

Unshakable

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 14, 2015 • Pastor Chris Lankford

And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

~Daniel 1:19-20 (ESV)

1) Characteristics Of Daniel

- A) Daniel occurs during a very dark time in Jewish history of exile due to sin/rebellion against God (1 Kings 18:1-25:21).
- B) The high points of this historical time period (Hezekiah's faithfulness & Josiah's reforms) are eclipsed by low points (Hezekiah's shocking political alliance, Manasseh's wicked reign, the beginning of the Diaspora - the "scattering" of Jews by forced deportation, and the Samaritan explosion - the forced migration of foreigners into central Israel).
- C) The setting of Daniel is "the land of Shinar" (Daniel 1:2), a purposeful outdated reference meant to bring into mind the location of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9, 10:10). "Shinar" was synonymous with "rebellion against God," hearkening back to ancient times even before Abraham.
- D) God's judgment which was delivered through Isaiah because of the foolish political hopes of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:12-19), promised that the eventual captives taken to Babylon would be "eunuchs in the palace of the king..." Whether Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were castrated is unclear (though implied). What is clear is that Isaiah's 100-year-old prophecy is being fulfilled by Daniel and his fellow captives (Daniel 1:1-3).

- E) Daniel and his three compatriots are all “youths,” at an age when they could still be trained for service in the court of Babylon. Babylonian historical materials note that education began when boys were 14-15 years old.
- F) The book of Daniel fits the same historical context as the materials collected from ancient Babylon and nearby Persia. When captives were brought to Babylon, the youngest and brightest were immersed and molded into the rich culture and values of Babylon. The changing of a captive’s name represented the death of an old identity, and a re-birth of their new Babylonian life (Daniel 1:5-7).
- G) It is notable that each of the young men’s Hebrew names gave glory to the God of Scripture, and each of their new Babylonian names gave glory to various Babylonian gods. The names each of these teenagers were given provides a capstone to this opening section revealing the incredible upheaval, terrifying change, and intense pressure each of them were under to hide their true identity.

2) One Identity In A Multi-Identity World

- A) The challenge for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in their new surroundings was immediate. Since they were being “educated” in Babylon’s Court (Daniel 1:4-5), new challenges would come regularly. Even the new Babylonian diet of “king’s food” they experienced presented a dilemma!
- B) Babylonian food often included “unclean” foods (e.g. pork, horse meat), and the meat was almost certainly not drained of the blood (forbidden in Jewish Law). Further, it makes sense that some of the foods were probably part of ritual idol worship, and in the mind of faithful Hebrews, this would make that food ritually unclean.
- C) Finding favor with those he served (1:9) and making a respectful request in a gracious and tactful manner (1:10-13) allowed the faithful foursome to exceed expectations (1:15-16) and be significantly blessed by God (1:17).
- D) After three years of training & education, the four young men were brought face-to-face to stand and be measured by King Nebuchadnezzar (1:18-19). Because of their wisdom and faithfulness to God, they excelled “ten times” beyond all the wisest counselors and magicians in the ENTIRE Babylonian Empire (1:20)! Their singular identity in God reveals faithfulness in the face of tremendous adversity!

