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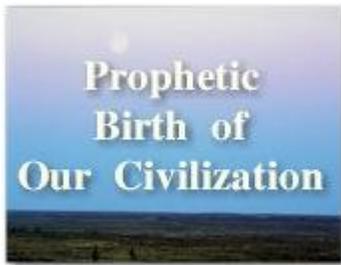
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The Prophetic Birth of Our Civilization

By Ernest L. Martin Ph.D., March 1975

Transcribed by David Sielaff, July 2002, updated October 2020

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for October 2020](#)



We need to pay attention to the Middle East. Biblical prophecy is coming alive. This is one reason for going to Israel on occasion, to see the focal point of all prophecy.¹ Prophecy is one way God proves Himself active in human affairs. We can learn all we want about doctrine,² but God wants to reinforce His teachings about salvation, with prophetic information, so we can see that He is very active in human affairs on earth. That is why we need to keep our minds on prophecy, not only for interest sake but so we will have a good, general understanding of God's role in history through the fulfillment of His prophecies.

I want to examine a particular period of time which has great prophetic significance to it. It happened in the past, that is true, but its ramifications for today are profound. The period occupies about 100 years in the history of this earth, but scholars have looked into this period and given it a particular name. Scholars have called it the "Axial Period." It is one of the most important, indeed the most important, historical period of study that I know of in the Scripture, outside of the first advent of Jesus Christ.

Why Begin with Nebuchadnezzar?

Let me ask two questions. Have you wondered: [1] *Why God started the Gentile world kingdoms with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon in the 6th century BC?* [2] *Why did God wait until the time of Daniel chapter 2 to give the dream where King Nebuchadnezzar saw an image?* The image was made of various metals and clay. The head was of gold. The lower portions were silver, brass, iron, and then finally iron mixed with miry clay. You all know the story. Daniel chapter 4 comments on the image given in Daniel chapter 2.

¹ Hopefully health threats can change [from 2020] so Israel and Palestine can be visited. Politically, some good work has been done with regard to Israel's relations with its neighbors, leading to the future "**restitution of all things**" Peter spoke of in Acts 3:21.

Editor's Note: All biblical quotes in this article are from *The Concordant Literal Version of the Old Testament*. DWS

² These important teachings, such as Grace, Reconciliation, Faith, the important doctrine of Imputation and a full explanation of the Mystery of God, all are absolutely essential when compared with Prophecy. They must always be understood as having a higher level on the ladder of importance. These teachings are best explained in Dr. Martin's book [The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#) (Portland, OR: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 2001), free online and for purchase. DWS

This world kingdom started with Babylon. When Daniel interpreted the dream to Nebuchadnezzar he said to him, **“You are this head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you,”** that is, a kingdom not as powerful or important in the world as the Babylonian Kingdom. That inferior kingdom was the Persian Kingdom. After that would come along another kingdom more inferior, the Greco-Macedonian Empire, and then others, until we come to the bottom of the image where 10 toes on the feet support the whole image.

We know from Daniel that a stone is cut out of a high mountain, without hands. The stone rolls down the mountain, gathers speed, and hits the image on the 10 toes. The image falls over and the stone pummels that image to grains of dust. Wind comes along and blows all the dust away. Nothing is left of the image once that stone crumbles or destroys it. The stone is obviously the Kingdom of God. The person in sovereign power when the stone destroys the image is Jesus Christ. We will not have, it seems, any of this Babylonian image left at all. So ...

Why did God wait so long before starting this World Empire series of kingdoms that end at the Second Coming of Christ? If you look at history before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, according to the chronology of the Old Testament you have about 3,500 years *before* He ever brought up the Babylonian head of Nebuchadnezzar. That is a long, long time. Previous “world empires” were not as important as the one where the head was Babylon.³

Kingdoms Before the Image of Gold

Look at the major kingdoms that existed before Nebuchadnezzar became the Head of Gold. What about the ancient Kingdom of Egypt, the kingdom that produced the pyramids and many other fine and even amazing structures? Some of these things are still in evidence for us to see today. We have to recognize that there were mighty and powerful kingdoms long before the Head of Gold ever came on the scene.

We have the record in Genesis chapter 41 about Joseph. The understanding and knowledge that God gave him saved not only Egypt from famine but the totality of the known world at the time. He gathered and distributed food to other peoples to keep them from starving during the 7 years of famine. At that time Egypt undoubtedly became the most powerful kingdom on earth; relatively speaking, far more powerful than the United States or Great Britain ever were. Egypt controlled the entire known civilized world! Such was Egypt in the time of Joseph. Egypt was *not* the Head of Gold, nor were the later Egyptian empires that came up subsequently.

