

Judgment and Hope:
The Sunken Scroll
and the Buried Deed

Babylonian Captivity

Jeremiah 25:8-12

8 Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, 9 I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the Lord, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them...

11 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the Lord, “and will make it desolate forever.



Neo-Babylonian Empire



John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, *ESV Bible Atlas* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2010)

Judgment on Judah

Potshard letter written in 586 BC during the attack on Judah and Jerusalem. Written by an officer named Hoshai'ahu who was in charge of a military outpost a military commander at Lachish named Ya'osh as the military situation worsened.



'To my lord Ya'osh. May Yahweh cause my lord to hear the news of peace, even now, even now. Who is your servant but a dog that my lord should remember his servant?'

From the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. -Jeremiah 6:13-14

Destruction of Jerusalem

Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586BC and carried the people away into captivity in Babylonia



Babylonian Worldview

Babylon = Babel-eem (Akkadian) = “Heaven’s Gate”

Absolute power, unbounded by law or custom, from Marduk to the king

Daniel 2:5-6, 12

5 The king replied to the astrologers, “This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. 6 But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.”... 12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon....

Daniel 5:19 “Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared”

Contrast with Egyptian culture / Pharaoh’s response

Gen 41:7-8 “So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream. Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.”

Persian Worldview

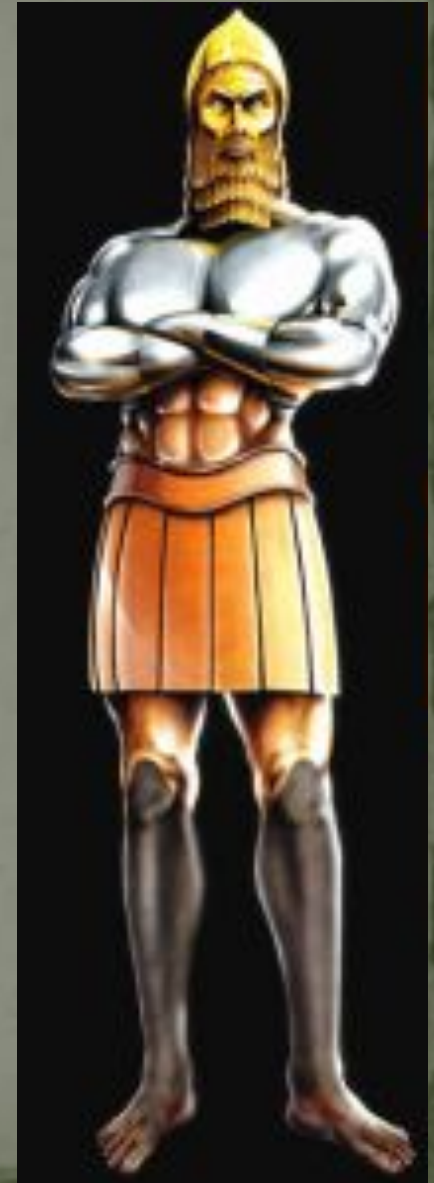
Daniel 6:11-16

11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” 13 Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” 14 **When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.** 15 Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “**Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.**” 16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. **The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”**

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:31-35

31 Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. 32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. 34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. **But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.**



Nebuchadnezzar's Idol

Possibly based on his dream, Nebuchadnezzar built an enormous idol of gold 90 ft high x 9 ft wide. (Dan. 3:1) Shadrak, Meshak, Abednego refuse to bow down

Evidence from Herodotus:
20 foot high Statue of Marduk
in Esagila (main temple)

Tons of gold used in giant
statues of Marduk: solid gold +
golden base, table, gilden
walls

Gold melted down by
Alexander the Great

Babylon: rule of Marduk over the world, gold standard, gold reserve



The Scroll In The River

Jeremiah 51:60-64

60 Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. 61 He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. 62 Then say, ‘Lord, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’ 63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. 64 Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall.’”



The Deed in the Jar

Jeremiah 32:6-15 Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me: 7 ‘You and Hanamel son of Shaphan, brother of your father and your mother’s brother, buy the field at Anathoth, before my eyes.’ 8 “Then, just as they were talking to me in the courtyard of the guardhouse in the territory of Benjamin. Since it is a desolate land, buy it for yourself.’ “I knew that the word of the Lord was to me, so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel for seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I weighed out the silver in the presence of the witnesses, and I wrote a sealed copy containing the deed and of all the conditions, and I gave the copy to the witnesses. 11 I also wrote an unsealed copy as the unsealed deed, and I gave it to Hanamel son of Mahseiah, the son of Mahseiah, the witnesses who had signed for me and the witnesses of the guard. 13 “In their presence I gave Baruch the scribe the deed and the sealed and unsealed copies of the deed, so they will last a long time. 15 For this says the Lord God of Israel, says: ‘Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.’”



