

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 21, Neo-Babylonian Empire and End of Judah

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 21, Neo-Babylonian Empire and End of Judah.

Well, welcome back to all of you.

This is our last day of taping here. It's a Friday morning, and I want to say as I start this morning, it's been a real joy and privilege to have this opportunity to share with you on this tape and especially to have you here with us. And to have the opportunity to be with my good friend Ted Hildebrand who is making all of this possible.

So, thank you so much for bearing with us and we are leaving a significant era. It's the era of the first hyperpower and it must have seemed to them like this would never end after all. Three centuries isn't exactly like three decades.

So, there were many generations who had never known anything but Assyrian domination. And now just like that, in the absolute perfect set of circumstances, Assyria could be overcome. It could only have happened with a perfect set of circumstances.

So, what we have is a sort of alliance that was able to bring down this mighty Assyrian Empire. And so, that alliance was the Babylonian power to the south in alliance with the Medes to the east. And if you could picture with me the topography to set the stage, here in the purple is the Mesopotamian Valley.

And then separating Mesopotamia from Iran or other names for it is the Zagros Mountains. Then on the east of the Zagros Mountains area is the classic area of the Medes and the Persians. So, the Babylonians forged an alliance with the Medes and the Medes were the ones who actually were the prime people in bringing down the Assyrian Empire.

They were also allied with a group of fierce horsemen who had joined themselves into this alliance called the Scythians. We think that they came from the Russian steppe. But between this alliance and the fact that Assyria was disunited and deeply weakened, it was just the perfect time for this empire to come to an end.

And so, thus it was. So, I must have clicked on the wrong document, so bear with me as I take a few minutes to get my material back. In this rising power now of Babylon,

the world will take a shift, but nothing like it's going to take in 70 years when the Persians take over.

So, the Neo-Babylonian period is a period in which Babylon has been in a schizophrenic relationship with Assyria. The Assyrians regarded them apparently with some form of religious affection. They deeply respected Babylon's great religious past, especially because Assyria did not have a past that stretched into the third millennium.

So, they respected Babylon, but the Babylonians didn't really appreciate the Assyrians in a like fashion. So, throughout the period in which these two political entities lived side by side, there was friction. So, Nabopolassar is king of Babylon there at the end when the Assyrian Empire collapses.

And so, Nabopolassar is now, even though he's the king of Babylon, I need to make the point that, and this is marginalia, it's not like you have to have this down, but Babylonia now is part of an Aramean-speaking entity that can properly now be called Chaldea. So, the Arameans in the south were called Chaldeans, and the Arameans in the north tended to be called Arameans. So, Nabopolassar was of Chaldean extract, which is nothing more than southern Aramean.

He assumed the throne of Babylon in 626, and that was in a time period when Assyria was in some state of dissolution. It appeared to be his alliance with the Medes that was the most influential in bringing down the Assyrian Empire. By 617, he had cleared the Assyrians out of Babylonia.

After the last of the Assyrian forces had retreated to Haran, he attacked in 611-610, and meanwhile, a large Egyptian force had come north to try to aid Assyria. The two forces collided in 609, and evidently the Babylonians won that battle. Josiah, who was the last godly king on the throne in Judah, lost his life trying to stop Pharaoh from making his way north to assist the Assyrians.

After being repulsed in the effort, but not by Josiah, the Egyptians remained in control of Palestine for several years. So, I think it would be worth me pausing here to explain to you the surprising and chaotic turn of events that had occurred. When it became clear to the people in the ancient world, when it became clear that Assyria was in trouble, a strange set of new alliances began to occur.

The Egyptians recognized that Assyria was weak, and so they decided to ally themselves with the Assyrians. Now this is one of those who would have thought moments. No one could have predicted that the Egyptians would be trying to rescue the Assyrians from the Babylonians.

That's exactly what happened. So, the Egyptians send an army through the area of Israel all the way north up here, close to Haran, trying to help the Assyrians. And in 609, they're defeated, and so there's one last great battle to be fought in 605, and that's at the Battle of Carchemish.

You can see Carchemish is here. International politics make for interesting conversations in any era. This new alliance, consisting of the Babylonians and the Medes, is far more powerful than this emerging alliance of Egypt and the remnants of Assyria.

