

**Old Testament Survey**  
**Lesson 14 – 2 Kings**  
**Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School**  
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**Review**

1 Kings began as David died and Solomon became king. Solomon was the world's wisest and one of the richest men who ever lived. He reigned over Israel during its greatest time in history, built the temple, and wrote three OT books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon). However, he was driven to love many foreign women and tax and force labor his people. In the end, the kingdom was weakened by his sins. With the death of Solomon, the throne of David was threatened. Ten tribes seceded from the throne and set up an independent kingdom in the North. This kingdom was called Israel and was eventually ruled from Samaria by a number of kings, all of whom were unrighteous. The tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to Judah and the Davidic throne in Jerusalem, making up the "Southern Kingdom" known as Judah. This nation was ruled by men who were heirs and true successors to the throne of King David and some of those kings were very good. Most however were unrighteous. 1 Kings ends with the introduction of Elijah and his confirmation as God's prophet with signs and wonders. In 1 Kings we saw the beginning of a significant period of miracles (Elijah and Elisha). We also see the first of eight bodily resurrections recorded in Scripture (1 Kings 17:22) and the second great demonstration of God's power over false gods with Elijah against the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 (the other being the plagues in Egypt).

**Outline of 2 Kings**

1 and 2 Kings form one narrative recounting the history of Israel's monarchy from the death of David through the destruction of both of the fragments of that nation, Israel and Judah. God destroyed both kingdoms because their kings led the people to do evil things primarily tied to the worship of idols. 2 Kings begins with a continuation of the story of Elijah and the re-introduction of his follower Elisha.

**I. God's Prophet Elisha (Chapters 1-8)**

This first section continues with the Prophets Elijah and Elisha who were responsible for speaking the word of the Lord to the people of a perverse and evil nation. Elijah soon leaves the scene, but Elisha guides Israel to victories over their greatest enemies. God again and again showed his sovereignty over all nations of the earth while meeting the needs of His faithful followers and judging those who disobey.

**A. Elijah's Service Ends (Chapters 1-2)**

**1. Ahaziah of Israel Consults with Baal-Zebub (1)**

His rule in Israel was introduced in 1 Kings 22 when he followed the most wicked of all Israel's kings, Ahab, to the throne. Ahaziah was seriously injured in an accident in his palace and sent his messengers to consult with the Phoenician God, Baal-Zebub to find out if he would recover. Elijah intercepted them with God's message that Ahaziah would die, not because of the accident, but because he went to the false god rather than to the Lord. And he did (v15-18).

**2. Elijah Chooses a Successor (2)**

Elijah was traveling from town to town knowing that his life and ministry was coming to an end. Elisha attached himself to him hoping to receive a double portion of the spirit that Elijah powerfully displayed throughout his life. What right did he have to expect anything? He based his request on the "law of the firstborn" in Deut 22, where the firstborn son was to receive a double portion of his father's inheritance, and he considered himself Elijah's spiritual son. He swore he would never leave Elijah's side until he was so blessed. When Elijah's ministry came to a close, God chose to take him home in a whirlwind on a "chariot of fire". Elisha's reaction, as he saw the chariot was to cry out, "My father! My father! (12) Elijah was transported into heaven alive and his cloak, the symbol of his office, fell on Elisha's shoulders, (v13) indicating God's choice of him as Elijah's successor. The other young prophets were not convinced that Elisha was really called by God. God confirmed his choice by:

- Allowing him to cross the Jordan on dry ground as Elijah had
- Empowering him to purify the corrupted water at Jericho, and
- Punishing 42 of the mocking prophets (two female bears killed them).

## **B. Elisha Represents God (Chapters 3-8)**

### **1. To Joram (Jehoram) (3)**

While Joram was the king of Israel (852-841 BC), Mesha, king of Moab, moved his armies against him. Joram recruited Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (1 Kings 22) and the king of Edom, to help put Mesha back in his place. They had a hard time keeping him out of Israel because all the rivers and streams, natural barriers to their advance, were dried up. Since Jehoshaphat, the king on David's throne, was involved Elisha asked God to help Joram (v1-15). The Lord had them dig a series of trenches on the potential battlefield and He flooded them with water. When the Moabite armies came to the site they saw a myriad of pools of red liquid (perhaps reflection from the red hills, or red dye from the clay) and thought that the three kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom had fought amongst themselves. Mesha attacked, expecting to find a weak and depleted army, only to be routed. He publicly offered his firstborn son to his god, Chemose, thinking he had offended him and thus been defeated. The Jewish armies, knowing God's abhorrence of human sacrifice withdrew, expecting God's wrath to fall from heaven. On a Moabite stone found at Dhaban, Jordan in 1868 is Mesha's account of the battle. He admitted being defeated by Ahab earlier but claimed victory against Israel in this battle because they fled.