Nabunidas and Belshazzar

After Nebuchadnezzar's reign: 3 kings in 6 years, 2 killed, then Nabunidas

During Nabunidas's reign, Cyrus the Persian steadily conquered Babylon's empire and defeated Babylonian armies in the field
By 539BC, Babylon's army had retreated into the city itself
Cyrus had Babylon surrounded

The despised King Nabunidas was likely in his 80's
His arrogant son, Belshazzar, was acting king of Babylon
At this time, Daniel, was an old man, likely in his 70's

Isaiah 13:1, 4-5

A prophecy against Babylon... 4 Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The Lord Almighty is mustering an army for war. 5 They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens— the Lord and the weapons of his wrath— to destroy the whole country.

Beckon the Medes

Isaiah 13:1, 17

A prophecy against Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw...

See, I will stir up against them the **Medes**, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold.

Jeremiah 51:11

11 “Sharpen the arrows, take up the shields! The Lord has stirred up the **kings of the Medes**, because his purpose is to destroy Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:28

28 Prepare the nations for battle against her— the **kings of the Medes**, their governors and all their officials, and all the countries they rule. 29 The land trembles and writhes, for the Lord’s purposes against Babylon stand— to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there.

Cyrus Summoned By Name

Isaiah 45

1 “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: 2 I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. 3 I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, **who summons you by name**. 4 For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, **I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me...** 13 I will raise up **Cyrus** in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. **He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward,**

Neo-Babylonian Empire



John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, *ESV Bible Atlas* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2010)