But lost in the moment is the sidebar of importance. King Josiah was a great and godly king. As the Egyptian forces are making their way through here at Megiddo, which is not on this map, but at Megiddo, there's a pass that goes through the Carmel Mountain Range, and historically, that is the pass that armies preferred to go through. And Josiah knew that, and so Josiah tried to stop the Egyptians, and there, Josiah lost his life in battle.

It must have been troubling to the Orthodox religionists of Judah to see a king who had led Israel in the most, or I should say led Judah, who led Judah in the most thoroughgoing religious reform of the entire period of the Old Testament, to lose his life in battle against an Egyptian pharaoh. This, of course, can be troubling, and just as we mentioned in our last tape repeatedly, about how dangerous it is to build your theology from the front page of a newspaper, so now it must have been very difficult for them to interpret what is God doing. One would have thought that Josiah would have given an opportunity for God to turn the corner with the Israelites, but in fact, Josiah's so-called revival wasn't really a revival, it was a reform imposed from the top.

Unfortunately, Josiah's religious reforms did not penetrate the social echelons of his country, Judah. So, with Josiah's death, it's not hard to say it's just a matter of when the southern kingdom will come to an end. To return, therefore, to our text, Josiah has lost his life, and the Egyptians are now in control of Palestine.

After being repulsed in the effort, they remain in control of it for several years, during which they place Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah. You know, by now, friends, let me make the point to you that Judah is a much smaller player than what it had been just a century before. So, it's not exactly like we should think Judah is the same that it had been.

Well, after losing the battle at 609, Necho recoups, rebuilds, and marches north, and there, in a mighty battle at Carchemish, in 605, these two armies met. Evidently, the Egyptians were routed, because another battle was fought at Hamat a year later, in which the Egyptian army was destroyed completely. With the way open to the gates of Egypt, it was likely that the death of Nebuchadnezzar spared the Egyptian rout.

After Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar, who was the son of Nebuchadnezzar and the general of the army, crossed the great Arabian desert to return for his coronation at Babylon. Let me put my map back up so that we can all see what was going on. Here is the map situation.

At Carchemish, and then the year after at Hamat, the Egyptian forces are repeatedly routed, and for all practical purposes, this is going to spell the end of Egypt as a powerful player. So, after the battle of Hamat, the forces here are now moving south, and Nebuchadnezzar gets down in this region. When Nebuchadnezzar hears that his father, Nabopolassar, who is sitting on the throne in Babylon, he hears that his father has died.

Well, of course, this is a brand-new dynasty, so he is anxious to get back to Babylon and have himself coronated before somebody else takes his place. So instead of going the safe and normal route, like this, all the way back to Babylon, he makes his way directly across the great Arabian desert, risking life and limb to get back to Babylon. And so there he is coronated and becomes one of the great kings of antiquity.

So, Egypt may or may not have had a brief moment of coming under Babylonian control, but if it did happen, it was relatively brief and not consequential. The core of the Babylonian Empire, unlike that of the Assyrian, was the Fertile Crescent. That's pretty much all it ruled, and Nebuchadnezzar became one of the great and famous kings of antiquity.

So, he sought to go directly into Egypt but was repulsed. As his military forces were moving down in the region, they did what empires had been doing for a very long time. They took hostages that they were going to train to go back and help educate them in Babylonian ways and thought and then serve the Babylonians.

So, after the great battle of Hamath, as Nebuchadnezzar's forces make their way south, important people like Daniel, Ezekiel, and others are taken into Babylon to be trained to serve the Babylonians. Such is the situation with Nebuchadnezzar that he's now ruling, and I would dearly wish it was possible. This is not a History of Israel course, but I would love to go into the biblical text and talk with you about the last days of Judah.

In 597, there was a revolt against the Babylonians. And I can't help but tell you, even at this late stage of my life, I find this to be a little short of astounding. Judah is a tiny little country, not much larger than a county in a midwestern state.

They're weak politically, they're weak militarily, and to have them revolt against Babylon is truly astounding. And yet, that is exactly what happened. Nebuchadnezzar brings his forces to the west.

They have the good sense to surrender. Nebuchadnezzar takes about 10,000 Judeans into captivity. And one would have thought that that would have spelled the end.