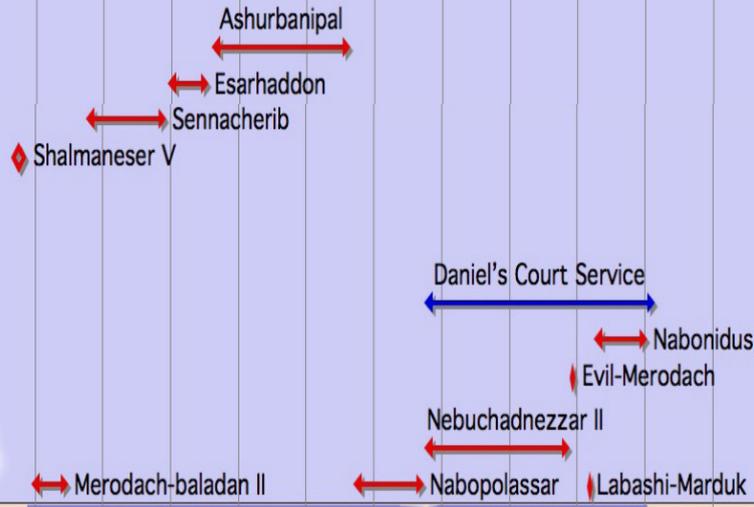
Book of Daniel Timeline

Persia

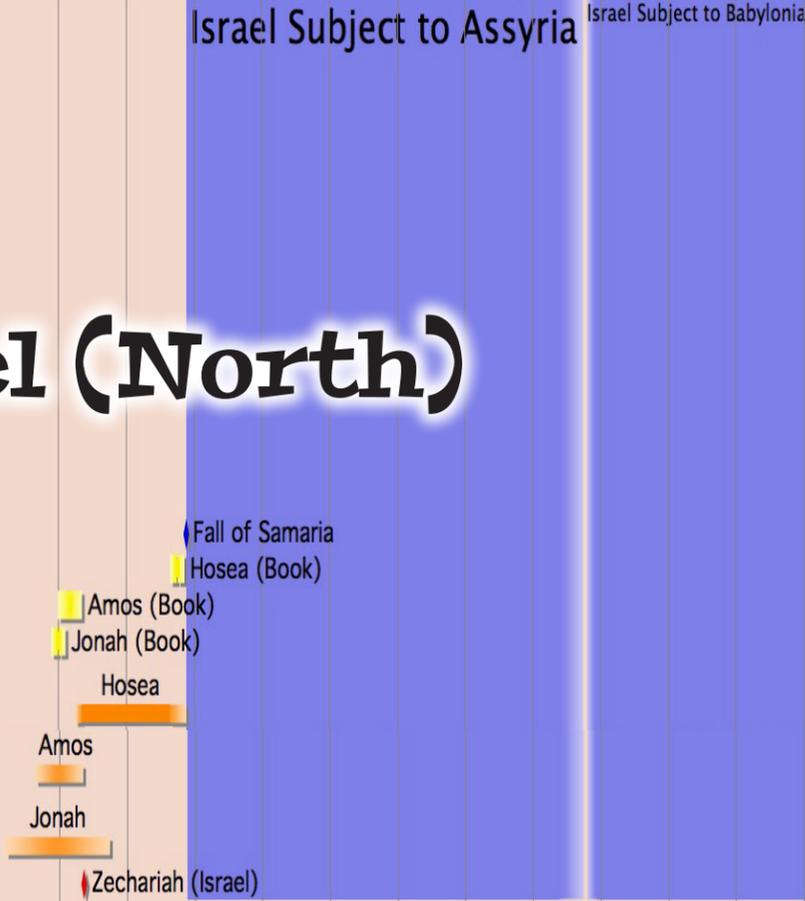


Cyrus Cylinder

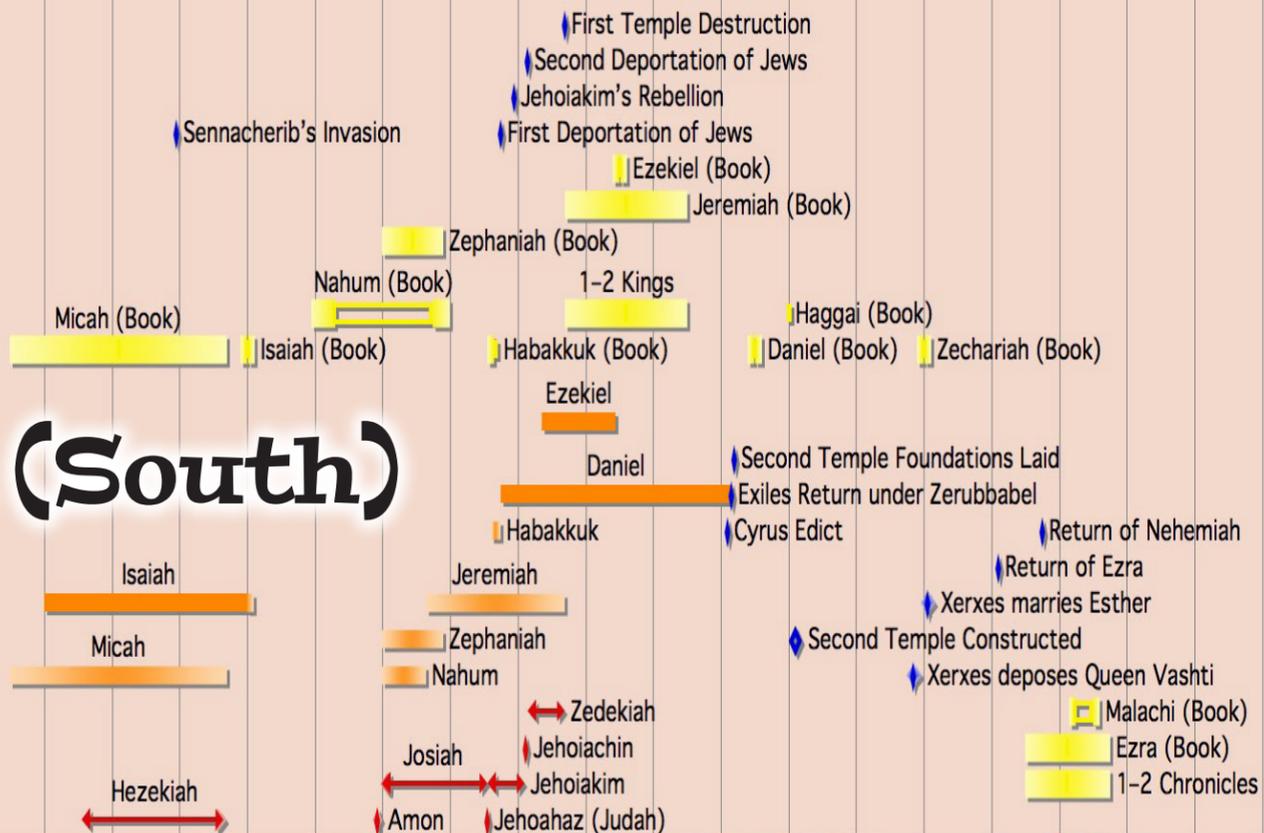
Babylon



Israel (North)



Judah (South)



The United Kingdom Under Saul, David, and Solomon
 Roughly 1175BC - 930BC • 1 Samuel - 2 Chronicles



The Divided Kingdoms of Israel (North) & Judah (South)
 Kingdom divides around 930BC
 Ezra - Esther & Numerous Prophetic Writings
 (Note Additional Map of Prophets)

The Prophets Of Israel & Judah
 785BC - 430BC



The Rise of the Assyrian Kingdom

The Northern Kingdom of Israel Falls to Assyria (733BC)
 Samaria & Southern Kingdom of Judah Falls to Assyria (722BC)
 Mass Relocation of Israelites & Foreign Occupiers
 Beginning of Samaritan Peoples in Judah/Israel Region



Judah's Preservation

King Hezekiah rebels against Assyria (701BC), bringing the wrath of Assyrian King Sennacherib against rebel Judah. The Angel of the Lord wins the battle against Sennacherib (killing 185,000 Assyrians), miraculously preserving Judah (2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chronicles 32)