### **2. By Miracles (4-5)**

- a. A prophet's widow had no means to pay her many creditors and was being forced to sell her sons into slavery. Elisha multiplied her meager amount of oil (4:1-7).
- b. When Elisha came to Jezreel he stayed with a wealthy Shunammite woman who met all his needs. God rewarded her by giving her and her husband a son in their old age, but he died. Elisha prayed and God answered by raising their son (4:8-37).
- c. The Lord met the needs of the growing school of prophets through Elisha, purifying their poisoned water and feeding a hundred with just twenty loaves of bread (4:38-44).
- d. Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was stricken with leprosy. To be healed he sent to the king of Israel to heal him. Naaman goes to the house of Elisha, but Elisha does not come out to talk to Naaman – he only gave directions through the door. Naaman was insulted, but his servant encouraged him to follow Elisha's instructions. He did, dipping himself in the Jordan seven times and was healed.
- e. Gehazi, Elisha's servant was stricken with leprosy for greed and lying (5:15-27).
- f. Elisha makes an ax head float when it was dropped into the Jordan River (6:1-7).

### **3. To the Arameans (6-7)**

The Arameans waged two military campaigns against Israel: In the first raid the Lord had Elisha tell the Israelites every move the Arameans were making. Knowing this, the Aramean army surrounded Elisha's home in order to kill him. God not only protected Elisha and his servant with his own army of horses and flaming chariots but, in answer to his prayer, he blinded the whole army as well. With sight restored they went home to warn their king (v8-23).

In the second, Ben-Hada and his Aramean army invaded Samaria. Their siege caused a famine that was blamed on Elisha, and the king of Israel sent out a hit man to get him. Just as the hit man arrived, Elisha prophesied that the city would be free in one day. That night the Lord created a rumbling noise that the Arameans took for an approaching army coming to the aid of Samaria. They ran off leaving all their food and supplies behind. Word of this miracle got to the city from some lepers who had seen the deserted camp, and the following day the hit man was trampled in the stampede of the town people to get to the supplies.

#### **4. To Jehoram and Ahaziah (8)**

Meanwhile, in Judah, Jehoram came to power as co-ruler while his father, Jehoshaphat, was still king. Unfortunately, his father married him off to Athalia, daughter of the evil Ahab and Jezebel. This resulted in exporting their evil to Judah. So, even though God allowed Jehoram's reign as heir to the Throne of David, it ultimately spelled disaster when he died and the evil Athalia usurped the throne from their son Ahaziah.

## **II. Decline of Israel (Chapters 9-17)**

The second section describes the deterioration and collapse of the Northern nation of Israel due to its continued pagan practices and evil leadership. The slide into captivity is now all downhill, climaxing in chapter 17, which explains why Israel cannot survive. By disregarding the covenant as explained by Joshua in Deut 30:19, "This day I call heaven and earth as witness against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life." Israel chooses death!

### **A. Political Purging Does Not Save Israel (Chapters 9-14)**

#### **1. Jehu's Purge of Ahab (9)**

Jehu was the commander of the army of Israel under King Joram. He faithfully defeated Joram's arch-enemies, the Arameans, but God had a special plan for him. Elisha instructed a prophet to anoint Jehu king, the only God anointed king in Israel. The Lord then commanded Jehu to avenge the blood of His prophets shed by Ahab and Jezebel (v1-13). Jehu pushed his chariot to Jezreel and found kings Joram and Ahaziah meeting in the field once belonging to Naboth. He killed Joram and Ahaziah with the bow, making sure his body landed on Naboth's land to fulfill Ahab's judgment (1 Kings 21 and 29). Jezebel, never knowing when to quit, mocked Jehu but he had the palace guard toss her out of her window where she splattered on the ground, was trampled by horses and eaten by dogs, as predicted, in Naboth's field (1 Kings 21).