That Judah would now grasp its role, which is to be a slave nation to the Babylonians. It is better to be enslaved to the Babylonians in your own country than to be enslaved in Babylon. One would have thought that the revolt in 597 would have been enough, but such was not the case.

In 587-586, they revolted a second time. And it's a particularly interesting thing to read in the biblical text because this revolt came not from above, but from below. The revolt led by Zedekiah reveals to us in the biblical text that Zedekiah knew what he was up against.

Zedekiah did not want to revolt against the Babylonians. He actually came to Jeremiah or had Jeremiah come to him at night to talk with Jeremiah. Jeremiah had the mind of God, and he was telling them that they would be destroyed unless they submitted themselves to the Babylonians.

But this is the Middle East, and maybe it's unwise to impose current religious tensions onto the past world, but the religionists in Judah, the religious nationalists, had convinced themselves that God was with them and God would be forced to deliver them. So, they override Zedekiah's desires, and they force him into a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. So, with that, Nebuchadnezzar brings his forces to the west, and after a relatively short siege, Jerusalem falls, and the population is now deported to Babylon.

Zedekiah is a particularly tragic case because he was smart enough to know that this revolt had literally no chance. So, when the Babylonian armies make their way into his territory, he takes his family with him, and they flee by way of the Dead Sea, and they're making their way south to Egypt. And there, the cavalry of Nebuchadnezzar catches him, and so they bring him back to Jerusalem, and there, in front of whatever surviving elements of the city of Jerusalem were still there, they murder, one by one, every member of the family of Zedekiah, wives, and children, and then they put Zedekiah's eyes out.

Evidence, or with a purpose, so that the last thing Zedekiah will have ever seen is every one of his family members killed. They paid a very high price for this revolt against Babylon. So, as we look at this, it occurs during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and of course, Judah is a hiccup on the buffet table of the ancient world.

It is inconsequential, but now, when we think back, in our earlier comments about the promises made to Abraham, the land has been lost, the temple has been lost, the kings have been lost, and so now they have a rare opportunity to be a blessing to the nation because they will be in Babylon for seven decades. This must have been a time of tremendous importance for the Jewish people. So, if you would allow me to just pause here with you for a moment, we can take for granted that they survived because we know they survived, but we need to pause ourselves and ask, how and why did they survive? None of the other peoples who were taken into captivity in the Assyrian-Babylonian milieu survived, yet here we have an unprecedented situation in which the people of God kept their identity, an identity in exile, and an identity that they perpetuated even when the remnant left Babylon and went back and refounded their country.

That's what I mean when I suggest to you that very important religious activities were occurring in Babylon that are not visible in the biblical text. The Bible doesn't really tell us much about that 70-year period in exile in Babylon, but the exile did not end, it did not end for the vast majority of the Judeans. They never came back.

When the exile is over, only about 50,000 return. So, here's what we can say: they needed to reformulate their religious identity. And if I may be forgiven in speaking in broad tones, prior to the exile in Babylon, when you read the prophets, you read about a major problem that the Judeans had, and that major problem was investing themselves in temple ritual without obeying the laws that God gave to Moses.

So,, what we have in the exile is the emergence of a new emphasis. Slowly but surely, the Israelites, or the Judeans, rebuilt their religious platform as a people, and they rebuilt it not around temple ritual, because they didn't have one, but around emphasizing the law of Moses. Now, we don't have literary information of any consequence in the Babylonian years that allows us to talk informatively about that.

But clearly, the genius, or one of the evidences of the genius of the Jews, is their ability to overcome a radically new religious situation and formulate a new response, and that new response would serve them in amazing ways because for the next 2,500 years, they will be a people, perhaps the only people in the world, who survive without a country. They, for 2,500 years, they managed to have a national identity in exile. This is a formative period.

No doubt, it forced them to turn their attention towards what we call the biblical text. There's no evidence, of course, that they had at that time been able to create a Bible, for the simple reason that there were no books. Scrolls were large and cumbersome, and to have a document the size of the Old Testament was not possible.

But it seems like in the Babylonian exile, they shifted from temple to text, from ritual to law. So, this was a very formative time, and unfortunately, we can't speak to it in any kind of meaningful way. So, instead, we will take a brief glance at this Neo-Babylonian period through the great Nebuchadnezzar.

