

## **Iraq, Turkey And Iran Are Important Places In The Bible**

'She (the church) who is in Babylon, who is chosen, sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark' (1 Peter 5:13).

Babylon is in Iraq, and there was once a thriving early Christian church there. The people who live in the Middle East, Northern Africa and parts of Asia should be very proud of their ancient heritage. They would by necessity, be related to the ancient people who once lived in that area, thousands of years ago. We know the Jews were alive and well back then and still are, but the Medes, Persians, Babylonians and other peoples will all still be around somewhere. The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Empires, although all were in a similar area, included many countries, and some are significant in the Bible. The Empires included what is now Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Southern Europe, Asia, India, Ethiopia, Syria, Lebanon, the ancient land of Mesopotamia, Macedonia and other places mentioned in the scriptures, known by their ancient names. In the Bible, the first mention of these countries by their ancient names are Persia (2 Chronicles 36:20), Assyria (Genesis 2:14), Mesopotamia (Genesis 24:10), the Land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10), Babylon (Joshua 7:21), Tubal (Isaiah 66:19), Egypt (Genesis 12:10), Medes (2 Kings 17:6), Elam (Genesis 14:1), Canaan (Genesis 10:18), Lebanon (Deuteronomy 1:7), Macedonia (Acts 16:9), India (Esther 1:1), Ethiopia (2 Kings 19:9) and almost all of these settlements were named after the descendants of Noah. We read about many significant Biblical events that happened in that huge area.

The Assyrian Empire began about 745 BC, conquered Egypt in 670 BC, and ended in 612 BC when the capital Nineveh, was captured by the Babylonians and the Medes. The Assyrian Empire encompassed the area of what is now Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and as far south as Egypt.

The Babylonian Empire had its capital in Babylon. That empire lasted from 690 BC soon after they had conquered Egypt, until 539 BC. It was much smaller than either of the other empires, taking in what is now Syria, Israel, the Mediterranean Sea, Iran, all of Iraq to about Kuwait.

The Persian Empire was by far the largest of these three empires; began to become powerful around 550 BC and lasted until 334 BC when it was broken up by Alexander the Great. The famous rivers Euphrates and the Tigris both run through what was the Persian Empire. The Persian Empire encompassed an extremely vast area, from the Mediterranean Sea, up to Macedonia, to Turkey, through the now-named Caspian Sea, possibly as far as Turkmenistan, down to India, across the Arabian Sea, taking in all the lands in between such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and as far south as Ethiopia (Esther 1:1; 8:9), back up through Libya and up to the Mediterranean Sea. Its capital was the citadel of Susa in the city of Shushan (Esther 3:15), in the province of Elam (Daniel 8:2) near modern day Shiraz in Iran.

The Garden of Eden was created in the area of what is now Southern Turkey, somewhere in the mountains, where the Euphrates, Tigris and two other rivers begin to flow down the mountains and around the nearby cities (Genesis 2:10 to 14). The Garden of Eden was not created on plains. We know that because the Bible clearly says the four rivers flowed out of the Garden, not into it. For the rivers to flow out of the Garden of Eden, the Garden had to be higher than where the rivers were flowing, or the rivers would have been flowing into, not out of, the Garden and it would have ended up a lake. If we look at an atlas, we can see exactly where the Euphrates begins. Genesis says the Garden was created where

the Euphrates flowed from, so we can pin-point where the Garden of Eden was originally created – in the mountains of what is now Southern Turkey. Everything would have been very different from the way it is today. There was no rain or snow in those ancient days, but the ground was watered by a mist every night (Genesis 2:6), so the mountains would have been beautiful and perfect, not freezing in winter as alps are today.

Noah's Ark was built in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and then after the flood had subsided, the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat, and we know that is in Turkey, close to the Armenian border (Genesis 8:4).

The Tower of Babel was built in a valley (or plain) in the land of Shinar, later called Babylon (Iraq) after the Tower of Babel. It was where the Lord confused the languages, and the people sounded like they were babbling (Genesis 11:1 to 9).

Abraham, then called Abram was born in the Ur of the Chaldees (Iraq), moved to Haran (Syria) then onto Canaan (Israel) (Genesis 11:31; 12:5 & 6).

Isaac's wife Rebekah was from Nahor (located in Iraq between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers (Genesis 24:10).

Jacob met Rachel in Haran (Syria) (Genesis 29:4 to 10).

Balaam was from Mesopotamia (Iraq) (Deuteronomy 23:4).

Nineveh was built by Nimrod (Genesis 10:11), and it had become a vast city by the time of Jonah (Jonah 3:2 & 3), which was about 800 BC. Nineveh is still in Northern Iraq. It is possible that Jonah is buried there. Nineveh later became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The King of Assyria lived at Nineveh (2 Kings 19:36). Eventually, Nineveh was destroyed because of sin (Zephaniah 2:13).

In about 458 BC, Ezra and Nehemiah served kings of the Persian Empire (Ezra 7:9; Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1).

Queen Esther lived in Shushan (Esther 3:15), in the province of Elam (Daniel 8:2), modern day Iran.

The Word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel in the Land of the Chaldeans (where Abraham was born) in what is now Iraq (Ezekiel 1:3).

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, when during his reign in 605 BC, he forced some Israelites to go to Babylon (Daniel 1:1, 3 & 6).

Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Mishael) and Abednego (Azariah) were put in the fiery furnace in Babylon, and were joined by the Angel of the Lord (Jesus) (Daniel 3:19 to 26).

Belshazzar, another king of Babylon, saw a man's hand writing 'Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin' on a wall (Daniel 5:1 to 9 & 25).

Daniel was in the lions den in Babylon (Daniel 6:16 to 21).

The wise men who visited Jesus soon after He was born came from the east (Matthew 2:1 to 12). They could have been the descendants of the Jews who were forced into Babylon

hundreds of years before, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Many Jews returned to Jerusalem during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, but many stayed in Babylon. Their descendants are living there even to this day, and they know they are descended from the Jews who were forced there by Nebuchadnezzar.

King Jechoniah, son of King Josiah was born in Babylon (Matthew 1:11).

It was clearly the Lord's will for the Jews to go to Babylon, because the exile was incorporated into the Jews lineage up to the time of Jesus our Messiah. 'So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the exile to Babylon; fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah; fourteen generations' (Matthew 1:17).

Mesopotamian Jews (Iraqi's), Elamites (Iranian's), Libyan's, Italians, Arabian, Jews from Crete and many other places were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9 to 11).

As we saw in the opening scripture, Babylon had an important assembly in the days of the early church (1 Peter 5:13).

Almost all of the nations in the Middle East are mentioned in the Bible by their ancient names, and were places where Christian churches were founded by the apostles. Through those early churches, the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was spread world-wide. The apostles worked very hard, in difficult circumstances to get the Gospel out to the people. In this age of technology, sharing the Gospel is a lot easier, but just as important.

Amen and God bless you.

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