What about the ancient kingdom of Assyria, going back 1,000 years before the time of Nebuchadnezzar? It was still very powerful just 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar. The Assyrian Empire was dreaded and feared by all empires and kingdoms. It took over all the Middle East, even conquering Egypt. Yet the Assyrian Empire, whether the earliest or the one near the time to Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah, was not considered one of the world empires.

What about the ancient Phoenician Empire (a trading as well as a political empire), the Elamite Empire, and I must mention the Hittite Empire of Anatolia (in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey)? That was one of the greatest empires of all time. The Hittite Empire was before Nebuchadnezzar.

Many ancient kingdoms of the Bible were recognized before Nebuchadnezzar, yet they seemed all of a sudden to disappear about Nebuchadnezzar’s time. In Isaiah’s prophecies, he writes two chapters on the nation of Moab. Isaiah has almost one chapter on the nation of Ammon. These nations were trans-Jordanian tribes that lived east of Palestine. They disappeared off the surface of the earth from a political point of view at the time of Nebuchadnezzar. No one has heard of them since except from a geographical consideration.

What about the ancient Philistines? They were well known for 1,000 years before Nebuchadnezzar. Go back to Abraham. Abraham had harmony with the Philistines, as did Isaac and Jacob. Come to the time of the

³ If you go back 3,500 years from *our time* you would be long before the time of Christ (some 2,000+ years ago). Going back 3,500 years would take you to the time of Moses. According to the chronology of the Old Testament, Adam was created and you wait about 3,500 years for Nebuchadnezzar to come along to be the Head of Gold and bring in the Babylonian system that we are familiar with today. We are all part of this “Babylonian Image” in a symbolic political and religious sense. *DWS*

Exodus at the conquest of the land of Palestine. Joshua was in contact with the Philistines. We all know about Samson, David and others. What happened to the Philistines? Around the time of Nebuchadnezzar they just disappeared from off the face of the earth, politically.

Events coalesce around the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now when was this time? It was the beginning of the 6th century BC, specifically around 585, 586 BC. This 6th century BC when God speaks about a Head of Gold coming along (a new type of civilization), is one of the deep-cut times in history, a major historical line of demarcation.

Other Axial Periods

The Flood, which took place 1,656 years after Adam, according to Old Testament chronology, was a major axial period. The civilization that went before was wiped out completely by that physical catastrophe. What emerged afterward was a brand new civilization. Obviously that was a major Axial Period.⁴

Consider the Second Coming of Christ on this earth. When the stone comes down and hits the image at its base and the whole Babylonian system blows away, should we not consider that an axial period? The answer is yes, a most definite axial period! The fulcrum of that axial period is the Second Coming of Christ and His intervention in world affairs. He will bring in a new civilization on this earth.

There have been minor axial periods as well. I suppose you could include the Exodus. At the time of the Exodus when the Israelites came out, Egypt was virtually destroyed. That civilization that helped build the pyramids was devastated.

The Canaanite civilization in Palestine that the Israelites took over was destroyed as well. You might say that a new minor civilization developed at that time. This marked a minor axial period. Solomon's reign was a minor axial time. Go to the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD. Many have seen that as an axial period, a minor one. Rome's fall caused much confusion in Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

Another axial period we might call minor would be the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation is very major to some of us. The Protestant Reformation was a major dividing line in Europe, along with the invention of printing, and the emergence of the industrial age that you and I know today. Our civilization today, we must admit, is vastly different than 500 years ago.

But there is no axial period (with the exception of the Deluge), which was so complete in getting rid of an earlier civilization, no period of time was more deep cut than the 6th century BC, when the Babylonian image was first seen by Nebuchadnezzar. What we will find is this: God was saying to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel that a new type of civilization was coming onto this earth. It would continue to exist until the Second Coming of Christ. ***You and I live within that Babylonian Period and the Babylonian System today!***

It is important to see if this deep-cut dividing line in history was a fact. If so, then God's divine revelation in prophecy makes sense. If it was not a fact, then we can say it was man's imagination.

The interesting thing here is that the Axial Period is proven. No question about it. Historians have seen it. But the Bible itself speaks about it, and not only about the Head of Gold beginning then and coming down to the Second Coming of Christ. We have in the Bible a particular prophet raised up especially to be what we might call the "Axial Prophet" to bring in the new civilization which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream, and that Daniel was able to interpret. That prophet was Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's Commission

Look at Jeremiah chapter 1 where we find Jeremiah's commission. Normally you find these directions of God at the beginning of a prophet's career. This is what we find in Jeremiah. Chronology shows that he had a 41-year ministry or time period for prophesying. When he was a young boy (certainly under 21), God spoke to and told Jeremiah He had a special commission for him to perform. The rest of the 52 chapters of Jeremiah