Many of the inscriptions detail the prolific building efforts of this amazing king in Babylon. Much of what Herodotus, the famous Greek historian, said about the city in 460 was a result of Nebuchadnezzar's efforts. He also conducted an aggressive building program in other parts of Babylonia as well.

It appears that he was consciously mirroring the precedence of great kings before him. This archaizing is characteristic of the entire Neo-Babylonian period. You see, the Babylonians saw themselves as a continuation of the very impressive Babylonian presence in ancient Near Eastern religious history.

The last years of Nebuchadnezzar's life were obscure. We have very little documentation, and this time period when this great and very visible king becomes virtually invisible may be an affirmation of what Daniel describes with Nebuchadnezzar's illness. In a paroxysm of royal hubris, Nebuchadnezzar sees himself as greatly independent of God, and in the Bible, he is smitten down.

The average explanation for it is he struggled with a disease of bovine qualities because he ate grass like an animal. And so, during that time period of illness, he is virtually missing in the pages of history. In the Bible, following the deliverance from that illness, he has a seeming awareness of the reality of God and humbles himself, and of course, that is in harmony with the way kings should think.

So, Nebuchadnezzar shows himself to be a man of great courage and great energy; he's known for his military victories, but he's actually perhaps better, should be better known for his tremendous building activities in the great city of Babylon. When you travel to this part of the world today, and you visit the site of Babylon, most of what your eye sees is the remains of what Nebuchadnezzar had built. So, he was a great king, mentioned, of course, in Daniel, but we will move on to one of the most obscure kings that we will talk about, Nabonidus.

Nabonidus is difficult to explain because he does not get good print in Mesopotamia. He is regarded by some to be crazy. He had a unique fidelity to the moon god Sin.

Evidently, he saw the destruction of the holy city of Haran in the wars between the Egyptians and the Babylonians. He saw that as evidence that the moon god Sin was unhappy at being abused and ignored. So, he rebuilt the temple of seen where his mother had previously been a devotee.

He installed his daughter as the priestess of seen at Ur. Then he built a great city and temple to Sin in the desert oasis of Tima in Arabia. I think I have Tima here so that you can see the location of this site.

For a decade or more, he abandoned his throne in Babylon and moved out into this desert area of Tima. There he had built a very large temple to the moon god Sin. It's an oasis in that spot.

There, he built a great city wall around Tima. It's hard to find ways to describe this to you, but Tima was an oasis. It wasn't an urban center, yet he built a wall around Tima large enough for a powerful city.

So, this is some of the strangest behavior of any king in all of antiquity. How can we explain the fact that he abandoned his throne? He left the throne for his son Belshazzar. He abandoned his throne in Babylon.

We're not sure if he ever went back—there's some debate about that. He took up residence in Tima, where he built a great temple and a great wall around the city.

How on earth is this to be explained? I'm pretty sure I can say to you that no one has a clear explanation for what was going on. As is the case, there are varying attempts at explaining these strange behaviors. One of those that I think has a high level of likelihood of being at least partially true is what I call the devotee view.

In other words, Nabonidus's behavior was that of a religious ascetic. He was uniquely devoted to the moon god C. And so, he desired, perhaps in this thought, to absent himself from Babylon. Now, it wasn't that there were no temples to see in Babylonia.

But there was almost certainly political controversy between the religious functionaries in Babylon who focused on Marduk as opposed to Nabonidus, who was focused on seen. And so perhaps it was to avoid that controversy and devote himself without hindrance to Sin that he absented himself and went and lived at this oasis for ten or more years absent from Babylon. I think there's some value to this view.

However, it may not fully explain his actions, which has led to other attempts to explain his strange behavior. A second attempt is what has been called the religio-political view.

And this religiopolitical view makes the point that Babylon's chief deity is the deity Marduk. Marduk is not worshipped in the West, especially among the Arabs and the Arameans. So, when we say West, what we're making reference to is anything to the West of the Euphrates all the way down to here, the whole western half of the empire. Marduk is not worshipped.

So, this view is making the suggestion that Nabonidus was perhaps trying to unify his country around an old prestigious deity like seen. Now, that has some intriguing aspects to it, even if we admit that we cannot prove it. If there is a deity that is worshipped throughout the Fertile Crescent, it would be the moon god.

