

The earlier part of Old Testament history is so much better known than the latter part. Who doesn't know about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, the great characters Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and many others of the earlier history? But what happened after the Jews were taken to Babylon as exiles? Beyond the interesting stories in the book of Daniel (Daniel in the lions' den, the fiery furnace experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the handwriting on the palace wall), the rest of the Old Testament story is an uninvestigated history by too many church people.

Before we get into a study of these matters, it would be good to get a few dates in mind:

606 B.C. - Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah. Jehoiakim was king. Daniel and his 3 friends went in this captivity.

597 B.C. - Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Judah. Jehoiachin was king. Ezekiel went in this captivity.

586 B.C. - Nebuchadnezzar's final invasion of Judah. Zedekiah was king. Jeremiah was a persecuted prophet in Jerusalem because he had predicted this calamity that befell Judah; destruction of the temple, burning of the city, and Judah deported to Babylon.

538 B.C. - Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians just as the handwriting on Belshazzar's wall had said.

536 B.C. - Zerubbabel and Joshua return to Jerusalem with 50,000 to rebuild the temple and to resettle the land.

520 B.C. - The temple rebuilding that had been stopped for awhile was resumed under the prophesying of Haggai and Zachariah.

516 B.C. - The temple was completed.

478 B.C. - Esther became queen in Persia.

457 B.C. - Ezra led a smaller group back to Jerusalem where he conducted needed reforms.

444 B.C. - Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt its walls, and governed the returned Jews.

Let us first of all take a look at the Jews during those Babylonian Captivity years.

After they departed in chains for Babylon, following a series of tragedies (the temple destroyed, the walls beaten down, Jerusalem burned, King Zedekiah's sons killed before his very eyes and his own eyes then put out, etc.), the great prophet Jeremiah, who was permitted to remain in the land instead of being made to go to Babylon, gives us this description of Jerusalem in the opening verses of his book Lamentations: "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!...Judah is gone into captivity...she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest...The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate...her children are gone into captivity before the enemy...Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed...Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger...Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her" (Lam. 1:1-17).

And Psa. 137:1-4 gives us a snapshot of those taken to Babylon: "By the rivers of

Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

The prophet Jeremiah had not only told them they were going into Babylonian Captivity but that it would be for a long, long time--even 70 years: "This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. 25:11); "Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29:10).

But before this restoration to their homeland could take place, the mighty power of Babylon had to be broken.

1. What were the dates of the three invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar?
2. In what year did Babylon fall?
3. In what year did Zerubbabel begin rebuilding the temple?
4. After the rebuilding was stopped, what was the date when the project was resumed?
5. In what year was the temple rebuilding completed?
6. In what year did Esther become queen of Persia?
7. In what year did Ezra arrive at Jerusalem?
8. In what year did Nehemiah arrive at Jerusalem?
9. What prophet was left in the land of

Judah to lament the sorrows that had come upon it?

10. How does the 137th Psalm describe Judah's sadness in Babylon?

11. How long did Jeremiah say the Babylonian Captivity would last?

### **BABYLON FELL**

Before the Jews were ever conquered by Babylon because of their idolatrous sins, God had told, had assured, the prophet Habakkuk that after He had used Babylon to punish Judah, He would then turn around and punish the more-wicked Babylon for its heinous sins. But why was Babylon spared for 70 years before God brought the ax of judgment down upon it? Because He had decreed that Babylon would hold the Jews hostage for 70 years. And why 70 years? Moses gave this divine warning back in Lev. 26:33-35: "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land...because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it." From II Chron. 36:21 we conclude that God totaled up the sabbaths the Jews had cheated Him out of while they were in the land (from Joshua's day to Jeremiah's), and it came to a total of 70 years--thus the length of their captivity in Babylon.

Medo-Persia would be the power that God would use to overthrow the scepter of Babylon. This military combine of the Medes and Persians was the breast and arms of "silver" in Dan. 2:32. Daniel predicted that Medo-Persia would be inferior as an empire to the powerful Babylon (Dan. 2:39). This new empire was also predicted in Dan. 7:5 as

the "bear" that would arise and "devour much flesh". And in interpreting the "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" on Belshazzar's palace wall, Daniel said the latter word meant that "thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan. 5:28).

Daniel went on to say, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old."

