 21:9,

"Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield." Isaiah 21:5, by the hand of Elam. Elam was just to the north of the Persian Gulf and Media. **"A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously,**

and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.” Isaiah 21:2.

The wild, gay time would suddenly turn to terrifying, paralyzing fear. **“Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.” Isaiah 21:3, 4.**

Jeremiah also foretold their end in the midst of a drunken stupor. **“In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. “ “And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.” Jeremiah 51:39, 57.**

The enemy would crawl like caterpillars, declared the prophecy. **“The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.” Jeremiah 51:14.**

The street passages by the river would be besieged first and later the rest of the city. **“One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.” Jeremiah 51:31, 32.**

The drunken revelers would not be able to resist and Babylon would go down. **“The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.” Jeremiah 51:30.**

“A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.” Jeremiah 50:35-37. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.” Jeremiah 51:58.

On the night of this Babylonian high day, Cyrus, the Persian, divided his army in three companies. The first was to turn the river at a given hour, the second was stationed where the river flowed into the city and the third where the river flowed from beneath the city walls and as soon as the river was fordable they were (in the darkness of night), to enter the city and meet at the palace, kill the guards and capture the city.

In the British Museum there is an ancient inscription written by the priests of Babylon which describes the capture of the haughty city of Babylon. **“On the 16th day, Gobrigas Pasha of the land of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus, without a battle entered Babylon”.** They did not need to battle, for on that high day of revelry, the river gates were left open, either in carelessness or

treachery, so the army of Cyrus just marched in and took possession. Herodotus, in his History gives an interesting account of this capture of Babylon, Book 1, page 97. Thus both history and the unearthed stone tablets of the archaeologist confirms the exact and uncanny fulfillment of the infallible Scriptures. One hundred and seventy five years before, the prophecy had foretold that the gates would not be shut. This was the very way by which Cyrus was enabled to capture this mighty fortress.

“Thus said the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.” Isaiah 45:1.

The exact and amazing fulfillment of these and a thousand other prophecies on a myriad of subjects is irrefutable proof of the truthfulness of Scripture. It is true! It is reliable! **“I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe.” John 14:29.**

“These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing you might have life through His Name.” John 20:31. The prophecy is “written”, so is history, and the stone tablets, so that we might have a sure foundation for our belief in Christ and by believing we may have life.

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” Isaiah 44:28.

It was foretold of Cyrus that he would be used of God to lay the Foundation” of the temple. He would commence the work of the restoration and rebuilding of the temple. This he did by his decree. This decree was the first of the three decrees given by Persian kings.

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:2-4.

Here we have the amazing statement of Cyrus, a pagan king. This is amazing to have come from a Persian king, because the Persians were fire and sun worshippers and were opposed to the use of buildings in worship. Yet here is a Persian king giving a decree to restore the temple, for the worship of “the Lord God of heaven”. How could this be? Prophecy is the answer!

PROPHECY: Cyrus was shown his own name in the prophecy of Isaiah and the work he would accomplish in the overthrow of Babylon and that he would lay the foundation to restore Jerusalem’s temple. Cyrus was amazed! Through this prophecy “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation.” Ezra 1:1. (See Josephus, Book 11, page 228).

Thus it was prophecy that arrested the attention of Cyrus and led to Israel’s restoration. God uses the heathen to accomplish His will. In Isaiah 44:8, God calls Cyrus “My shepherd”, for God used him through prophecy to lead His people back from Babylonian captivity. In Jeremiah 27:6, Nebuchadnezzar is likewise called “My servant”. God used him to punish an apostate Israel. In

Jeremiah 51:20, Babylon is called by God “My battle axe”. Babylon is the last power addressed in this chapter, so it is evident that He is here addressing Babylon. In Jeremiah 50:23, Babylon is called “the hammer of the whole earth”. God used these earthly powers and pagan kings to accomplish His will.

When Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians they could see that it had happened by the hand of God. Even the captain of the army of Babylon exclaimed to Jeremiah, **“The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.” Jeremiah 40:2.** The hand of God is often seen in the affairs and tragedies of men.