Medo-Persian Empire

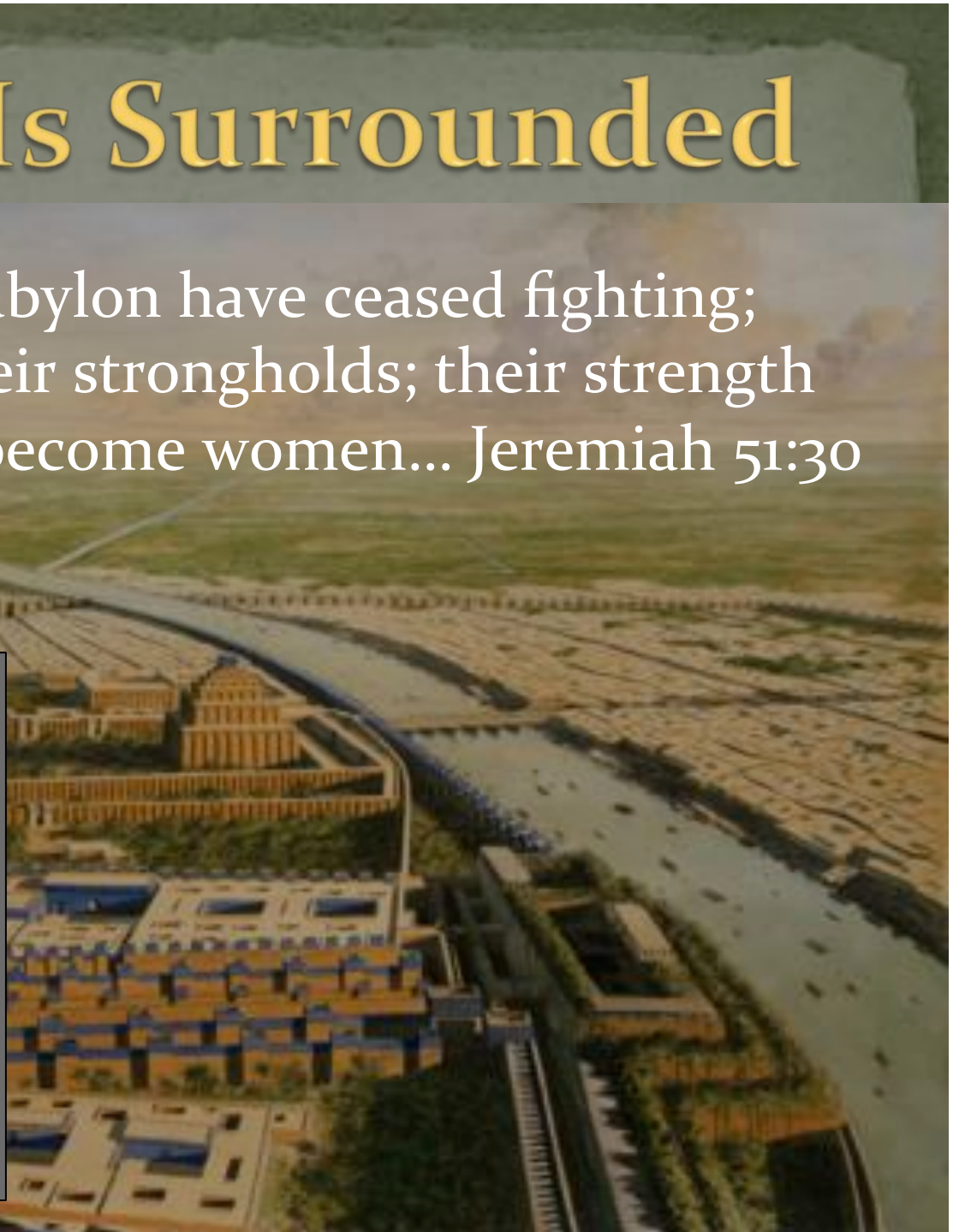


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Babylon Is Surrounded

The warriors of Babylon have ceased fighting; they remain in their strongholds; their strength has failed; they have become women... Jeremiah 51:30

Cyrus has his army move miles upstream and dig a reservoir with canals leading to it. He plans to drain the river and permit his assault troops to enter the city by night through the dry river bed



River Gates Were Left Open

Isaiah 13:1-3 A prophecy against Babylon...

Beckon to them to *enter the gates* of the nobles. I have commanded those I prepared for battle; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath...



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*. Isaiah 45:1

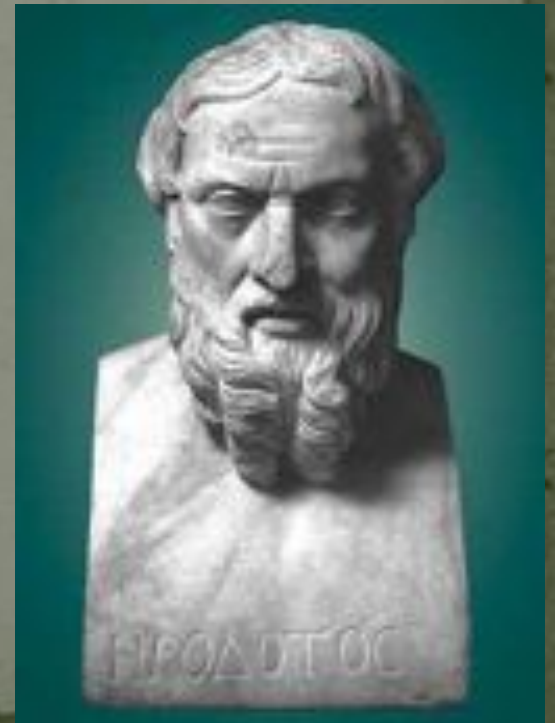
Final Assault

Persian troops opened the canals and diverted the Euphrates
The water level dropped
The river gates were left open
Cyrus's assault troops entered the city through the river gates
The city was captured and its rulers killed



Herodotus' Account

(1.191) ...[Cyrus] turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable. Hereupon the Persians... entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street gates which gave access to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare) long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt about the capture.



Babylon Falls

The Lord Almighty has sworn by himself: I will surely fill you with troops, as with a swarm of locusts... One runner runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to tell the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every side; the fords have been seized, the marshes are burned with fire, and the soldiers are in panic. -Jeremiah 51: 14, 31-32



The Writing on the Wall

Daniel 5:

King Belshazzar gives a great banquet for a thousand nobles
He brings the goblets from Solomon's temple to drink from
As they drank and praised their idols:

“Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. 6 His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

No one could interpret the writing
“So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale.”

Then they searched out Daniel



The Writing on the Wall

He promised Daniel purple clothing, gold, and the third highest authority in the kingdom

Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.”

Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain

The Scroll In The River

Jeremiah 51:60, 63

Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon... When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates.