This two-power empire is again pictured in Dan. 8:3 as a "ram which had two horns". It is noteworthy that this verse goes on to say the two horns were not equal in size, and that the latter horn was the higher. The earlier ruling power was Median and the latter Persian. The Persians were stronger rulers than the Median. Thus the Darius of the book of Daniel, the king who could not sleep because his good man Daniel was in the lions' den (Dan. 6:18-24), ruled first. This was in the year 538.

Daniel himself had been among the first Jewish captives to go to Babylon (that was in the King Jehoiakim captivity back in 606 B.C.). Now listen to Dan. 9:1-4: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God." Since Jeremiah had said the Babylonian Captivity would last 70 years, and it began in 606 B.C., Daniel realized in 538 B.C. that they were nearing the

captivity's end--only 2 more years to go! This explains why he began praying to God about the matter.

1. What had the prophet Habakkuk assured Judah about Babylon?

2. Why did God establish seventy years as the length of Judah's captivity in Babylon?

3. What power would overthrow Babylon?

4. Was this power represented by the silver or the gold in Dan. 2's prediction?

5. Was this power represented by the lion, bear, or leopard in Dan. 7's prediction?

6. What did "Upharsin" in the handwriting on the wall mean?

7. Was this power represented by the ram from the east or the goat from the west?

8. Which king of this power was ruling when Daniel was put into the lions' den?

9. In which of Judah's three captivities was Daniel taken to Babylon?

10. In the year that Babylon fell, Daniel knew it would be only how many more years of captivity?

### **CYRUS AND THE JEWS**

For many years Cyrus had headed the great conquering machine of the Medes and Persians. Following Darius the Mede he came into direct contact with the captive Jews of Babylon when he began ruling from Babylon in 536. No doubt the Jews (especially Daniel) showed him that their prophet Isaiah had recorded some prophecies concerning his rise and victories. Imagine the effect that his reading of the following Jewish Scriptures had upon his mind toward the Jews and their God Jehovah: "Thus saith the Lord...that confirmeth the word of his servant, and

performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof...that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, 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; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord (Jehovah--ASV), which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord (Jehovah--ASV), and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isa. 44:24--45:5).

As a result, the book of Ezra opens with this thrilling historical report: "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia" (536 B.C--exactly 70 years after the first captives went to Babylon), "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" (Jer. 25:11; Jer. 29:10), "might be fulfilled, the Lord 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,

THUS SAITH CYRUS KING OF PERSIA, THE LORD GOD OF HEAVEN HATH GIVEN ME ALL THE

KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH: AND HE HATH CHARGED ME TO BUILD HIM AN HOUSE AT JERUSALEM, WHICH IS IN JUDAH. WHO IS THERE AMONG YOU OF ALL HIS PEOPLE? HIS GOD BE WITH HIM, AND LET HIM GO UP TO JERUSALEM WHICH IS IN JUDAH, AND BUILD THE HOUSE OF THE LORD OF ISRAEL, (HE IS THE GOD,) WHICH IS IN JERUSALEM. AND WHOSOEVER REMAINETH IN ANY PLACE WHERE HE SOJOURNETH, LET THE MEN OF HIS PLACE HELP HIM WITH SILVER, AND WITH GOLD, AND WITH GOODS, AND WITH BEASTS, BESIDE THE FREEWILL-OFFERING FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD THAT IS IN JERUSALEM" (Ezra 1:2-4).

This was the beginning of the return movement to Palestine some 500 years before Christ that began the serious repopulating of Palestine with Jews among whom Jesus would later be born.

Cyrus's proclamation brought the following results: "Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods" (Ezra 1:5-7). These were the vessels Belshazzar had sacrilegiously used in his wine-feast in Dan. 5:3,4 which caused God to send the hand that wrote, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" (Dan. 5:5,25). They were going to be sent back to Jerusalem to be put in the temple after it was rebuilt.

Ezra 2 gives us a run-down of those who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild--around



50,000 people altogether. Their governor who headed the temple-rebuilding was Zerubbabel. From the meaning of his name (begotten in Babylon) we conclude that he had never before seen the land of his fathers. The Jews' other leader was the priest Joshua.

Before they began on the temple itself, which took several years to complete, they erected the altar so they could offer sacrifices to the Lord and have His blessing throughout their project (Ezra 3:1-3). They observed the Feast of Tabernacles and restored the Mosaic system of feasts and offerings (Ezra 3:4,5). Let us note here that these whose divine religious practices had been suspended for a long period of time and who came back and restored those practices "as it is written in the law" left us an example that shows that our religious predecessors (the Campbells, Stone, Scott, and others) who broke away from denominational practices, names, and organizations in their zeal for New Testament Christianity were right in so doing.

