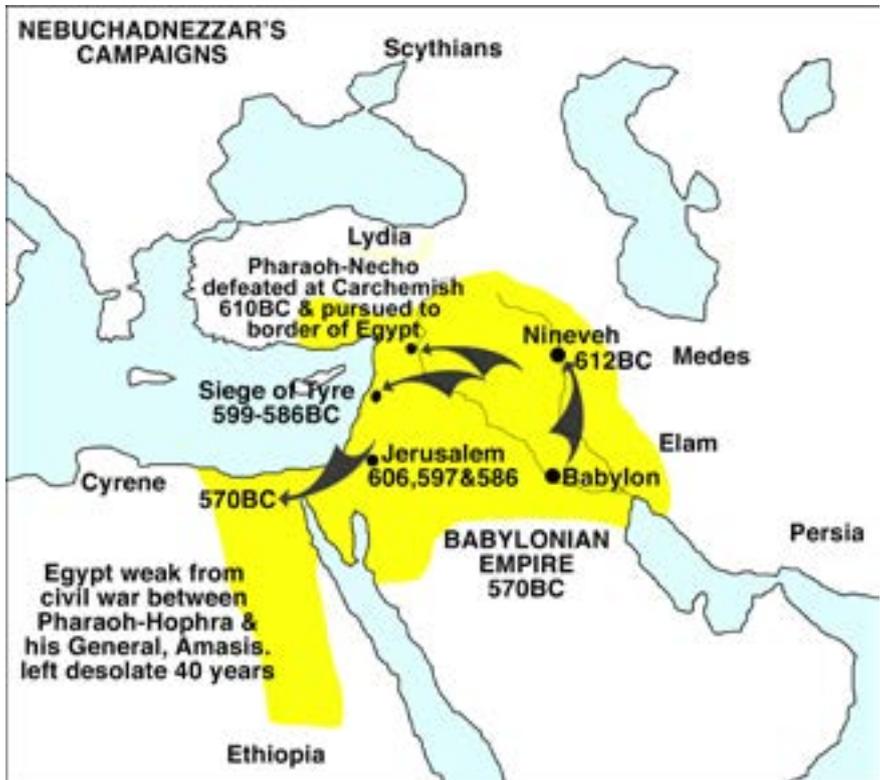


# Nebuchadnezzar

## in History

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# *Nebuchadnezzar the First Universal King*

**T**he first World Empire was Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar was its King. Prior to Babylon there were two kingdoms, Egypt and Assyria, vying for power.

After the Flood men settled along the Euphrates Valley and along the Nile Valley where they were ruled over by city Kings. Cities were joined to make nations and nations joined to make kingdoms. Evidence abounds that soon after the flood men worshipped the sun, moon and stars and then their deceased rulers and in Egypt they worshipped any living creature.

In the Euphrates region there were originally two kingdoms. Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, built cities around Babel on the Euphrates and Asshur, a descendant of Shem, built cities about Nineveh on the Tigrus (Gen.10:8-12):

*“And Cush begat Nimrod...And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.”*

It is not surprising to read that Asshur from the godly line of Shem went out of the land of Shinar and travelled approximately 450 km north along the Tigrus River to establish a separate civilization with its capital Nineveh to escape the idolatry and tyranny of Babel.

Accadian and Summerian kingdoms merged into a single Babylonian kingdom and evidence of early idolatry is found in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which was written soon after the Flood.

*The Code of Hammurabi* about 1700 BC reveals how idolatry and government were combined. It was written in the Akkadian language and is preserved on a stele of stone. It has 282 laws.



Archaeologists have uncovered Ur of the Chaldees which was a great city on the Euphrates about 2000BC with idolatrous temples and a king. Abram was told by God to leave Ur and to go to a land that God would show him. The land of Canaan, which God gave to Abraham and his seed as an everlasting possession, lay between the two civilizations of Babylon and Egypt and strategically at the centre of the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Ezekiel wrote:



*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her” (Ezek.5:5).*

Abram travelled up the Euphrates to Haran and remained there until his father Terah died and then proceeded to Canaan. When Abram came to Canaan the Amorites who dwelt there could not be dispossessed for another 400 years because, although they were wicked people, their iniquity was “not yet full” (Gen.15:16). God’s longsuffering was not exhausted.