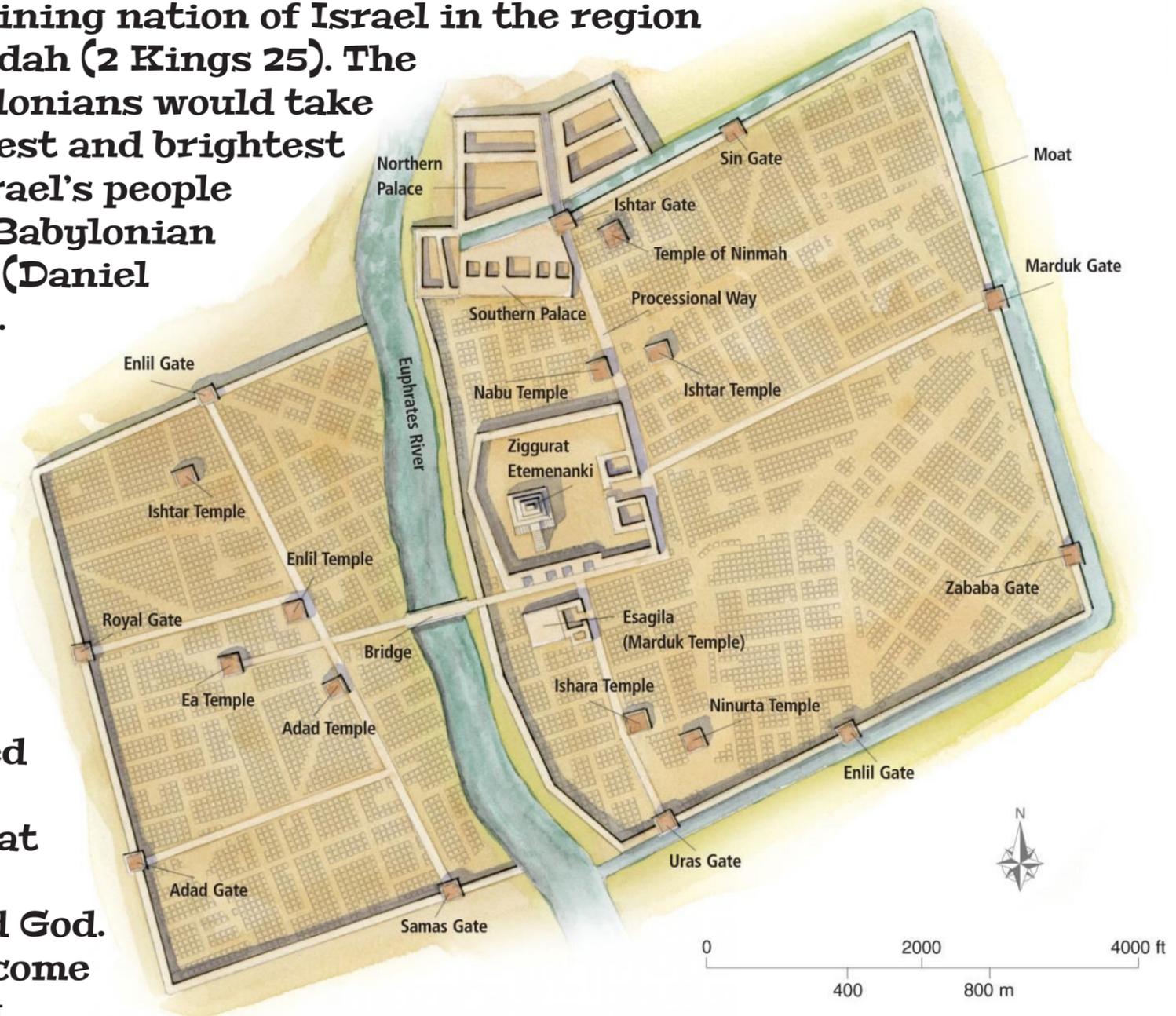


Unfortunately, after Sennacherib's attacks and the miraculous deliverance promised from God through the prophet Isaiah (2 Kings 19), King Hezekiah chose to depend on political alliances, rather than the Lord (2 Kings 20:13). This would result in the demise of Judah, and promised judgment against God's people (2 Kings 20:16-19, see also Leviticus 26) because politics had replaced trust in the Lord God.

The Rise of the Great Babylonian Empire



Because of King Hezekiah's disastrous political choices to place his trust in Babylon, the Babylonians would eventually come under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar II (the Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible), to destroy the remaining nation of Israel in the region of Judah (2 Kings 25). The Babylonians would take the best and brightest of Israel's people into Babylonian exile (Daniel 1:1-7).



Daniel (and many other Israelites) lived and served as exiled slaves in the great city of Babylon for most of their lives. Every gate, road, river, and building reminded the exiles that they were in a foreign place. They were foreigners in a far-away land among those who were violent and hostile toward God. Everything had changed for them, even their names had become more Babylonian and less Jewish. Aliens in the land, among people who did not understand them, people who were hostile about God, and people who hated anyone who would not conform to their ways. The people of God stood at a crossroads in Babylon. Would their identity and lives belong to the God who promised them He would never forget them? Or, would they forget about God, and become identified with the culture and the people within which they were now completely immersed?