1. In what year did Cyrus begin ruling in Babylon?

2. What had the prophet Isaiah predicted about Cyrus?

3. As a result of Isaiah's prophecy, what did Cyrus do?

4. About how many thousand went back to Palestine with Zerubbabel?

### **REBUILDING THE TEMPLE**

You may recall that when Solomon built the original temple, he obtained cedar-of-Lebanon logs from the Lebanon Mountains in Phoenicia, which were floated down the coastline to Joppa after which they were hauled up to the building site at Jerusalem

(II Chron. 2:16). It is interesting to note that the process was repeated in the reconstruction of the temple (Ezra 3:7). Chronologically this was 400 years after Solomon's temple.

It was a great day when they began laying the foundation for the new temple. In conjunction with the foundation laying there was much music and rejoicing (Ezra 3:8-11). The joyful shouts of the masses were intermingled with weeping and loud wailing by some of the older men who could still remember Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:12,13). Ezra's account does not explain their weeping. We might settle for sentimental weeping were it not for some parallel material in Hag. 2:3: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" The limited resources of the returning Jews did not match the wealth of Solomon in erecting his beautiful temple. Imagine a beautiful hewn-stone courthouse erected in the center of a beautifully landscaped block. It was built when everything in the country was thriving. Its city continued to be the county seat even after the economy fell upon hard times. Fire roared through that building one night while its citizens slept, and they awoke to see it a raging inferno. Their beautiful building was gone, but the business of the county went on. They erected another courthouse, but this time their resources were very limited. They were forced to erect a courthouse of cement blocks with a little ornamentation here and there. Could they still transact county business in the cement block structure? Yes, but it just wasn't as fine as the former seat of county government. Even so the returning Jews would be able to perform every religious rite and

ceremony in the new temple as they had in Solomon's--it just wasn't as ornate and as beautiful.

The Samaritans lived just north of Judah and occupied the land formerly held by the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom. They had a little of the Mosaic religion mixed in with their own religion. When they came and offered to assist in the construction of the temple, saying, "We seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither" (Ezra 4:2), Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the other Jewish leaders refused their help (Ezra 3:3). This explains why the Jews and Samaritans had no favorable spirit even into Jesus' day (John 9:51-53) and why the Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus would ask drink of her (John 4:9).

This refusal on the part of Zerubbabel enraged the Samaritans so that they began lobbying against the project to Cyrus and his successors (Ezra 4:5). It was either in the days of Cyrus's successor or his successor's successor that they succeeded in obtaining a royal decree against the continuance of the project. Read their letter to the ruler (Ezra 4:11-16) and the ruler's letter to them (Ezra 4:17-22). When the Samaritans obtained this letter from the ruling monarch, they lost no time getting to Jerusalem and forcing them to stop the project (Ezra 4:23,24). And it ceased "unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (this is a different Darius than Darius the Mede of the book of Daniel).

How long was this work-interruption? If it was stopped during Cyrus's successor, the interruption was for 16 years. If it was stopped during Cyrus's successor's successor, the interruption was much shorter (possibly 2 years). It is difficult to

determine just which it was.

1. Where did Solomon obtain logs for building his temple?

2. Where did these returning Jews obtain logs for rebuilding the temple?

3. Why did the older men weep when the foundation for the new temple was laid?

4. Who offered to help the Jews rebuild the temple?

5. Was their help accepted or not?

6. What caused the rebuilding project to stop?

### TEMPLE PROJECT RESUMED

The idled workers decided to utilize the time constructing houses for themselves.

Why had God allowed this worthy project to come to a standstill? Was it altogether through the manipulations of their enemies, or was something wrong that displeased God? A careful study of Haggai's third speech (the part in Hag. 2:11-14) might be the explanation. They had evidently come back from the defiling connections of Babylon without properly purifying themselves and in their eagerness to get started on the project had not done as the law of Moses said they should. Their condition before God both before and after taking care of the matter is probably set forth in Zechariah's vision of the high priest Joshua in Zech. 3:1-5.