The Words Of The Scroll

Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives... Her towns will be desolate, a dry and desert land, a land where no one lives, through which no one travels. -Jeremiah 51:37, 43



Babylon's Height of

So desert creatures and hyenas will live there, and there the owl will dwell. It will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. -Jeremiah 50:39



Babylon Today

In 1990, Saddam Hussein attempted to rebuild the city of Babylon at the original site and reclaim its lost glory.

In 1991, his power was utterly destroyed during the Gulf War and his attempts to rebuild Babylon came to nothing.

On December 30, 2006, he was hanged for crimes against humanity.



Babylon Today

But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will inhabit her strongholds, jackals her luxurious palaces. -Isaiah 13:21-22



Babylon Today

She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; there no nomads will pitch their tents, there no shepherds will rest their flocks. -Isaiah 13:20

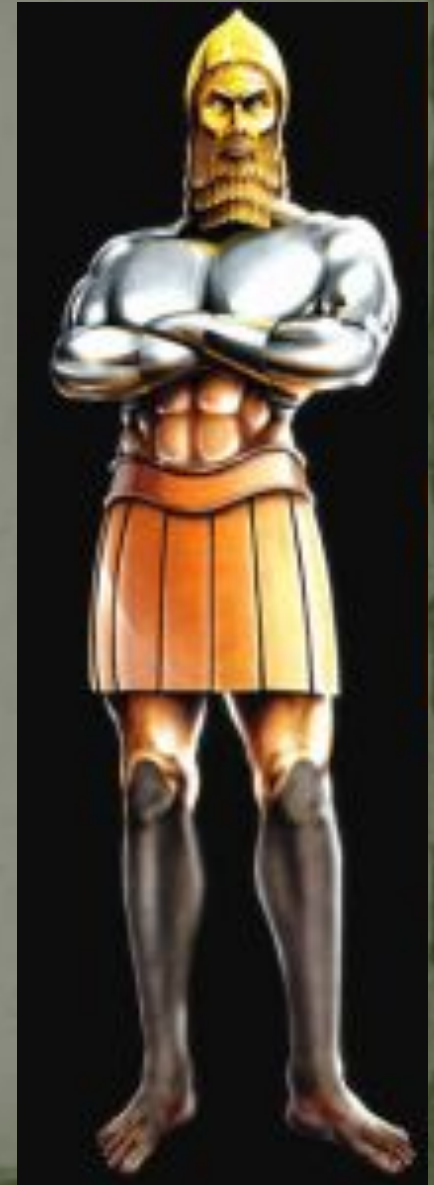
To this day, nomads and shepherds believe the site is haunted and will not camp there.



Babylon: The City of Man

Isaiah 21:9 “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground.”

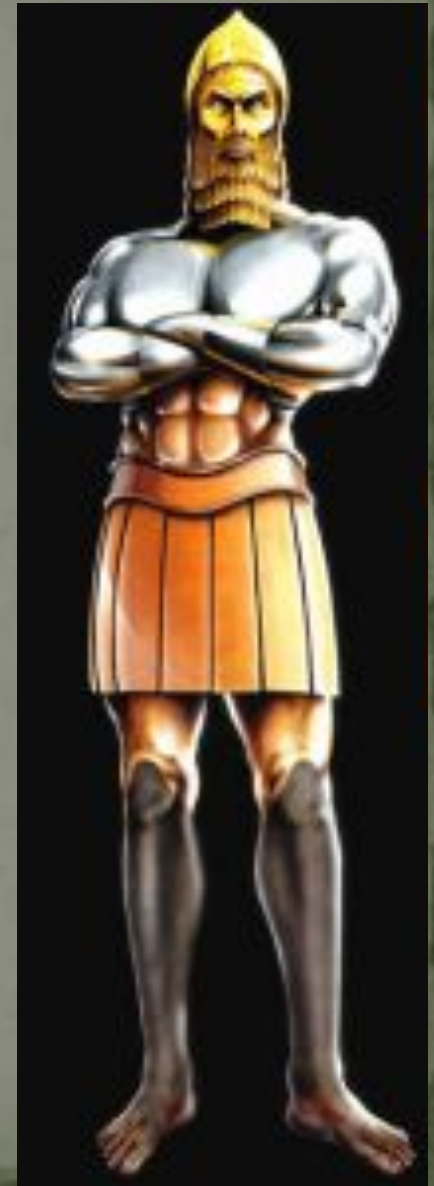
Rev. 18:1-2 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen'...



