



Handout for week of 3/5/18 John 3: 14-21 & 2 Chron. 36: 14-23

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2 Chron. 36: 14 Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, transgressed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of HaShem which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And HaShem, the G-d of their fathers, sent to them by His messengers, sending betimes and often; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place; 16 but they mocked the messengers of G-d, and despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of HaShem arose against His people, till there was no remedy.

*17 Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or hoary-headed; He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of G-d, great and small, and the treasures of the house of HaShem, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.*

19 And they burnt the house of G-d, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia; 21 to fulfil the word of HaShem by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had been paid her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of HaShem by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, HaShem stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying: 23 `Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath HaShem, the G-d of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people--the HaShem his G-d be with him--let him go up.'

**COMMENTARY:** Persia

c. 536-480

**Building of Second Temple  
Prophecy of Zechariah, Haggai**

**538 Cyrus allows Israelites to return to Jerusalem; Judah a Persian province**

**\* India: Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (c. 563-483)  
\* China: Confucius (c. 551-479)  
\* Greece: Archaic period**

The history, religion, and civilization of Persia are offshoots from those of Media. Both Medes and Persians are Aryans; the Aryans who settled in the southern part of the Iranian plateau became known as Persians, while those of the mountain regions of the north-west were called Medes. The Medes were at first the leading nation, but towards the middle of the sixth century, B.C. the Persians became the dominant power, not only in Iran, but also in Western Asia.

**HISTORY:** Historians generally assign the beginnings of Persian history to the reign of Cyrus the Great (550-529 B.C.), although, strictly speaking, it should begin with Darius (521-485 B.C.). Cyrus was certainly of Persian extraction, but when he founded his empire he was Prince of Elam (Anzan), and he merely added Media and Persia to his dominion. He was neither by birth nor religion a true Persian, for both he and Cambyses worshipped the Babylonian gods. Darius, on the other hand, was both by birth and religion a Persian, descended, like Cyrus, from the royal Achæmenian house of Persia, and a follower of the Zoroastrian faith. The ancestors of Darius had remained in Persia, whilst the branch of the family of which Cyrus was a member had settled in Elam. Towards the middle of the sixth century B.C., and a few years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar (Nabuchodonosor) the Great, King of Babylon (605-562 B.C.), Western Asia was divided into three kingdoms: the Babylonian Empire, Media, and Lydia; and it was only a question of time which of the three would annihilate the other two. Astyages (585-557 B.C.), the successor of Cyaxares (625-585 B.C.), being engaged in an expedition against Babylonia and Mesopotamia, Cyrus, Prince of Anzan, in Elam, profiting by his absence, fomented a rebellion in Media. Astyages, hearing of the revolt, immediately returned, but was defeated and overthrown by Cyrus, who was proclaimed King of Media. Thus, with the overthrow of Astyages and the accession of Cyrus to the throne, the Median Empire passed into the hands of the Persians (550 B.C.). In 549, Cyrus invaded Assyria and Babylonia; in 546 he attacked Croesus of Lydia, defeated him, and annexed Asia Minor to his realm; he then conquered Bactriana and, in 539, marched against Babylon. In 538 Babylon surrendered, Nabonidus fled, the Syro-Phoenician provinces submitted, and Cyrus allowed the Hebrews to return to Palestine. But in 529 he was killed in battle, and was succeeded by Cambyses, the heir apparent, who put his brother Smerdis to death. In 525 Cambyses, aided by a Phoenician fleet, conquered Egypt and advanced against the Sudan, but was compelled to return to Egypt. On his way home, and while in Syria, being informed that Gaumata, a Magian, pretending to be the murdered Smerdis, had seized the throne, Cambyses committed suicide (522) and was succeeded, in 531, by Darius Hystaspes, who, with six other princes, succeeded in overthrowing the usurper Gaumata.