#### **2. Jehu's Bloody Coup (10)**

To follow through with his instructions, Jehu threatened the city officials in Samaria, and they appeased him by decapitating Ahab's seventy sons. He also killed all other relatives and associates he could find. This was sanctioned under the Lord's directive. But, he also slaughtered forty two relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah, so as to weaken his rival's throne. This blood bath was remembered and cursed for 100 years (Hosea 4). Jehu continued his purge to include the worshippers of Baal and burned their temple, but didn't bother to remove the golden calves from Bethel and Dan. His bloody reign lasted from 841-814 B.C. Jehu's troubles included making an alliance with King Shalmaneser from Assyria to protect his northern border. He is shown bowing to the Assyrian king presenting tribute on an ancient black stone monument.

#### **3. Athaliah's Coup in Judah (11)**

When her son Ahaziah died, Athaliah seized the throne and killed all of the royal descendants of David. All, that is but one, Joash. He was hidden for six years in the temple, and made king after she was executed by the palace guards. Joash became king at age seven.

#### **4. Joash's Religious Reforms (12)**

His forty year reign (835-796 BC.) was a time of a renewal of righteousness, a refurbishing of the Temple, and reinstatement of Temple worship. His rule was flawed by his fear of Aramean King Hazael, which caused him to send Temple implements to them as payment of tribute. God's desire, since Egypt, was that His people stay free to worship Him. His own officials killed him.

#### **5. Jehoahaz and Jehoash's Wicked Rule (13)**

Jehoahaz followed Jehu to Israel's throne only to introduce a new form of idol worship, the Asheroth Pole. This was a representation of the Canaanite fertility goddess, bringing its vile

immoral practices. God used the Arameans again to reduce Israel's army and influence. His son, Jehoash, was king when Elisha was dying. Even on his deathbed, Elisha was a powerful instrument of God. God allowed Jehoash to defeat his enemies because of his love of Elisha and, even after death; a body was restored to life when placed among his bones in his tomb.

#### **6. Amaziah's Pleasing Rule (14)**

Just like his father Joash, he pleased God by bringing religious reform. He executed his father's assassins and put down a rebellion by the Edomites, but His overconfidence and arrogance led to his defeat by Jehoash of Israel who crumbled the walls of Jerusalem and raided the Temple treasury. Amaziah was assassinated, like his father.

### **B. Political Stability Does Not Save Israel (Chapters 14-17)**

#### **1. Jeroboam II's Successes (14)**

Jeroboam II gave Israel one of its greatest periods of political stability and territorial growth. The prophet Jonah encouraged this expansion as God showed His mercy to His wayward people. By the end of his rule, however, Amos was condemning the greed and immorality of Jeroboam II as he began to be more and more like his namesake.

#### **2. Azariah's (Uzziah) Successes (15)**

While Jeroboam II ruled Israel, he ruled Judah in an even longer and more successful reign. He was struck with leprosy for offering incense in the Temple (2 Chron 26). Jeroboam was followed by five kings who presided over the fast deterioration of Israel:

- Zechariah ruled for six months and was killed by ...
- Shallum who ruled for one month and was assassinated by ...
- Menahem who held on for ten years by paying heavy tribute to the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul).
- Pekahiah inherited his father's debts to Assyria until his military commander led a coup and killed him (two years).
- Pekah, that commander, ruled for twenty years and refused to pay Assyria but he was deposed by ...
- Hoshea, who usurped the throne with Assyrian support.

#### **3. Jotham's Co-rule (15)**

In Judah he co-ruled with his father Uzziah and was also righteous. He did, however fail to destroy the "high places" and Pekah was his greatest threat. The prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah ministered during his reign.

#### **4. Ahaz's Wicked Rule (16)**

Like Ahab in Israel, Ahaz in Judah was one of their most wicked kings. He introduced human sacrifice to worship and promoted the "high places" (2 Chron 28). Against the advice of Isaiah, he asked Tiglath-Pileser for help against a threat from Assyria. He paid for the help with treasure from the Temple. Assyria captured Damascus, besieged Samaria and forced continued tribute as Judah was a virtual vassal state of Assyria. Part of his compliance meant erecting an Assyrian altar in place of the Bronze Altar in the Temple and removing all things from the Temple that would offend the Assyrians.

