

CHAPTER 3 ~ THE MIDDLE EAST

Chapter 2 Review

Sumer

Earliest civilization - very advanced - city states

Development of writing - **Cuneiform** - and development of the wheel



Akkad

A Civilization just north of Sumer whose main cities were Kish and Agade

Sargon the Great conquered the Sumerians for a time and created an empire

Neo-Sumerian

The time of the *Golden Age of Sumer* when Sumer revived.

Ur-Nammu was the great leader. He developed a code of laws.

The Great Ziggurat of Ur was built.



Chapter 3

Old Babylonian Empire

Hammurabi and Hammurabi's Code of over 300 laws!

Hittite Empire

Iron Workers - they had better weapons, so they were very good fighters!

Mentioned in the Bible but no remains of civilization found until early 1900's



Assyrian Empire

Tiglath-Pileser I -- established Assyrian Empire in **1100 BC** followed by Tiglath-Pileser II & III

Assyrians known for being VERY CRUEL! They cut off body parts and skinned people alive!

- Writing about the Assyrians, one author said "The ancient Assyrians were the Nazi's of the ancient world " AND writing about the Nazi's, another author said "The Nazi's were the Assyrians of the modern world."

Associated with Jonah because **Ninevah** was their capital city

Sargon II - conquered Northern Kingdom of *Israel* in **721 BC** (2Kings 18:9-12)

- The Kingdom of Israel had split after Solomon's reign into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom was still called Israel and consisted of ten of the tribes. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah (the people of Judah called the *Jews*) because it consisted mainly of the tribe of Judah along with some Benjaminites. Both get conquered eventually, but by different empires. Israel (northern/ten tribes) gets conquered by the Assyrians in 721 BC. Later, Judah (southern/two tribes) is conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

Sennacherib (son of Sargon II) - tried unsuccessfully to conquer Southern Kingdom of *Judah* around 741 BC

- 2 Kings 18 - 19 Tells the story of Sennacherib attacking Judah and King Hezekiah. Sennacherib tries to conquer Jerusalem but fails. King Hezekiah & people are trapped in Jerusalem in a siege. The army of Sennacherib is huge - 185,000 men! Isaiah prophesied that Sennacherib would not take Jerusalem, but it seemed hopeless. God saved the Jews by sending an angel to strike down the Assyrian army during the night. Most of them die. Sennacherib retreats! Never conquers Judah!

Greek Historian *Herodotus* and Jewish Historian *Josephus* are famous historians who wrote about these empires and it is good to know their names! :-)

Ashurbanipal - built first library at Nineveh with clay tablets of cuneiform writing!

The Assyrian Empire ends when Nabopolassar of Babylon conquers Nineveh in **612 BC**

New Babylonian Empire

Nabopolassar conquers Nineveh 612 BC -- Nineveh was completely destroyed and never rebuilt!



Nebuchadnezzar (son of Nabopolassar)

- Married a Median/Persian princess who missed her homeland, so he built her the **Hanging Gardens of Babylon**
- Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC -- The **Babylonian Captivity** begins (King Zedekiah)
- Inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken away to Babylon -- **Daniel**, the prophet, was one of them. So were **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!**
- Nebuchadnezzar's Dream gives us a good timeline of history
- Nebuchadnezzar had time of madness due to pride that was well-documented in historical records

After Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler was Nabonidus and his son **Belshazzar**. Belshazzar's story is told in Daniel Chapter 5 - it is the part where he sees *writing on the wall* - "Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin" - the very same night the Persians under Cyrus the Great come to conquer Babylon!

Persian Empire / Medo-Persian Empire (one and the same)

Cyrus the Great defeats the Babylonians in 539 BC

- Cyrus is mentioned in the Bible - BY NAME - 150 years before his life even began!
- In the mid-700's BC, **Isaiah** wrote about Cyrus who was to be ruler in the mid-500's BC! In Isaiah 44: 28 & 45:1 Cyrus is referred to by God as "my shepherd" & "my anointed"
- ¹*The Lord says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut."*
- **Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild it!**

The main religion of the Persians was ZOROASTRIANISM - named after its founder Zoroaster

- It is a dualistic religion - two gods:
 - (1) Ahura-Mazda - the god of light, creation, goodness
 - (2) Ahriman - the god of evil & darkness & destruction (like Satan)
- Both were considered co-equal gods - *sort of like the two sides of The Force in Star Wars*
- Very ethical religion - believed in a coming judgment at the end of one's life and a need to be moral and good. Many think that Zoroaster was probably influenced by Israelites' beliefs when he developed his religion.



Darius the Great - Came after Cyrus

Xerxes I (son of Darius the Great)--

- This was the King who was the husband of Esther. Ahasuerus is what he is called in Book of Esther.
- Xerxes I had a reign with wars against the Greeks - Battle of Thermopylae, Battle of Salamis, Battle of Marathon (to be covered when we cover Greece)



Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire and that is what brings it to an end! 333 B.C.