There was a famine in Canaan when Abram arrived and so he continued into Egypt where he was in danger from Pharaoh who wanted to take Sarah to wife. Abram was preserved, returned to Canaan and dwelt in the land as a stranger and sojourner with Isaac and Jacob. In the days of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, the children of Israel went down to Egypt and became slaves to the Egyptians for four generations (215 years) after which Moses led them out into the wilderness for 40 years. They ultimately entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and conquered the land. At that time the Egyptians had control of Canaan which was ruled by city kings.

After Joshua died, Israel was ruled by Judges until God gave Israel her first King, Saul, and when he failed, God anointed David and made an **everlasting covenant** with him and his seed after him, establishing the throne of Israel on which, ultimately, Messiah would rule the world in the millennial kingdom.

In the days after Solomon when the kingdom divided, the **northern kingdom was harassed by Assyria** as the Assyrians pushed west and south and Shalmanassar besieged Samaria. He was replaced by Sargon who captured Samaria in 721 BC and took 27,290 captives according to his own chronicle, and settled them in the cities of the Medes. When Sargon was murdered his son Sennacherib became king and pushed the boundaries of the Assyrian kingdom south to the border of Egypt

in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah. After conquering all of Judah, Sennacherib lost 185,000 soldiers in one night as the Angel of the Lord slew them while they threatened Jerusalem.

**Prior to this**, Babylon had revolted and Merodach-Baladan, a Chaldean tribesman, was made King but Sennacherib ruthlessly defeated the Babylonians at Kish and Merodach-Baladan fled to Chaldea at the mouth of the Euphrates. When Sennacherib lost his army at Jerusalem Merodach-Baladan returned to Babylon and sent ambassadors to Hezekiah (Isa.39:1).

The enemies of Sennacherib joined forces and Babylon, Elam, the Aramaeans, and Medes, fought against Sennacherib in a battle that was indecisive about 691BC. A couple of years later Sennacherib captured Babylon and broke down some of the walls. He was murdered about 681BC by two of his sons who fled to Armenia and another of his sons, Esarhaddon took the throne and reigned about 11 years.

Esarhaddon was told by the soothsayers to rebuild the temples of Babylon which his father had destroyed and he gained favour with the Babylonians by worshipping their gods. He defeated Tarharka King of Egypt and captured the northern capital city of Memphis (Noph, Isa.19:13) but when the Assyrians withdrew, Tarharka again ruled Egypt.

Esarhaddon's son, Ashurbanipal, followed but the Assyrian Empire declined and Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, seized power in Babylon in 625 BC. In 612 BC he led an army of Babylonians and Medes to destroy Nineveh and in 607 BC the destruction of the Assyrian nation was complete. In order to secure the support of the Medes he married his son Nebuchadnezzar to the daughter of Cyaxares the king of the Medes. The Assyrian Empire had also been under attack from the Scythians who lived north of the Black Sea. They had taken the western part of the Assyrian Empire in Asia, east of the Haly River, and occupied it for 28 years before being driven out about 596BC by the Medes

### *The Invasion by Babylon Foretold*

One hundred years before Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon Isaiah had foretold that Babylon would rise, invade the land of Judah, and take away all the treasures of the Temple and the King. At that time Assyria and Egypt were the dominant powers and Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, had put down a rebellion in Babylon. When Merodach-baladan, a Chaldean tribesman took Babylon and revolted

about 689BC Sennacherib broke down part of its walls and destroyed its temples.

When Hezekiah was healed of his sickness, Merodach-baladan sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to wish him well and no doubt to gain his help in opposing the Assyrians. Foolishly, Hezekiah showed them all the treasures of the house of the Lord. He was flattered by the Babylonians and so Isaiah was sent with the message that the Babylonians would come and take away all the treasures of the Lord's house. We read:

*"At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah...and Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things...Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him...Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, **shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left...**" (Isa.39:1-6).*

Ezekiel (Chs..17 and 21) and Jeremiah (Jer.20:4-6; 25:9-12; 27:1-8; 32:28; 40\_1-7) both foretold that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Jerusalem. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim (about 605BC) Jeremiah stated that the Jews would be held captive in Babylon **70 years** and he repeated that prophecy in ch. 29:10.

Jeremiah prophesied that the *"basket of good figs"* had been taken to Babylon in the first two invasions and that the *"naughty (evil) figs"* would be taken in the final captivity (Jer.24:1-10). **There would be three captivities.**

Ezekiel prophesied that the throne of David would be **overturned three times** after which it would cease until Christ came to reign.