#### **5. Hoshea's Final Rule (17)**

He was able to save Samaria by continuing to pay tribute to Assyria, but when he tested Shalmaneser, Tiglath-Pileser's son, by threatening to bring Egypt into the equation, he was imprisoned, Samaria besieged, eventually destroyed, and the state of Israel brought to an end. The Assyrians moved many of the able-bodied Jews to Assyria and settled many of their people

into Samaria, bringing the mix of nationalities and religions that made the Samaritans a hated race of half-breed, heretical people during New Testament times. Israel fell because...

<sup>7</sup>Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods <sup>8</sup>and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. 2 Kings 17:7-8

### **III. Survival of Judah (Chapters 18-25)**

The final section of Kings traces the survival of Judah after Israel's collapse. Hezekiah and Josiah brought reform that prolonged Judah's existence for another hundred years. Manasseh, however, brought the eventual collapse as God judged him for his terrible sins.

#### **A. Judah's Renewal (Chapters 18-20)**

##### **1. Hezekiah Trusts The Lord (18)**

He, unlike his father Ahaz, trusted the Lord and introduced many religious reforms in Judah. He reestablished worship in Jerusalem, removed the "high places," and destroyed idols and other pagan symbols. He also rebelled against his oppressors Sargon and Sennacherib causing the invasion and siege of Jerusalem. This is also recorded in Isaiah 36-37. When it looked like Hezekiah might get help from Egypt, Sennacherib surrounded the city (701 BC). Assyrian writings report, "He was trapped like a bird in a cage." Hezekiah paid a large tribute, but it only delayed the inevitable. Sennacherib sent a delegation to accept surrender terms and they made fun of Hezekiah and his dependence on his God. They made dire threats in Hebrew so the Jewish population would understand.

##### **2. The Lord Delivers Hezekiah (19)**

Hezekiah received threats from Assyria and consulted Isaiah for God's word and received a promise of deliverance. Sennacherib, worried because of troop movements from Egypt, sent a letter warning him not to use Egypt. He took the letter before the Lord, knowing only He could save them, and Isaiah announced that God would fight for them, save Jerusalem, and end Sennacherib's reign.

<sup>14</sup>Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup>"Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. <sup>17</sup>"Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands <sup>18</sup>and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. <sup>19</sup>"Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God." 2 Kings 19:14-19

That night an angel of the Lord slaughtered the Assyrian army (185,000 men), forcing Sennacherib to return to Nineveh.

##### **3. The Lord Heals Hezekiah (20)**

Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the Lord sent Isaiah to tell him to prepare to die. He begged God for fifteen more years and God honored his request. His response is in a hymn recorded in Isa 38. Berodach-Baladan, a king of Babylon (721-710 BC), sent an envoy to Hezekiah to

congratulate him on his recovery. Actually he wanted to test Judah's strength and lure them into an alliance, but he proudly showed off the nation's riches which, according to Isaiah, caused those treasures to be carried away in the Babylonian Captivity.

## **B. Judah's Regression (Chapters 21-25)**

### **1. Manasseh Rejects the Lord (21)**

It is interesting that Hezekiah's son would undo all that he has accomplished in righteousness. During the fifty-five years of Manasseh's reign he committed every pagan atrocity and under his leadership Judah *"did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites"* (v19). In fact, Manasseh was blamed for the eventual fall of Jerusalem. He was the most wicked king in Judah. He experienced a short imprisonment in Assyria (2 Chron 33), but Assyrian records show he was their loyal subject for most of his rule.

### **2. The Lord Touches Josiah (22)**

Manasseh's grandson Josiah was eight years old when his father, Amon, died and he became king. When he was eighteen he began repairs on the temple which had decayed during the previous fifty plus years. Hilkiah, the high priest found the book of the law (probably Deuteronomy) and read it to the king. Josiah feared God's wrath and inquired of a prophetess, Huldah, about Judah's future. She predicted that Judah would be destroyed, but Josiah would not see it because he had personally repented.