Josephus bears testimony that when the Roman army captured Jerusalem, Titus, the Roman general acknowledged that God had intervened and enabled them to capture Jerusalem, for this victory was not his doing. (Wars of the Jews, Book 5, page 568). Likewise Cyrus, as we have noticed, acknowledges the intervention of the Lord God of heaven.

THE RAVENOUS BIRD FROM THE EAST: In Isaiah 44:11 Cyrus is called “a ravenous bird from the east”. He was a ruthless killer. Herodotus, the historian of these bygone years, tells of Cyrus’ anger at the river for the drowning of a favorite horse. He states “Cyrus, enraged at the insolence of the river. Having however, wreaked his vengeance on the Gyndes, by dispersing it through three hundred and sixty channels, marched against Babylon”. Book 1, p. 96. He was finally killed on the field of battle; and of the queen that he was fighting against when he was killed, Herodotus records, “She took a skin and filling it full of human blood, she dipped the head of Cyrus in the gore, saying, as she thus insulted the corpse. “By this I give thee thy fill of blood”. Book 1, p. 108.

He was well named a ravenous bird of prey and died as one. Let every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ hesitate before claiming that Cyrus is a type of Christ, as some have done, to try to uphold a doubtful interpretation of prophecy.

“For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” Revelation 17:17. Here we have another case of God over-ruling and using the wicked to be His servants in accomplishing His will and fulfilling His prophetic Word, for the Scriptures cannot be broken. Speaking of the downfall of modern Babylon by the powers of earth, we read “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, until the words of God shall be fulfilled”. So God used Nebuchadnezzar as His “servant”, Titus and Cyrus, “His anointed”, although they were all as ravenous birds of prey.

While it can present many difficulties to try to make Cyrus a ‘type’ of Christ, a parallel could be drawn however, between the decree of Cyrus and the first Angel’s message for these last days, when modern Babylon goes down forever and God’s Israel, His God-ruled people, at last are lifted home to glory to be “forever with the Lord”. The parallel is worthy of notice.

THE FOUNDATION: Cyrus laid “the foundation” or began the deliverance of God’s people. His decree, the first of three decrees, is certainly a parallel of the first of the Three Angel’s Messages. Three decrees were given by the Persian kings. The decree of Cyrus was followed by the decrees of Darius and Artaxerxes and these were followed by the commission of Nehemiah. So in Revelation 14:6-12, we have the messages of the three Angels, followed by “the loud cry” of Revelation 18:1-5. Cyrus could be used as a parallel of the first Angel’s message, but not the

Advent of our Lord, as some have thought. Cyrus died a century before the work of restoration was completed and centuries before the complete downfall of Babylon.

The work of restoration was completed under the leadership of Nehemiah and his commission. So the work of God will be finished in the preaching of the three Angel's messages and the loud cry of Revelation 18:1-5. **"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."**

Cyrus, the man from the east, began the work of restoration, and in like manner the angel of Revelation 7 is pictured as ascending or arising from the east. This is a picture of the beginning of God's last message to the world. The final overthrow was to be accomplished by powers from the "north" This is repeated again and again in Scripture.

"The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God." Jeremiah 50:1-4.

"Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 51:48.

While Cyrus began the movement of Israel back to Jerusalem, he also began the destruction of Babylon, but he certainly did not complete that destruction. "Babylon was not destroyed by Cyrus, and its decline came in slow stages". SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 4, page 526. Babylon's destruction was to be final and complete.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE TWO BABYLONS

Jeremiah 50:3 She would be made "desolate".

Jeremiah 50:13 It was to "be wholly desolate"

Jeremiah 50:3 It was to be complete, for "none shall raise him up"

Isaiah 13:19-20 "it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation."

This was not accomplished by Cyrus, for Babylon was inhabited for centuries after Cyrus was dead and gone. God repeatedly stated that complete destruction was to be accomplished by powers from the north. The Bible Commentary adds these interesting facts of history: "By prophetic foresight Jeremiah looks down through the centuries and beholds the result of a

succession of catastrophes that would cause Babylon to become a wilderness, a dry land and a desert.