Babylon: The City of Man

Jer. 51:5-6 For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the Lord of hosts, but the land of the Chaldeans is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel. "Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her.

Rev. 18:4-5 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.'



The Deed in the Jar

Jeremiah 32:13-15

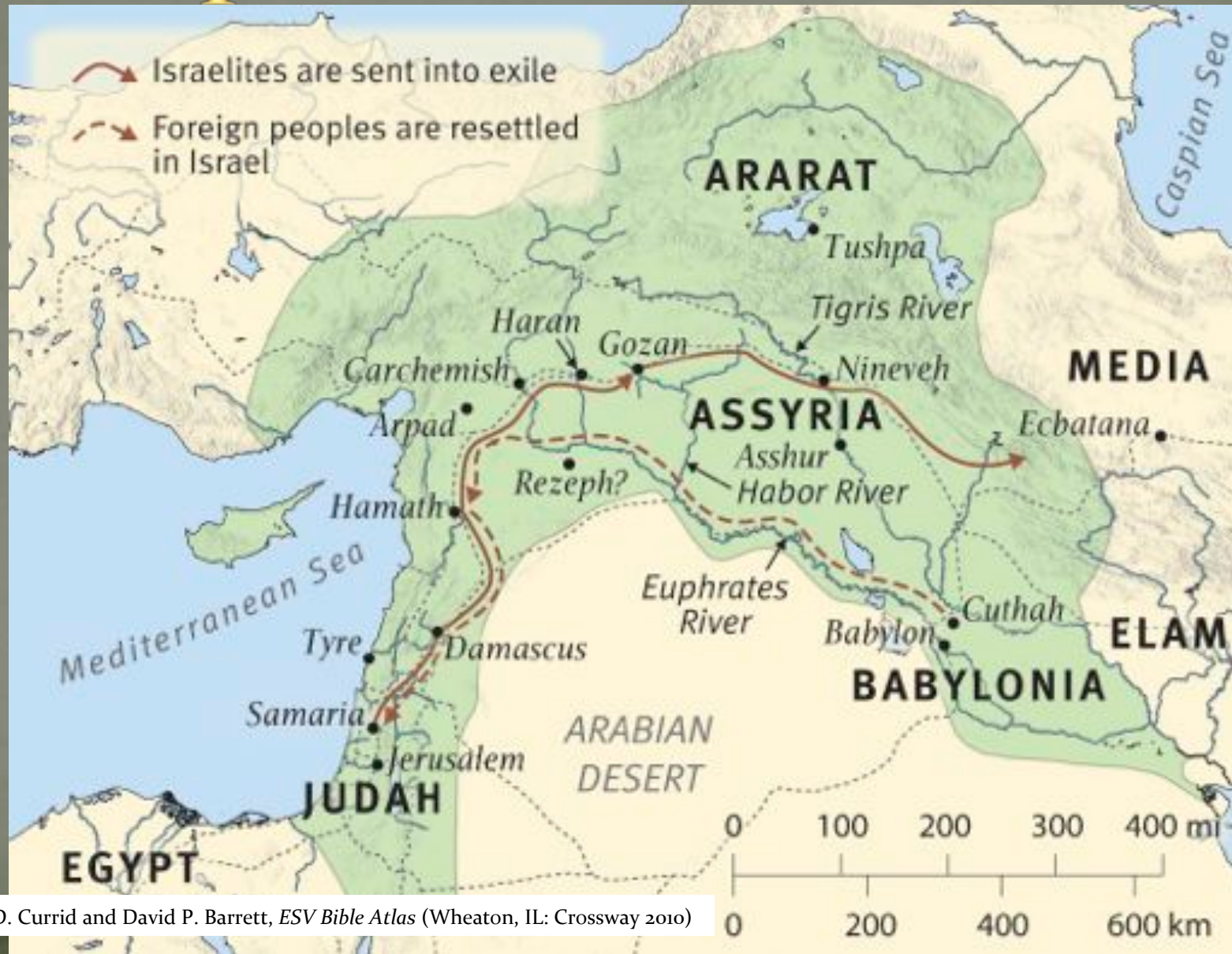


13 I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, 14 ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. 15 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’

Matt 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Maps

Deportation of Israel



Assyrian Empire



Neo-Babylonian Empire



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Medo-Persian Empire



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