<sup>19</sup>because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD. 2 Kings 22:19

### **3. The Lord Waited Because of Josiah (23-24)**

Josiah renewed the covenant and celebrated Passover as it had not been celebrated since the wilderness wanderings. He removed all evidence of pagan worship, including the shrine built at Bethel by Jereboam (1 Kings 13), and re-centralized the nation's worship in Jerusalem. *"Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did"* (v25). Sadly, Josiah was killed in a battle with Egyptian Pharaoh Necho when he tried to stop him from helping the Assyrians against Babylon's armies. Babylon took control of the known world from Egypt and Assyria. The end of Judah's history reads much like the fall of Israel. King after king failed to halt the spiritual and physical spiral:

- Jehoahaz, Josiah's son was deposed by Pharaoh Necho
- Jehoiakim, another son was made Necho's puppet king and resisted the word of the Lord by burning Jeremiah's scroll that warned of Judah's coming slavery.
- Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son tried to rebel against Babylon and brought Nebuchadnezzar back to Jerusalem where he deposed Jehoiachin and stripped Jerusalem and the Temple and took the royal family and leading citizens of the city to Babylon. This was the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity.
- Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle was made puppet king of Jerusalem.

### **4. The Destruction of Jerusalem (25)**

Zedekiah led a final revolt against Babylon, against the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah and bringing a siege that led to the starvation and eventual burning of Jerusalem. The Temple was stripped of the last of its furnishings. Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons executed and then his eyes were put out so the memory would remain, then led into captivity. When Evil-merodach became king in Babylon, he released Jehoiachin and provided a stipend for him. God still had a king in Israel and Judah could be restored if it would only repent.

## Introduction of Three Important Empires

### Assyria

#### 1. **Tiglath-Pileser (745-727 BC)**

The nation of Assyria was in decline when Jeroboam II came to power in Israel. He was an ambitious and ruthless king and ruled for over forty years, but just about the time he died an equally mighty king rose to power in Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser led Assyria to become the foremost power of the day. He was even proclaimed king of Babylon early in his reign and is known in Scripture by his Babylonian name, Pal (2 Kings 15:19). His advances into the west overshadowed the rules of Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea in Israel, and Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz in Judah. He is the emperor to whom Ahaz, King of Judah, paid tribute and Israel was no more than his puppet state also paying taxes to him

#### 2. **Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC)**

He followed Tiglath-Pileser to the throne and expected Israel to continue to pay tribute. Hosea believed Egypt when they promised to help against Assyria and stopped the flow of money to Assyria causing them to lay siege to Samaria. This eventually led to the Assyrian captivity of Israel.

#### 3. **Sargon II (722-705 BC)**

Samaria held out for three years but the death of Shalmaneser changed nothing, in fact, Sargon not only defeated Israel but began the terrible deportation of Jews to Assyria. He led Israel into THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY.

Judah, under King Hezekiah, also felt the sting of Sargon's wrath. It was at this time that the Prophet Isaiah walked the streets of Jerusalem "naked and barefoot" to illustrate the that Assyria would conquer Egypt and Ethiopia and warn Judah to look elsewhere for help--to the Lord (Isaiah 20).

#### 4. **Sennacherib (705-681 BC)**

When Sargon died revolts broke out throughout Israel, Judah, and Assyria. In fact, Judah, under King Hezekiah escaped their yoke completely. This revolt is described in three places in Scripture: 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; and Isaiah 36-37. Sennacherib came against Jerusalem with a mighty army and laid siege to the city hoping to starve the people into submission and enslave them. He was an unbelievably barbaric, inhumane ruler who would have brought great suffering to Judah, but God defeated him supernaturally.

#### 5. **Esar-Haddon (681-669 BC)**

He was one of the greatest of all Assyrian kings and extended their kingdom into Egypt. He is mentioned in Isaiah 19 and Ezra 4 and the account of his capture of King Manasseh is in 2 Chron 33.

#### 6. **Ashurbanipal (669-633 BC)**

He finished the job his father started by subjugating all of Egypt. He is mentioned in Nahum 3 when he restored Manasseh to his throne, probably to help him keep the trade routes between Egypt and Assyria opened. Trouble soon engulfed Assyria as the Median Empire grew stronger. When the Medes joined with Babylon in 625 BC, Nabopolassar (Nebuchadnezzar's father) led a combined force to drive Assyria out of Babylon. In 612 BC he destroyed Nineveh, weakening the Assyrian influence in Judah and making the religious reforms of King Josiah possible.