*"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel (Zedekiah), whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will **overturn** (606/605BC), **overturn** (597BC), **overturn** (586BC), it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek.21:25-27).*

The last king of Israel to sit on the throne of David before the first Advent of Messiah was Zedekiah and Ezekiel prophesied of that *"wicked prince"*:

*"My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; **yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.**" (Ezek.12:13).*

Three times Israel was overrun by Nebuchadnezzar but before he became the undisputed ruler of the world, ushering in the “*times of the Gentiles*” (Luke 21:24) he had to destroy the power of Egypt which he did in 570BC after God had weakened Pharaoh-hophra by a civil war. He came against Judah in 606BC, 597BC, and 586BC and finally destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem taking Zedekiah away **blinded** and in chains to Babylon just as Ezekiel foretold:

*“I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there”* (Ezek.12:13)

The story of Nebuchadnezzar and prophecies concerning him are intriguing and about one year before he died he turned to the Lord and boldly testified. Before Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon had become part of the Assyrian Kingdom which stretched from the Haly River in Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf. It was in constant conflict with Egypt in the south and Israel was between. Egypt had extended her kingdom to Syria and Assyria contested the lands of Syria, Israel and Judah.

#### *Nebuchadnezzar’s Rise to Power*

As the Assyrian Empire began to disintegrate Pharaoh-necho came from Egypt to secure the territory south of the Euphrates River. As the Egyptian army passed through Judah Josiah when to fight with them but lost his life in the battle.

Jehoahaz his son then reigned in Jerusalem for 3 months but was taken to Pharaoh in Riblah, bound, and sent to Egypt. Pharaoh-necho then placed Jehoiakim his brother on the throne. It appears that Necho and his army remained in Syria for 3 years as an occupation army until the battle at Carchemish where he was challenged by the youthful Nebuchadnezzar leading the Babylonian army. That whole area was considered part of Egyptian territory at that time.

After the destruction of Nineveh in 612BC other Assyrian cities needed to be occupied and by 607BC Assyria was no more. It was then that Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to the Egyptian army occupying Syria at Carchemish on the Euphrates near Haran and he defeated Pharaoh-necho in the **fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign** (606BC). Jeremiah prophesied

*“against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim”* (Jer.46:2).

When the Egyptian forces were routed by Nebuchanezzar he pursued them to the border of Egypt. It was during this campaign that Nabopolassar died at Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar returned home to be crowned king (605BC).

Jehoiakim had served the Egyptians during his **first 4 years** and then he served Nebuchadnezzar but 4 years later (602BC) he rebelled and Nebuchadnezzar came again in 597BC. Jehoiakim was put in chains to take him to Babylon but he died and was buried at Jerusalem. His 18-year-old son Jehoiachin ruled for 3 months and he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar who took him to Babylon and placed his uncle, Zedekiah, on the throne. The death of Jehoiakim was in the 8th year of Nebuchanezzar's reign (2Kings 24:12).

Jeremiah had prophesied in the 4th year of Jehoiakim which was the 1st year of Nebuchanezzar, that Nebuchanezzar would come and destroy Jerusalem and it would be desolate 70 years after which the king of Babylon would be overthrown (Jer.25:1,11-12).

**However, Jehoiakim** believed the false prophets and rebelled after serving Nebuchadnezzar **3 years** (2Kings 24:1) and Jeremiah prophesied:

*"He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem"* (Jer.22:19).

*"Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, **to carry him to Babylon**"* (2Chron.36:6).

Jehoiakim was bound ready to go to Babylon but died in Jerusalem (2Kings24:6) and they dragged his body outside the city. The city was besieged by Nebuchanezzar and Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) had reigned 3 months. Nebuchadnezzar took him to Babylon with Ezekiel where he was imprisoned until after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in the 37th year of his captivity (560BC) and was released in the short reign of Evil-merodach the son of Nebuchadnezzar.

We are told of two things that happened in the fourth year of Zedekiah: he went to Babylon (Jer.51:59), and the false prophets told him that the overthrow of Babylon was imminent (Jer.28:1-4).

Jeremiah records that in the fourth year of Zedekiah he visited Babylon for we read of

*"Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when **he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon** in the fourth year of his reign"* (Jer.51:59).

At this time Jeremiah gave Seraiah a roll to take in which were written judgments on Babylon. Seraiah was told to read them when he arrived in Babylon and then he was to tie a stone to the roll and cast it into the Euphrates River saying, *“Thus shall Babylon sink and not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her”* (Jer.51:64). Babylon was later captured by Cyrus the Persian and never recovered. It is an archaeological site today and will never be rebuilt.