“The predicted desolation came, although not immediately.

“It did not become a wilderness until much later.

“The Mongols, under the grandson of Genghis Khan swept over Western Asia.

“Since that time, the central and southern plains of Mesopotamia have been largely desert.”

SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 4, p. 526.

Babylon’s destruction was finally complete. This final destruction came from the north”, as foretold in God’s infallible “Scriptures of Truth.”

OUT OF THE NORTH: The North has a strange significance in Scripture, and is worthy of note and careful consideration as the following facts reveal. “There was a peculiar mystery attached to the north in the Hebrew mind, as, in fact, the word for “north” in Hebrew (literally the hidden) indicates”. Pulpit Commentary, Volume 11, p. 274.

Satan’s ambition was to reach “the sides of the North”. He wanted the throne of God, for as stated. **“The sides of the north, the city of the great King. Psalms 48:2.**

God gave strict instructions that the burnt offering was to be sacrificed on the north side of the altar. **“He shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the Lord.” Leviticus 1:11.**

The four cherubim are stated to come, out of the north as stated: **“I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire in folding itself, and a brightness was about it”. Ezekiel 1:4**

Ancient Babylon’s fall was completed by powers out of the north, so modern Babylon will go down to rise no more, by the now “hidden” power of our Christ, who is today preparing a city, the City of the Great King, in the sides of the North. He and He alone, will write “finish” on modern Babylon. So, as Babylon of old was reduced to ruins by powers from the north, so also modern Babylon Decrees will fall by the power from the north. As God used the Moslem powers to punish apostate Christendom, as revealed in Revelation 9, so he used the Mongols from the north to complete the doom of Babylon forever on that once blasphemous and Satan-ruled city.

“That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! . . . How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!.”

Isaiah 14:4, 12. God Himself, addressed Lucifer as the king of Babylon. This destruction, although commenced by Cyrus, was completed by the northern powers. Cyrus could not be a type of our Lord and His glorious advent. Babylon’s destruction merely “began to be fulfilled in the edict of Cyrus”. Pulpit Commentary, Volume 11, p. 274.

“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own

country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.” Jeremiah 51:6-9

Note “Her wine”. “She is not healed”. These pronouns are feminine. A woman in prophecy symbolizes a church. Babylon was and is Satan’s church.

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:18. As Christ is the unseen Head of the Church, His Church, so Satan was the unseen king of Babylon. This city was the centre of a counterfeit system of religion.

“My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.” Jeremiah 51:45. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, just as Christ told His disciples to flee from Jerusalem when it was surrounded by the armies of Rome. They obeyed Christ’s word literally and not a single Christian perished. So here Israel was to flee literally from Babylon.

Also Christians are to flee literally from modern Babylon. Yes literally, not merely a mental or figurative assent, but by a literal channel of life, “a new birth from sin to holiness, to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. Not as monks flee from the world, to hide in silent cloisters, or in far away desert solitudes. This would be a double mistake. For they would neglect their duty to a dying world. Some who think they heed this call become supremely selfish. They seek to save their soul while others can suffer and perish. This is a false “Come out”. Remember those who hear and heed Christ’s call out of Babylon, will repeat the call: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17.**

Jeremiah 51:9 “We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed”. Babylon is beyond help. By the captivity, God planned, not only to bring Israel to repentance but to acquaint Babylon with His truth. Through men like Daniel and Ezekiel, the people of Babylon were given opportunity to know and follow the truth of the Great Creator, but Babylon’s failure to heed was the cause of their downfall and doom.

GOD WARNS BEFORE HE STRIKES:

“Jeremiah 51:59-62 The warning was read to Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:62, 63 It’s downfall was enacted. So is that of modern Babylon.

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” Revelation 18:21. Evidently this call of mercy fell on deaf ears in of Babylon. They refused the call of God, therefore His truth could afford them no protection. Thus the experience of ancient Babylon is as a lesson-book for us in these days of modern Babylon. Unless we take heed, the Bible will be a witness against us. These prophecies and historical facts **“are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come”.** **1 Corinthians 10:11.** Thus the two Babylons are linked in warning and appeal.