Some scholars think that Mount Sinai was called Mount Sinai because of the moon god Sin. We know that the great city of Jericho in Israel was so named after the moon god, Yariq. We know that to both the Arameans and the Arabs, the whole western half of the ancient world preferred the moon god Sin.

So, this view is arguing that perhaps what Nabonidus was trying to do was by absenting himself from Babylon and moving to this, turning this into a religious center that could unite the Fertile Crescent power of Babylon under the religious flag of the moon god. It's intriguing, or at least to me it's intriguing, but it is also difficult to say with any degree of certainty. For example, it doesn't necessarily explain why he absented himself for ten whole years.

He could have done this sort of thing from any place in the Fertile Crescent. It doesn't necessarily explain why he would have built a gigantic wall around a few palm trees. It doesn't necessarily explain why he would build a gigantic temple to seen in a place where there weren't very many humans to use it.

So, while there may be some value to this, we would want to be careful to say that no one view seems to adequately explain this or completely explain this somewhat unusual behavior. There is a third view that I mentioned in my class notes here, and that third view is what I call the geoeconomic view. From the years 560 to 485, Babylonia experienced a ruinous inflation of over 200%.

In other words, economically, things were not going really well back in Babylonia. Inflation was high, the economy was not strong, and so this view suggests that what he was trying to do was to recreate trade routes that could re-formulate the economic center of the Babylonian Empire. What this view is trying to argue is that he was trying to create an economic trade transfer that put less emphasis on Babylon and more emphasis on the western half of the empire.

Well, in the last years of the reign of Nabonidus, we have a good reason explaining why they had ruinous inflation. In those last years, if you look at the salmon-colored area above Babylonia, what you can tell is that in the last years, the Medes and the Persians had succeeded in conquering in a gigantic arc so that Babylonia was cut off in every direction except the west. So, it's plausible that Nabonidus was trying to formulate an economic response to the emerging power from the east called Medo-Persia.

So, as we look at his behavior, we say we're not sure that we can explain why he did what he did. But what we can say is that he is not nearly as famous in the Bible as his son Belshazzar. Because Belshazzar is ruling on the throne back in Babylon, we're not sure if Nabonidus had fully abdicated and Belshazzar was the exact king or if Belshazzar was co-regent.

It's not exactly clear, but what is clear is that Nabonidus wasn't ruling in Babylon and Belshazzar was. And, of course, the book of Daniel has made Belshazzar famous, and so Belshazzar is ruling the city when we read the story in Daniel that Belshazzar orders a banquet. It's not controversial for a king to order a banquet.

After all, kings had a lot of time on their hands. You read a book like Esther, and the entire book seems to be punctuated with various banquets thrown by the king. So, he throws a banquet, and in the banquet, Belshazzar orders that the vessels from the temple... the religious vessels that were used in temple worship, probably he took with him into captivity the Ark of the Covenant.

And so, he orders those to be brought out as drinking vessels. Well, in the middle of the party, God intervenes and suddenly begins to write cryptic words in a divine hand upon the wall, and this would definitely rearrange the mood of a party. They went from a banquet of the doomed to a banquet of the terrified.

I say doomed because it's not at all visible to the readers of the book of Daniel. It's not visible that Babylon was under siege and had been under siege for over a year by the Persian forces. So, the banquet is a banquet thrown while the forces are besieging the city of Babylon.

And there we have this handwriting: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. Belshazzar wants this interpreted. Now, this isn't cryptic to read; the words are easy enough.

It's Mene, numbered, Tekel, Tekel is Aramaic for Shekel. Shekel means weighed, so it's numbered, weighed, and separated. Upharsin.

So, Daniel has a reputation as a religionist. So, Daniel is brought in and Daniel interprets the writing. He didn't translate it; anybody knew what it was saying.

He interprets it. And what he tells them is, Belshazzar, your days are numbered. Your behavior is weighed out.

And you are going to be separated from your kingdom. And this is, you know, in their world and in their language, friends, they loved puns. And this is the word from which we get the word Pharisee, the root from which we get it.

Pharisees mean separated ones. And so, separated out is the meaning of the word here, but it's also a homonym for the word Persian. If you look at the consonants, you can see that the consonants are the same.

In essence, then, the dream is telling Belshazzar that you're going to be separated out, and the Persians will be the ones who do it. So, it's a wordplay on the homonyms Persian and Pharisee. So, with that, that very night, the city of Babylon falls, and Belshazzar is removed from the throne.