Who was this Darius the Persian under whose reign the project resumed, and what got the project started once more? He was the most powerful Persian ruler since the days of Cyrus and along with Cyrus was among the greatest of the Persian monarchs. Archaeologically he was the Persian ruler who recorded some of his military history on

the smoothed face of Behistin Mountain (see "Halley's Handbook" under "Behistin Mountain"). And that which got the project started again was the preaching and prophesying of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1,2).

When we turn to the opening verses of the book of Haggai, we find that it was the "second year of Darius" when Haggai was sent to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people with this message: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." By this we can see the people's thoughts as to why the king's decree had been against them. But the prophet continued: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Hag. 1:4). He pointed out God's shutting off blessing because of their work stoppage: "Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:6). Haggai, speaking for God, said, "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of host. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house" (Hag. 1:9-11).

Possibly some place right in here was where the ceremonial cleansing referred to above fit in.

In conjunction with the above rebukes, Haggai promised them if they would resume their labors, God would be pleased (Hag. 1:8).

The leaders and the people responded to the message of God and began anew on their

temple. But what about the difficulties facing the resumption of the project? Zechariah raised the question, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. 4:7). He went on to say, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it" (Zech. 4:9). And how was all this to be brought about? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). And the ensuing event showed that when they did what God commanded them, He was truly with them in a providential way to bring the desired project to completion.

When the enemies learned that the Jews were working again, they came with the question, "Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?" (Ezra 5:3). Verse 5 says, "The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they could not cause them to cease." So the enemies sent a letter to Darius to get it stopped once more. In their letter to Darius they reported the Jews as saying Cyrus had made a decree to have the building rebuilt. Of course, they didn't believe that Cyrus had, but when Darius searched the archives of Cyrus's day, guess what? He found it--Cyrus had decreed it! That settled it. Immediately Darius (in his second year) dispatched a letter to the Jews' enemies to leave them alone, that the project was to go on, and that the tribute money should be given them to help on the project. Read Ezra 6:1-13.

What a turn of events! God was indeed with them and blessing all the way. He used the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 6:14) to stir them up, and then He cleared the way in the court of Darius to see that the work was allowed.

The second year of Darius was 520 B.C. Ezra 6:15 says the temple was finished 4 years later. This was the temple that would stand on Jerusalem's east hill until the reign of Herod the Great, who just prior to Jesus' time would rebuild this inferior temple structure into a temple which would again be the pride of every Jew (John 2:20; Mark 13:1; and Luke 21:5).

1. How did the idled workers utilize their time off?

2. What two prophets did God raise up to get the project underway again?

3. Who was the Persian ruler at the time?

4. How had the Jews' economy been while the project was dormant?

5. The completing of the temple would be accomplished "not by \_\_\_\_\_, nor by \_\_\_\_\_" but by God's \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Tell how the Samaritans' effort to restop the project backfired against them.

7. After the temple project was resumed, how long did it take to complete the project?

### **PERSIAN ATTEMPTS ON ATHENS THWARTED**

So far we have been following the history recorded in the first 6 chapters of Ezra supplemented with related material from the predictions of the earlier prophets (Isaiah, Daniel, etc.) and from contemporary coverage in later prophetic books (Haggai and Zechariah). Now let us look at something else.

Under Cyrus, Persia had spread west and controlled all of Western Asia. Later under Darius, Persia desired to spread into Europe particularly wanting to overthrow the

wealthy and powerful city Athens. (This was the Darius we studied about who authorized the construction of the temple in Jerusalem.)

Darius and his army landed on an island just off the European mainland. This island appealed to Athens for help. Realizing the Persians' intentions against Athens, they decided to send help. But before they could get to the island, they learned that another Persian army had landed on the mainland. They changed their course and approached the army on the Plain of Marathon northeast of Athens. Being outnumbered 2 to 1 (20,000 to 10,000) the Athenians hesitated to attack, but when they learned the island had fallen to the other Persian army and its people killed and taken captive, they had but one choice--to attack this army so they could get back to Athens before the other Persian army found it undefended.