## **Babylon**

### **1. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC)**

He was a strong and brilliant military leader who, in one of history's most important battles, destroyed the armies of Egypt at Carchemish in 605 BC. Having driven Pharaoh Necho out of Asia, he returned to take the Babylonian throne when his father Nabopolassar died. He played a major part in Jewish history including invading Judah, laying siege to Jerusalem three separate times. He sacked the Temple, took the implements of worship, and subjugated the last three kings of Judah, bringing an end to the Hebrew monarchy, and causing THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. Jerusalem has been under Gentile domination since that time.

Nebuchadnezzar was also involved in the famous siege of Tyre in 586 BC, when the citizens moved to an island off the coast and deprived him of any spoil. Two things made this event important in history. One was the prediction that Tyre would be utterly destroyed, and the second was predicted by Ezekiel who said he would fail to sack the city, but also promised Egypt would be his as his reward (Ezk 26-29). The Book of Ezekiel should be read with an eye on Nebuchadnezzar's military campaigns. He also figures prominently in the book of Daniel.

### **2. Evil-merodach (562-560 BC)**

He is remembered primarily because of his kindness to Jehoiachin during the 37 years of his captivity mentioned in 2 Kings 25. He was murdered by his own brothers in a coup attempt.

### **3. Neriglissar (560-556 BC)**

Nothing of consequence took place during his short rule, except he lost his throne while fighting Cilicia to stop the encroaching Lydians.

### **4. Labashi-Marduk (556 BC)**

He was placed on the throne while still a boy, ruled for nine months and was murdered ending Nebuchadnezzar's influence.

### **5. Nabonidus (556-539 BC)**

He was neither a good general nor statesman and, because of a strange set of beliefs and superstitions, he did not even live in Babylon. While he reacted to threats in Syria and northern Arabia, he left his son, Belshazzar as regent in his place.

Trouble also fermented in the north as the Medo-Babylonian alliance started to crumble at the death of Nebuchadnezzar. In order to protect his empire he instituted political reforms bringing harsh restrictions on his own people and causing him to have enemies without and face revolts within his kingdom. His fall is the last fall of the Babylonian Empire.

### **6. Belshazzar (553-539 BC)**

During the absence of his father, Belshazzar was virtually the king in Babylon. He was, of course, the king involved with Daniel and the interpreting of the writing on the wall presenting the final message of the judgment he had already predicted to Nebuchadnezzar when he interpreted his dream of the giant statue.

Of course, that very night, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and Persians. The empire had lasted about the same length of time as did the Jewish captivity, seventy years.



## Persia

### **1. Cyrus, the Great (550-530 B. C.)**

The Medes were the uncontested masters of the Persians until Cyrus succeeded his father to the throne in a small Persian kingdom named Anshan in 559 BC. Soon afterward he led a rebellion against the Medes, and by 550 BC he had united the Medes and Persians under his own rule. In 539 BC he captured Babylon and made Persia a world power that was over three thousand miles long from east to west. He permitted the Jews to return to Palestine and rebuild the temple as prophesied in Isaiah 45. This story is featured in Ezra and Nehemiah.

### **2. Darius, the Mede (539-525 BC)**

Darius was made king in Chaldea after Cyrus captured Babylon (Dan 5:31, 9:1). He probably held this kingdom in trust for Cyrus while he extended his kingdom.

### **3. Smerdis (521 BC)**

He reigned only seven months and is only important in that he is thought to be the Artaxerxes in Ezra 4.

### **4. Darius I (521-486 BC)**

The building of the Temple in Jerusalem had stopped when he came to the throne, but he allowed the work to continue and it was finished (Ezra 5-6). We meet the prophets Haggai and Zechariah during his rule.

### **5. Xerxes (486-464 BC)**

The king AKA Ahasuerus was the one who married Esther about 478 BC. He was a cruel, vindictive, sensual and fickle man. He was famous in history for his many wars with his arch rival Greece. Eventually a much smaller, but better trained fleet of Grecian ships defeated him soundly at sea at Salamis. A year later they also beat his land forces and he was murdered by a courtier in his own palace.

### **6. Artaxerxes I (464-423 BC)**

This king was a friend of the Jews and allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He is mentioned in Ezra 7, Nehemiah 2 and 5. He also appointed Nehemiah governor of Jerusalem (Neh 5).

### **7. Darius III (336-331 BC)**

This was the last king of Persia and his kingdom was defeated by Alexander the Great. The throne of world empires passed from Asia to Europe.