The Neo-Babylonian period, just like that, comes to an end. Of course, you'll remember what I mentioned about these highly centralized political entities. And so, these highly political entities collapse as suddenly as they appear.

With the Persians having already conquered territory in the northern part of Babylonia, all that's really left for them to do is capture the city of Babylon, which, of course, is what happens here. And just like that, the Medo-Persians inherit the Fertile Crescent. And so now we shift from a map that looks like that to the map that we told you about the other day, a map in which we have the largest landmass empire in the world.

So, we will shift our attention, therefore, for the first time in history away from the Fertile Crescent, and we will shift it toward the east. It's so easy for us to forget that the Persian Empire is the first empire in the world not to be based on an empire of the Fertile Crescent. So, long before there was a Persian Empire, there had been occupation and artifactual evidence from sites in the 5th and 4th millennium BC.

The most famous of these cities on the great Iranian plateau were Susa and Elam. By the beginning of the 1st millennium, a people called Aryans, now 1st millennium would be like 1000, so by about 1000 BC, these Aryan peoples had begun to emigrate or migrate into the area. After the migration had been accomplished, it appeared that there were five great tribes, of which the Parsua and the Madai were the greatest, the Medes, and the Persians.

But there were other tribes of consequence. The Parthava gave to the world the Parthian Empire, which during the Roman period was the greatest opponent to Rome in the entire eastern Mediterranean. So, the Parthava was a tribe.

As a matter of fact, at Pentecost, in the Book of Acts, we read that there were Jews from Parthia present at Pentecost. Then we have the Arachosians and the Bactrians, and so these are the five tribes of the so-called Persian peoples. The Medes, the Persians, the Parthians, the Arachosians, and the Bactrians.

So, I'm not sure if we can see those names here, but if we can, we can show you where they're at. So, the Medes are located up here in the northern part of Medo-Persia. The Persians are located in the southern part.

Here are the Bactrians over here. Here is Arachosia here, and here is Parthia in the middle. So, these five great tribes filled up this region to the east, and so for the first time now in history, political power shifts away from Mesopotamia to the east.

As a matter of fact, the irony is that even though for millennia the only center for power in the ancient world was Mesopotamia, with the shift of power to the east, this represents the last time that the center of power would ever be Mesopotamia. Because when the power shifts from the east, it will shift to the west in the person of Alexander the Great, and then in the people of the Roman Empire. So, what has just occurred is an epoch in the history of consequence so important that it's hard to explain to you what all this meant.

So quickly, as we begin to draw near to the end of this hour, let me tell you that the center of world history was always the Fertile Crescent. With the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Fertile Crescent will never be the center of power again. From here on in, power will shift its way away from the Fertile Crescent, first to the east, then to the west.

Thus, it continues to this very day. When you look at this region now, you might call it the empire that perished. All of those empires are gone.

The land is a fraction of what it had been. The land has suffered great ecological harm. There has been global drying out.

So, this historic region, which was fertile and powerful, has now begun the undisputable decline from which it will never recover. Now, the power will shift here to the east. This east is a dramatic change for our interests because these Aryans are not Semites; they're Indo-Aryans.

And that doesn't mean that we can tell you exactly where they came from when they emigrated. But what we can tell you is they are not Semites. They do not have a historic religion.

Their language is not Semitic; it is Medo-Persian. Their culture is not Semitic, and their worldview is not Semitic.

So, we have a change not just of geopolitical consequences but also of religious and cultural considerations. This is an epochal moment in history. It will take us to the Persian Empire, which lasted several centuries.

It is an empire of unique consequence. So, the unity of these tribes took time—centuries, to be exact.

It first appeared under the domination of the tribe of Media. Subsequent kings, of course, after they were united, were prominent in the fall of Assyria. The relationship of these two tribes was somewhat harmonious right up until the rise of the great Cyrus, who made things a bit nervous for the Median kings.

So, I think we should stop here and then come back in the next tape to talk about one of the truly most intriguing individuals in ancient history. He is called Cyrus the Great. He was a king, unlike any other king in antiquity.

And he's a joy to talk about. So, we will stop here and then begin on our next tape shortly.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 21, Neo-Babylonian Empire and End of Judah.