

The Downfall Of Babylon

George Burnside

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ISAIAH 41:28 “That said of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shall be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”

One hundred and thirteen years before Cyrus saw the light of day, his name was written in the prophecies of the Bible. It was also predicted that he would become a mighty general; and one hundred and seventy four years before he was born an exact prediction was made of the work he would do when he was sixty one years old. It also revealed the way by which he would accomplish the task. That task, the greatest feat of his life, was the capture of Babylon, the mightiest city of the ancient world.

Babylon was called in the Scriptures “the praise of the whole earth,” “the golden city,” “the glory of kingdoms,” “the lady of kingdoms,” and “the beauty of the Chaldee’s excellence.”

It was surrounded by a series of gigantic walls and a giant moat or trench, so made that it could be flooded from an artificial lake. The enclosed area of the city covered twenty five square miles, which provided ample space for gardens and orchards, so that if it were besieged its inhabitants could easily grow sufficient food to amply support them. Yes, Babylon was impregnable: Yet God’s infallible prophecies declared it was doomed to be overthrown and finally to sink into ruin and oblivion.

Five decades before, Jeremiah the prophet foretold in amazing detail the unique method of attack and even the conditions inside the city on Babylon’s fateful night. This prophecy is found in the fiftieth and fifty first chapters of Jeremiah. The very nations that would capture that proud city were also named. “The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon.” “Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes.” Jeremiah 51:11, 28.

In Isaiah 45:1-3 it was foretold that Cyrus the king of Persia would be the general who would lead the armies against Babylon. This prophecy mentions Cyrus by name over a century before he was born. History confirms prophecy: It always does. In the year 559 BC war broke out between the Babylonians and the Medes. Darius, the king of the Medes, sought the aid of his nephew, Cyrus the Persian king, who laid siege to Babylon. The Babylonians had no fears or concern, as they gathered within the impregnable walls. They had provisions for twenty years, besides land to furnish food for an indefinite period. Well may they scoff at Cyrus and mock his efforts to capture “the golden city.” Cyrus knew that spears, arrows, or battering rams were powerless against this greatest of fortresses.

Cyrus determined to use stratagem for he well knew force was useless. He determined to gain entrance by means of the river Euphrates which flowed diagonally through the city. The river would be his highway for it entered and emerged as it flowed beneath the city walls.

The river was diverted into an artificial lake so that the river would be fordable. Fifty or more years before, the prophecy had fore-told that this would be the method the Medes and Persians would adopt in the capture of Babylon. “A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up.” “I will make her springs dry.” Jeremiah 50:38; 51:36.

The fifth chapter of Daniel describes that night of wine, women and song. Babylon could have known and should have known, for God had sent this warning to them. The Divine prophecies had foretold it all, but like many modern so-called intellectuals, they were above the old Bible and too big to heed it’s messages. So Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, made “a great feast to a thousand of his lords.” It was a gay night, but it suddenly became a very gloomy one. If they were too big to be worried by God, they were not too big to be wounded by His judgment. “In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand,” and wrote the final message of Babylon’s doom on the palace wall. The same fingers that wrote the ten commandments on Sinai flint, now writes it so that all Babylon can see.

In defiance of God they had “worshipped and praised the gods of wood and stone, silver, gold and brass, that see not, nor hear, nor know and” continued God’s spokesman, “the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast not glorified.” Lovers of sin and the ways of transgression, love a god that cannot see, hear or know. But now the time of reckoning had come. Death, judgment and perdition.

“That night they slew him on his father’s throne, The deed un-noticed and the hand unknown. Powerless and sceptreless Belshazzar lay, A robe of purple on a form of clay.”

So ended the first act in the Babylonian drama.

The most amazing fact of all is that this too was foretold in the “Scriptures of Truth.” One hundred and fifty years before, the prophet had foretold that Babylon would go down (Isaiah 21:9), at the time of feasting and drunkenness. (Isaiah 21:5), by the hand of Elam. Elam was just to the north of the Persian Gulf and Media. (Isaiah 21:2.) The wild, gay time would suddenly turn to terrifying, paralyzing fear. (Isaiah 21:3, 4.) Jeremiah also foretold their end in the midst of a drunken stupor. (Jeremiah 51: 39, 57.) The enemy would crawl like caterpillars, declared the prophecy. (Jeremiah 51:14.) The street passages by the river would be sieged first and later the rest of the city. (Jeremiah 51:31, 32.) The drunken revelers would not be able to resist and Babylon would go down. (Jeremiah 51:30, 50:35-37, 51:58, 63, 64.)

On the night of this Babylonian high day, Cyrus, the Persian, divides his army in three companies. The first was to turn the river at a given hour, the second was stationed where the river flowed into the city and the third where the river flowed from beneath the city walls and as soon as the river was fordable they were (in the darkness of night,) to enter the city and meet at the palace, kill the guards and capture the city.

In the British Museum there is an ancient inscription written by the priests of Babylon which describes the capture of the haughty city of Babylon. “On the 16th day, Gobrigas Pasha of the land of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus, without a battle entered Babylon.” They did not need to battle, for on that high day of revelry, the river gates were left open, either in carelessness or treachery, so the army of Cyrus just marched in and took possession. Herodotus, in his History gives an interesting account of this capture of Babylon, Book 1, page 97. Thus both history and the unearthed stone tablets of the archaeologist confirms the exact and uncanny fulfillment of the infallible Scriptures. One hundred and seventy-five years before, the prophecy had foretold that the gates would not be shut. This was the very way by which Cyrus was enabled to capture this mighty fortress.

“Thus said the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.” Isaiah 45:1. The exact and amazing fulfillment of these and a thousand other prophecies on a myriad of subjects is irrefutable proof of the truthfulness of Scripture. It is true! It is reliable: Jesus declared, “I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.” John 14:29. “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life through His Name.” John 20:31. The prophecy is “written,” so is history, and the stone tablets, so that we might have a sure foundation for our belief in Christ and by believing we have life.

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