THE FOUR GENTILE WORLD EMPIRES

1. Babylon
   Head of Gold
   Lion with Eagles’ wings
   (606 BC - 537 BC)

2. Medo-Persia
   Breast and Arms of Silver
   Bear with three ribs in mouth
   (537 BC - 334 BC)

3. Greece
   Belly and Thighs of Brass
   Leopard with four heads and four wings
   (334 BC - 64 BC)

4. Rome
   Legs of Iron
   A dreadful and terrible beast
   (64 BC - Second Coming of Christ)

The Final Form of Rome
Feet and Toes part Iron and part Clay
10 horns on the beast
The Four Gentile World Empires

The Medo-Persian Empire
DARIUS I (HYSTASPES) (cont’d)

Zec 1:7
Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

- Exactly two months later, the Lord gave Zechariah his second prophecy on the 24th day of the eleventh month in the second year of Darius (Zec 1:7), which corresponds to February 9, 520 BC
- Zechariah’s second prophecy begins at Zechariah 1:7 and runs through chapter 6 (1:7-6:15) and includes the 10 visions
- The most important content of these visions for the Jews at that time were that the post-captivity restoration is a type of an even greater restoration in the future (i.e.- the Second Coming of Christ and the kingdom), the promise that the work that was ongoing for the temple would be finished (Zec 4:9), and that the Messiah would one day build the final temple of the Lord (Zec 6:12-15)
The Medo-Persian Empire- Est 1:1

- What took place next depends on who the king “Ahasuerus” was in the book of Esther
- **AHASUERUS**= a Hebrew transliteration of an Old Persian word meaning “the mighty”; the ancient Greek equivalent transliterated is XERXES
- AHASUERUS was a throne name (e.g.- Pharaoh; Caesar) the Persians attributed to their kings of the Achaemenid dynasty and their Median predecessors who ruled over Persia following the affinity between the two kingdoms instigated by Astyages in 580 BC cf. (Dan 9:1)
- The Bible provides us with clues regarding the identity of the Ahasuerus in Esther

Est 1:1

Now it came to pass **in the days of Ahasuerus**, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

- First, he is the Ahasuerus who ruled over 127 provinces that extended from India to Ethiopia (Est 1:1), which represented the Medo-Persian empire at its greatest extent
- There are only two kings who met this condition: (1) Darius I Hystaspes (522 BC-486 BC); and (2) Xerxes I (486 BC- 465 BC)
- If the Ahasuerus of Esther ruled the empire at its peak in the THIRD YEAR of his reign (Est 1:3), then he could not be Darius I Hystaspes because he ruled the empire at its peak toward the end of his reign because of the territories he conquered
The Medo-Persian empire included all or part of the lands currently known as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.
The Medo-Persian Empire- Est 1:2-3

Est 1:2-3
2 That in those days, when the **king Ahasuerus sat on the throne** of his kingdom, **which was in Shushan the palace**,
3 **In the third year of his reign, he made a feast** unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

- Second, the Ahasuerus of Esther sat on the throne in the royal palace at Shushan in the third year of his reign (Est 1:2-3)
- There were four capitals of the Medo-Persian empire: (1) Shushan (i.e.- Susa) in Elam; (2) Babylon; (3) Achmetha (i.e.- Ecbatana) in Media; and (4) Persepolis in Persia (the ceremonial capital)
- The Behistun Inscription is a multilingual inscription and large rock relief said to be the autobiography of Darius I Hystaspes
- In it, Darius claims to have built the royal palace at Susa and made it the winter residence of the Achaemenid kings thereafter
- We do not know when Darius began construction but it continued during the subsequent reigns of Xerxes I (486 BC- 465 BC), Artaxerxes I (465 BC- 424 BC), and Darius II (423 BC- 404 BC)
- How likely was it that construction on the palace began at the beginning of the reign of Darius and was far enough along that he could take up residence and hold a feast there in the third year of his reign (Est 1:3)?
Est 2:17,20

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

- Third, the Ahasuerus of Esther did not restrict his queen based on her bloodline, nation, or people.
- According to Herodotus, the seven conspirators who assassinated Gaumata, or the false Smerdis, all agreed that whosoever among them would become king would not marry outside the Achaemenid bloodline and their seven houses (*The Histories*, 3.84)
- When Darius I Hystaspes ascended to the throne, he kept this vow by marrying two daughters of Cyrus, Atossa and Artystone.
- Atossa was the elder sister and had been a wife of her brother Cambyses and then of Smerdis the Magi; she was the mother of Xerxes, who succeeded Darius as king.
- Artysone was the younger sister and a virgin.
- To further solidify his power, Darius also married Parmys, a daughter of the real Smerdis (the son of Cyrus); and Phaidime (Phaedymia) the daughter of Otanes, who confirmed to him that Smerdis was an imposter (*The Histories*, 3.88).

**Note:** Otanes would later marry one of the sisters of Darius Hystaspes and they had a daughter named AMESTRIS, who would marry Xerxes I.
The Medo-Persian Empire - Est 2:17,20

• He also married one of the daughters of Gobryas, who would give birth to his first born son Artobazanes, who was not heir to the throne because Darius favored his wife Atossa and her oldest son Xerxes
• Darius had two additional marriages later but both were also to women within the seven houses of the Achaemenid conspirators
• There is no evidence to suggest that Xerxes I had any similar restriction to his marriages
• Esther was more than a woman in the king’s harem, she was crowned QUEEN
• When she revealed to the king that she was a Jew he did not get angry, put her away, or kill her but sought to empower her people to defend themselves from genocide (Est 3:13; 7:3-4; 8:3-14)

Est 3:13
And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Est 7:3-4
3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:
4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage.
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