Also in **the 4th year of Zedekiah’s reign**, Hananiah the false prophet in Jerusalem prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar was already broken and all the captives would return within 2 years :

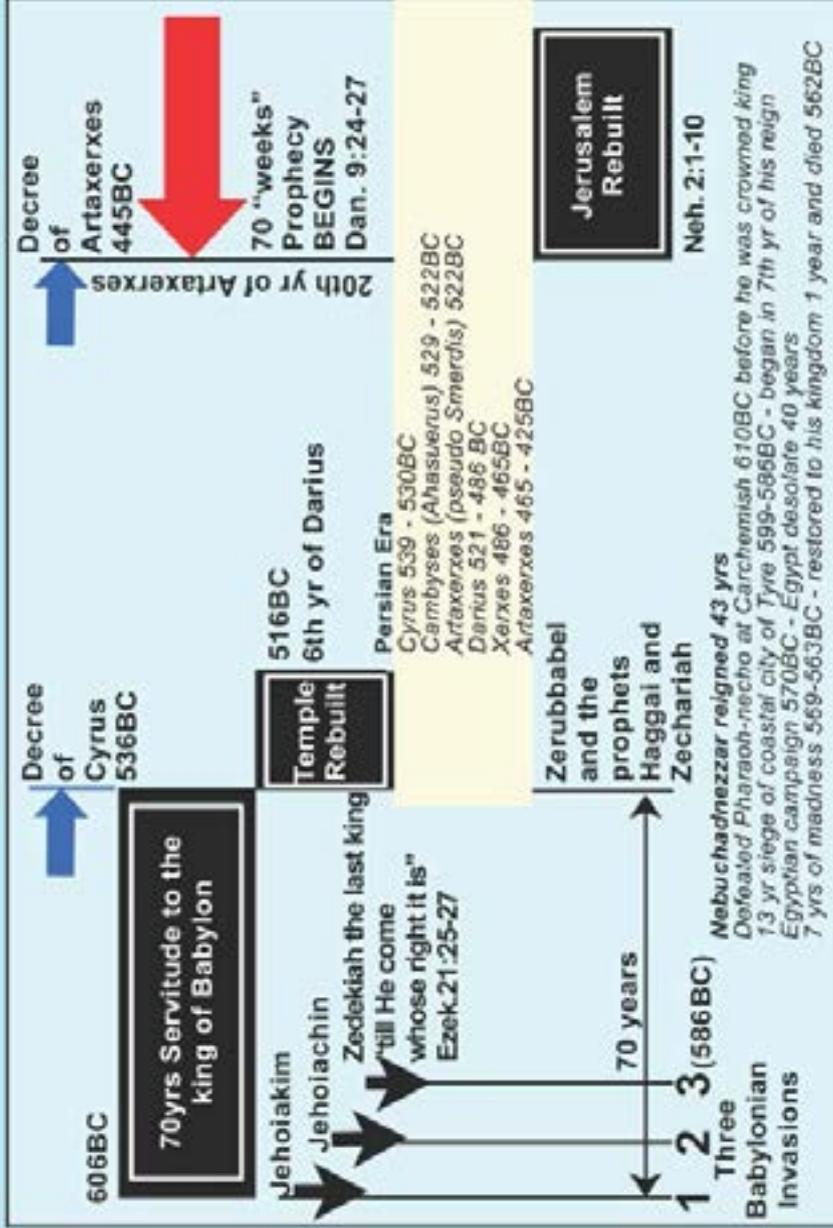
*“In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in **the fourth year**, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah ... spake unto me ... saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. **Within two full years** will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon”* (Jer.28:1-4)..

Jeremiah was told to tell Hanaiah:  
*“The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet **died the same year** in the seventh month”* (Jer.28:15-17).



### ***The Destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar Foretold***

About 715BC Isaiah had prophesied that the city of Tyre would be destroyed (Isa.23) and Nebuchadnezzar had a part to play in fulfilling that prophecy in 586BC while Alexander the Great completed the fulfilment of the prophecy in 332BC when he pushed the debris of the coastal city left by Nebuchadnezzar into the sea to make a causeway to the island which he then destroyed.



We know from Josephus that in the **7th year** of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (600/599BC) he began the siege of Tyre which lasted for **13 years**. (*Antiquities* Book 1:159; Book 10, Ch.11:228). However, the people of Tyre moved to the island one kilometer off shore and Nebuchadnezzar was deprived of the great spoils of Tyre.

Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre is recorded in chapters 26 to 28 of his prophecy. The total destruction of both the coastal city and the island city is described in chapter 26 while the commercial interests of Tyre extending to the entire known world are described in chapter 27. Chapter 28 is directed to the King of Tyre who was **possessed by Satan** and led the worship of Asherah which is the same god as Asherat; "Lady of the Sea". She was also known as Astarte and was depicted as a nude woman. She is the goddess of fertility and sensuality. In other areas she goes under the names of Venus, Ishtar, and Athtar. In Europe she was known as Eostre (Easter).

#### *The Land of Egypt Promised to Nebuchadnezzar as Wages*

Since Nebuchadnezzar had partially fulfilled God's will on the coastal city of Tyre God rewarded him for the service he rendered by giving him the land of Egypt and all its riches which he invaded about 570 BC and desolated for **40 years** in a 12 month campaign. He ravaged Egypt all the way to the border of Ethiopia (Ezek.29:12, 18-20).

*"And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste **shall be desolate forty years**: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries"* (Ezek.29:12).

*"And it came to pass in the **seven and twentieth year** (of Jehoiachin's captivity, 597 to 571BC), in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: **yet had he no wages, nor his army**, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon** (570BC); and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and **it shall be the wages for his army**" (Ezek.29:17-19).*

The false prophets had told Zedekiah that "within two full years" the vessels of the Temple that had been taken to Babylon in earlier invasions would all be returned to Jerusalem (Jer.28:2) and Zedekiah

revolted. Jeremiah warned that Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy both the Temple and the city but his warning fell on deaf ears.

Nebuchadnezzar came as Jeremiah had prophesied and in 586BC Zedekiah saw all his sons slain before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, then his eyes were put out and he was taken in chains to Babylon where he died in prison. Jeremiah was treated favourably and allowed to remain in the land but renegade Jews slew the Governor of the land who had been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar and forcibly took Jeremiah to Egypt.

### *Egypt's Civil War Foretold*

In Egypt Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar and indicated that Pharaoh-hophra would be given *"into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life"* (Jer.44:30). Herodotus records that the General of the Egyptian army, Amasis, was crowned king by troops that had revolted against Pharaoh-hophra. Pharaoh led 30,000 Greek mercenaries against Amasis who led a larger army of Egyptian troops. Pharaoh was defeated and taken prisoner only to be handed over to the Egyptians who strangled him. He was given into *"the hand of them that seek his life"*.

The desolation of Egypt was a gift from God to Nebuchadnezzar and God prepared the way for Nebuchadnezzar by weakening Pharaoh-Hophra with a civil war that made him a prisoner and cost him his life. Amasis then became king after Hophra (Aries). (*Histories of Herodotus* Book 2, paras. 261 - 272). Ezekiel foretold this:

*"And it came to pass in the eleventh year (586BC), in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt"* (Ezek.30:20-25).

The civil war in Egypt in the days of Nebuchadnezzar was also foretold by Jeremiah when renegade Jews wanted to go to Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah told them not to go and that Pharaoh-hophra would be destroyed by his enemies. Then Nebuchadnezzar would conquer the land and they would be slain.

*“Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them (Amasis) that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life” (Jer.44:30).*

The following is the story as told by Herodotus:

“Hophra (Apries), his son, succeeded him upon the throne, who, excepting Psammetichus, his great-grandfather, was **the most prosperous of all the kings that ever ruled over Egypt...** An army despatched by Apries (Hophra) to attack Cyrene, having met with a terrible reverse, the Egyptians laid the blame on him, imagining that he had, of malice pretense, sent the troops into the jaws of destruction... Hophra (Apries), on learning these circumstances, sent Amasis (his General) to the rebels to appease the tumult by persuasion...as he was seeking to restrain the malcontents by his exhortations, one of them, coming behind him, put a helmet on his head, saying, as he put it on, that he thereby crowned him king... That monarch, on tidings of these events reaching him, sent Patarbemis, one of his courtiers, a man of high rank, to Amasis with orders to bring him alive into his presence...Apries, however, when he saw him approaching without Amasis, fell into a paroxysm of rage, and ... commanded the nose and ears of Patarbemis to be cut off. Then the rest of the Egyptians, who had hitherto espoused the cause of Apries ...without a moment’s hesitation went over to the rebels, and put themselves at the disposal of Amasis... Apries, informed of this new calamity, armed his mercenaries, and led them against the Egyptians... Apries, at the head of his mercenaries, and Amasis, in command of the whole native force of the Egyptians, encountered one another near the city of Momemphis, an engagement presently took place. **The foreign troops fought bravely, but were overpowered by numbers... Apries fell into the enemy’s hands and was brought back a prisoner to Sais, where he was lodged in what had been his own house, but was now the palace of Amasis... (who) gave Apries over into the hands of his former subjects, to deal with as they chose.** Then the Egyptians took him and **strangled him**, but having so done they buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers.”