The Athenian leader Miltiades conceived the then-unique military strategy of making the center of his attacking line weak so it would be pushed back by the Persians, allowing the two strong ends of his line to encircle around and enclose the Persians. The Athenians with their long spears and armor-covered bodies ran through a storm of Persian arrows as they began the attack. The two Athenian flanks proceeded forward in the fighting while the middle of the line gave before the Persians--and the Persians found themselves enclosed and trapped! The fierce fighting that day cost Persia 6,400 soldiers while Athens lost only 200. One of the Athenian soldiers (Pheidippides) ran all the way to Athens yet that day to break the good news: "Rejoicing--we conquer!" The exhausting run after the fierce fighting was too much--upon saying these words Pheidippides dropped dead. The same number



of miles he ran from the Battle at Marathon to Athens that day in 490 B.C. are still run in Marathon races today in memory of his famous run.

In time the other Persian army sailed to Athens only to learn of the defeat of their comrades at Marathon and to find Athens heavily guarded and awaiting their coming. Disappointed, they withdrew without attacking and sailed back to Persia.

But that was not the end of the matter. Darius was determined to attack again, this time with such a large army that Athens would bite the dust. But death cut short Darius's career, and it was up to his famous son Xerxes I to carry out his plans. This brings us to the book of Esther, for this Xerxes I was King Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. ("Xerxes" is of Greek derivation while "Ahasuerus" is of Persian.) Secular history books normally use "Xerxes"; in our coverage we will use his Bible name "Ahasuerus".

Ahasuerus succeeded his father in 486 B.C. He first put down an uprising in Egypt and then began assembling ships and soldiers from all quarters of his vast empire. "World Book Encyclopedia" says he organized the largest army that had ever been assembled up to that time. It was while this vast army was being assembled and readied for the Greek campaign in the third year of his reign that the great feast of Esth. 1 took place as a "send-off" to the battle. And what a feast it was (actually 2 feasts involving more than 6 months of time)!

The large fleet of ships was used to form a pontoon bridge across the Hellespont (strait between Asia and Europe). History shows that while sitting on a marble throne on a bluff, Ahasuerus proudly watched his vast fleet make this impressive crossing.

From that crossing the foot-soldiers on land and the ships in the Aegean Sea paralleled each other west and then south toward Athens. The Persians were met at the narrow pass of Thermopylae a number of miles north of Athens by an army that Persia defeated. As the Persians came toward Athens, the Athenians under Themistocles decided to abandon land-fighting, let the Persians have Athens (at least temporarily), and engage Persia in a sea-battle. It was a great gamble, but it paid off. The abandoned Athens was entered and burned. Themistocles sent a faithful slave to the Persians to tell them they were going to retreat from Salamis Bay in fear, so the Persians divided their ships to guard both ends of the bay and keep them in. This was exactly what Themistocles wanted. Instead of retreating the Athenians with their smaller, more maneuverable ships engaged the more cumbersome Persian ships in a naval battle in the narrows of Salamis Bay. Ahasuerus was watching from his chosen spot and could not believe his eyes as his ships were rammed, broken, and captured. This was the day he had looked forward to, but Sept. 23, 480 B.C.'s Battle of Salamis just west of Athens turned victory into tragedy for this king of the book of Esther. Humiliated and disheartened he abandoned his western hopes and returned to Persia. The detachment of soldiers he left in Greece under Mardonius was defeated in 479 B.C. at the Battle of Plataea. This marked the end of Persia's attempt to subjugate the land we today know as Greece, which at that time was a land of various city-states (Athens, Sparta, and others). More than a century later Phillip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great would bring all this territory and city-states together into the new Greek nation

and turn things around, conquering their way east until Alexander defeated the Persians in 331 B.C. at the Battle of Arbela.

1. Under Cyrus, Persia had extended itself as far west as \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Darius wanted to extend it farther west by conquering the city of \_\_\_\_\_.

3. In the Battle of Marathon the Persians lost \_\_\_\_\_ soldiers and Athens only \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Tell of Pheidippides.

5. What famous race today is run in his memory?

6. What was Darius's son Xerxes I called in the book of Esther?

7. What was likely the occasion of the two Persian feasts involving more than six months recorded in the book of Esther?

8. Tell of Ahasuerus's military campaign in Greece.

9. Did he return to Persia a conqueror?

### **AHASUERUS AND THE JEWS**

As we turn to Esth. 2, the "after these things" and "when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased" and "he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her" of v. 1 all seem to point to the passing of time between chapters 1 and 2. We take that time-lapse to be the time Ahasuerus was away in the battle with the Greeks. History shows that after his crushing defeat at the Battle of Salamis, he gave up his conquering, returned home, and spent the rest of his years with his harem.

First order of business after he returned home was to select a new queen