Thus the prophecy was fulfilled and the sword in the hand of Pharaoh was taken away thus preparing Egypt for the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar.

### ***Jehoiachin's Release from Prison Foretold***

In the 27th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (571BC) Ezekiel wrote:

*"I have given him **the land of Egypt** for his labor wherewith he served against it, because they (Babylonians) wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD. In that day will I cause **the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth**, and I will give thee **the opening of the mouth** in the midst of them (Babylonians); and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezek.29:20-21).*

The "*horn of the house of Israel*" refers to Israel's king Jehoiachin who was imprisoned by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon in 597BC. In the thirty seventh year of his captivity (561BC) he was released and that was the **first year of Evil-merodach's reign (2Kings25:27)**. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC about one year after he was restored after 7 years of madness. It seems that Evil-merodach had a different policy to Israel than his father and allowed greater freedom described as "*the opening of the mouth*" (Ezek.29:21). Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar's conversion one year before he died had an impact on his son Evil-Merodach who then showed favour to the Jews who worshipped the God of Daniel. Jehoiachin was 55 years old at the time of his release (18 + 37).

### ***Nebuchadnezzar's Seven Years of Madness Foretold***

In 571BC Nebuchadnezzar had a dream at a time when he was "*flourishing in my palace*" and the soothsayers could not interpret it so he called for Daniel. He said:

*"I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth:*

*Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan.4:10-17).*

Daniel interpreted the dream as follows:

*"the tree...is thou O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth... they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan.4:22-26).*

Daniel concluded with an appeal to repent of his sins and to show mercy to the poor but there was no response. Twelve months passed when one day the proud king boasted of **the great kingdom** which he had built by his own power and for his own honour. Suddenly he was struck mad and was taken out to live like a wild beast for seven years.



Why was there **a delay of 12 months** for the dream to be fulfilled? What was he doing in that 12 months? Well during that year Nebuchadnezzar conducted his military campaign against Egypt with devastating force. The Egyptians were led away captive and Egypt was desolate for 40 years.

When Nebuchadnezzar returned victorious he took all the honour to himself and gave no credit to God who had weakened the Egyptians with a civil war that had deposed Pharaoh-hophra and had him strangled. Nor did he acknowledge that God had given the wealth of Egypt to him as wages for his soldiers for the service they rendered against the coastal city of Tyre. The victory in Egypt would not have been possible if God had not *"broken his (Hophra's) arms"* and caused *"the sword to fall out of his (Hophra's) hand"* (Ezek.30:22).

We know from footnote 341 of *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus that the seven years of madness was completed about one year before Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC and his Egyptian campaign was therefore in the 12 months that followed his dream of the great tree.

The overthrow of Pharaoh-hophra (Aries) in Egypt by Amasis occurred at the same time. The Egyptian army had been mauled by the army of the Cyrenes and the Greek mercenaries who supported Hophra had been defeated by Amasis so Egypt's military capability was reduced.

*Unger's Bible Dictionary* records that an inscription by Nebuchadnezzar states that he sent an expedition to Egypt in the **37th year of his reign** which, counting "inclusively" could mean 35 or 36 years after he was made king in 605BC (570BC) and allows for the 7 years of madness and one year's reign before he died in 562BC. Josephus wrote that he reigned 43 years (*Antiquities*, Book 1 para 146).

### *Evaluating Nebuchadnezzar's Life*

It is instructive to analyze the life of Nebuchadnezzar to see what lessons might be learned. Humanly speaking he was a success story from childhood till he was struck with madness on his return to Babylon from a very successful military campaign in Egypt. He was born into a Royal Chaldean family and married a princess, the daughter of Cyaxares King of the Medes. As a young man he joined his father's army and soon excelled in battle so that he led the army in his father's absence. When he faced the powerful army of Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish about 606BC he won the battle and chased the Egyptians all the way to Egypt thus extending his influence to the territories of the Phoenicians at Tyre and Sidon on the coast, Israel, Judah in the high country and Ammon, Moab, Edom and Arabia on the east of Jordan.

Nebuchadnezzar was a builder and he selected skilled craftsmen from all the conquered countries to complete the construction of the magnificent city of Babylon. He had wealth beyond description and when God described his kingdom, He identified all other kingdoms that were to follow as **inferior** (Dan.2:39).

Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of Daniel and his three friends and gave them idolatrous names, he made a massive gold idol in the plain of Dura and demanded on pain of death that all men should bow before it in worship. He constantly consulted soothsayers and magicians and sought guidance using devilish practices as Ezekiel described:

*"For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. At his right hand was the divination*

for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter” (Ezek.21:21-22).

Yet Nebuchadnezzar was given his exalted position by “the God of heaven” (Dan.2:37) even though he was an idolater, ruthless, and showed no mercy to the poor.

The life of Nebuchadnezzar teaches us that God sometimes chooses evil men to fulfill His purposes on earth. The city of Tyre was an exceedingly evil city and **it had rejoiced at the capture of Jerusalem** by Nebuchadnezzar. God promised Abraham that those who cursed his seed would be cursed and for that reason as well as others, Nebuchadnezzar was to judge **Tyre**.

*“Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock”* (Ezek.26:2-4).

**Egypt** was destroyed for two reasons:

i) The pride of Pharaoh brought punishment:

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself”* (Ezek.29:3).

ii) Egypt failed to support Israel after promising to do so:

*“And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand. THEREFORE thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste”* (Ezek.29:6-9).

Failure to support Israel was deemed a serious sin sufficient to bring judgment on Egypt. America should remember this in any future conflict.

**Ammon** came under the judgment of God for rejoicing that the Temple of God had been profaned:

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel,*

*when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession” (Ezek.25:3-4),*

**Edom** also was judged for cursing Israel even though the Jews had sinned: *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it’ (Ezek.25:12-13).*

The hatred of the **Philistines** for God’s disobedient people brought judgment upon them:

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast” (Ezek.25:15-16).*

**Moab and Seir** had dared to express their contempt for God’s people and brought down Divine wrath on their heads:

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baalmeon, and Kiriathaim, unto the men of the east” (Ezek.25:8-10).*

**Sidon** had been a thorn in the side of the nation of Israel and had despised them; so God said:

*“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee...when I shall have executed judgments in her...For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword ... And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD” (Ezek.28:22-24).*

How did God pour out His vengeance on these nations that had opposed God’s people Israel? He used an evil King Nebuchadnezzar and He does the same today. God even calls Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” because he was carrying out the will of God even though he himself was a wicked man. God said:

*“And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given*

him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son" (Jer. 27:6-7).

To curse Israel is a very serious sin incurring the wrath of God even when Israel is sinful and disobedient.

Christendom throughout the centuries has vented its fury on the Jew by pogroms and inquisitions. Constantine expressed his deep resentment of the Jews at the Council of Nicea in AD325 and Martin Luther wrote against the Jews in a book which Hitler used to justify the holocaust. Amillennialists and Preterists today have removed Israel from the promises of God and consigned the nation to oblivion thus bringing themselves under the curse of God.

Christians are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps.122:6) and to love the Jew for Christ's sake. God will never break His covenant with Abraham and his seed.

Paul had a great love for Israel and said in Romans 9:3-4 that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his kinsmen, his brethren according to the flesh. His hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved (Rom.10:1). Everyone who has blessed the Jew has been blessed of God and everyone who has cursed the Jew has been cursed of God. Hitler and Haman (Esther 7:6-10) are prime examples of what God thinks of Jew haters! Both were destroyed.

Those whom God has chosen to execute judgment on Israel in the past were blessed so long as **their personal attitude to the Jew was not hatred**. The Babylonians had carried out the judgment of God against Jerusalem but they themselves came under judgment because as Zechariah wrote:

*"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction" (Zech.1:14-15).*

The Babylonians *"helped forward the affliction"*. They went beyond what God had determined and so the Persian, King Cyrus, was sent to destroy Babylon and the Babylonian Kingdom was mightily overthrown.

In the future, according to Ezekiel 38/39 and Joel 2, the Islamic armies will be an instrument of judgment on Israel during the first half of the Tribulation but their hatred will bring down the wrath of Almighty God and they will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel.

In the second half of the Tribulation Antichrist will mobilize all nations to wipe Israel off the face of the earth but at that time Israel will be a believing nation and **the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations (Zech.14:3)**. Antichrist and the kings of the earth that follow him will be cast into “*everlasting fire*” (Rev.19:19-21).

God has said of Israel:

*“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye”* (Zech.2:8).

Even after 1,000 years of Christ’s reign on earth Satan will still be stirring up the nations to destroy Israel, and when they “*compass the camp of the saints*” at Jerusalem (Rev.20:9) God will send fire from heaven upon them. Abraham and his descendants are special people in God’s plan of redemption for this world.

### *A Wasted Life*

We do not know how old Nebuchadnezzar was when he died but supposing he was 20 when he joined his father’s army and fought in the overthrow of Nineveh in 612BC, that would make him 26 years old when he became king in 606BC and 70 years old when he died (27+43).

At 69 years he recovered from madness and was restored to his throne and testified as follows:

*“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I **praised and honored him** that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. **Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase**”* (Dan.4:34-37).

This response was quite different to his response on former occasions. When Daniel’s three friends were delivered from the fiery furnace Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that Shadrach, Meshach and

Abednego were the “servants that trusted in Him” and that their God was greater than all other gods. He even made a decree that if anyone spoke against their God, they would be destroyed but that is not conversion. He was greatly convinced of who the God of Israel was and spoke well of Him but failed to have personal faith in the Lord.

In the same way it is possible for a person today to speak well of Christ, of His power to heal, raise the dead, forgive sins, and one day to reign over the earth. They may be well taught about the God of the Bible and be able to present the arguments for creation, a Biblical Flood, and proofs of miracles without ever falling at Jesus’ feet and trusting in Him for salvation. Jesus said,

*“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.7:21).*

Intellectual assent to Biblical truth falls short of believing in the heart and when Philip had convinced the Ethiopian Eunuch that Jesus was the Lamb of God foretold in Isaiah’s prophecy, the Eunuch asked to be baptized and Philip replied, “*If thou believest with **all thine heart**, thou mayest*” (Acts 8:37). Romans 10:9 also states:

*“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

Nebuchadnezzar had confessed with the mouth but until he was humbled before God and deprived of his health and worldly wealth, he had never believed with the heart. For this reason Daniel had said to him, eight years before, “*Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor*” (Dan.4:27). This command was ignored and Nebuchadnezzar rode victoriously into Egypt in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy only to return and take the glory to himself. God spared him in battle and destroyed the Egyptians before he arrived in Egypt but he had to be robbed of the glory of his kingdom in order for him to bow at the feet of the God of heaven in simple faith. The goodness of God had led him to repentance.

Dear friend, you wonder why adversity has crossed your path, why business has failed, why your health has gone or your family has disintegrated. Have you ever thought that God is trying to get your attention. You may believe the Bible and even acknowledge who Jesus Christ is, but you need to fall at Jesus’ feet in true repentance and trust Him with all your heart. Without this saving faith you are still outside the kingdom of God and lost in your sin. Judas was a respected member of the Lord’s disciples for three years. He was the treasurer and dispersed money to the poor but he never had a genuine

heart experience of faith in Christ and he was lost.

Nebuchadnezzar lived his life in a blaze of glory and God had to strip him of it all before he was brought to a heart experience of faith in the God of heaven. Men would look at his accomplishments; at the administration of his kingdom; at the might of his army; at the structures he built and the wealth he accumulated but he was a pauper in God's sight. His life was a waste of time and opportunity until his final year. He could never recover the wasted years.

Nebuchadnezzar had learned of the true and living God at Jerusalem before he was crowned king and in the second year of his reign, when he was about 28 years old, had acknowledged to Daniel that Daniel's God was superior to all the gods of Babylon yet he continued in a life of sin and witchcraft. What might have been if he had only turned in saving faith and true repentance at that time? He could have ruled in righteousness for more than 40 years and his kingdom would have been blessed. He was saved just in time but his life was wasted.

I'm glad I trusted Christ at 15 years of age and have had the privilege of serving my Lord for 65 years. On that night, 1st August 1948 I could have chosen to live for the pleasures of this world. I could have decided to live for fame and fortune and all of those years since would have been written off as a mere wasted life. Nebuchadnezzar's life teaches us that however old you are you can come to Christ if you are willing to humble yourself.

*"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa.1:18).*

### ***The Longsuffering of God***

If any person ever deserved to go to hell for all eternity, Nebuchadnezzar did. He and his armies had slaughtered thousands on the battle field and he showed no mercy to the poor. He had given allegiance to the idols of Babylon and had forced all in his kingdom to worship his golden image on pain of death. Nebuchadnezzar had taken guidance from the soothsayers and magicians in all the decisions he made. Witchcraft was rife in his kingdom yet again and again God revealed Himself to him through the testimony of Daniel, his three friends, and through adversity. Many years of rebellion against God had passed before finally he yielded to the strivings of God's Holy Spirit and he believed with his heart in the God of heaven which shows that *"God is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).