⁴ The word "Axial" means to be on an axis of some kind. A teeter-totter is a board on a fulcrum and that can go one way or the other. What supports the whole board? What is the axle of it? It is the axis, the fulcrum. DWS

are about Jeremiah's performance of his commission. I am amazed how many people overlook this essential and major commission given to Jeremiah.⁵

This commission did not go to Isaiah; it did not go to Ezekiel or Joel or Hosea or Malachi. And it did not go to Ernest Martin. It went to one man, Jeremiah. He was raised up just before the time of Daniel, just as Babylon was becoming great. Jeremiah was the prophet called to introduce the Axial Period into history from God's point of view. He was the prophet to show it, to live through it, and to tell of its outcome. That is what the 52 chapters of the book of Jeremiah are about. Look at Jeremiah 1:1–4 where Jeremiah is identified.

“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.”

The city of Anathoth is there today, a village 2½ miles northeast of Jerusalem. The text continues,

“... to whom the word of Yahweh came in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.”

Here Jeremiah specifies the beginning of his prophecies from God. Then verses 4–5,

“The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ‘Ere I formed you in the belly, I knew you, And ere you came forth from the womb, I hallowed you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.’”

This is extraordinary because Jeremiah was not a prophet just to the people of Israel, he was also a prophet to the nations. What was the scope of that commission? What nations did it embrace? It encompassed all nations and all peoples, no matter what race, where on earth, no matter their power status. He was a prophet to everyone. **“I hallowed you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”** This was done before he was born.

Jeremiah was picked before he was born because God would guide what he would do in history — perform a specific job. God puts nations and people where He wills and determines their boundaries (Acts 17:26). God is sovereign, not only of this earth but of the whole universe. Jeremiah had problems in his commission, that is quite true, but he did perform it, and performed it precisely. Verse 6,

“Then I answered, ‘Alas, my Lord Yahweh, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am a youth.’

Yet Yahweh said to me, ‘Do not say, I am a youth, For to all to whom I shall send you, you shall go, And all that I shall instruct you, you shall speak. Do not fear their presence, For I am with you to rescue you,’ averring [declaring] is Yahweh.

Then Yahweh put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me,

‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, this day I have given you supervision over nations and over kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to demolish ...’

• **Jeremiah 1:6–10**

That is the destruction part of the commission. But note the last words of the commission in verse 10 (after **“to demolish”**), they are, **“... to build and to plant.”**

Those five words are crucial. Not only was he to tear down, but he was to plant. He was to go to whom? To the nations. The nations would be torn down. They would be rooted up, pulled down, destroyed, thrown down. But Jeremiah was also responsible for building and planting, which means to bring in a new civilization and new nations. God was the one, knowing what was to happen, to bring in a fundamental change in the civilization of the past, and bring in a new civilization that people never heard of before.

Jeremiah was the kingpin prophet in all this. It was put into action somewhat by Daniel in Babylon. This occurred a few years later when Daniel saw Nebuchadnezzar after the King had his dream of the Golden

⁵ Many have mistakenly taken to themselves commissions given to others. Commissions given to Noah, Jonah, Jeremiah, or others, were given only to those individuals. In fact, most commissions are special and belong only to those persons God designated them to fulfill. How many have taken on commissions which God never intended them to do? DWS

Image. This Babylonian kingdom, no matter what type of dress it might have, such as Persian, such as Greek, or Roman, or European, or Japanese, or African, or even British or American, it would still be essentially a Babylonian image that would continue to exist until the stone comes down to destroy it, or as we know, until the Second Coming of Christ.

Did It Happen in History?

In the Bible are all types of prophecies about kingdoms which were as familiar, before the time of Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah, as are Germany, Spain, Italy, Britain, France and the United States today. But after Jeremiah, those kingdoms were seldom thought of anymore. They were so out of mind that people forgot them within a short 100 years.

I repeat, how many of you have studied Isaiah about long prophecies on Moab and said, where in the world is Moab? What was Moab? In Isaiah's time it was just like talking about France today. Or, what about a sister nation such as Ammon — Moab and Ammon. That would be like Spain today. The Philistines are mentioned time and again in Old Testament prophecy. Where are the Philistines? Scholars are scratching their heads over those prophecies. Where are they? Where did they go? What happened to them? It seems that at the time of Jeremiah, a great many of the nations which were well-known before, totally disappeared almost without a trace. Yet the Bible speaks of them before this time just like you and I would speak of Germany and France today.

After the Babylonian image is revealed, history has its beginning as far as you and I are concerned. But in a college textbook on world history, how many pages will it have for the 3,500 years (as recorded in the Scripture) before Nebuchadnezzar? They will give about 10 pages out of a 500 page book.

Almost all books on ancient history start with Babylon or more particularly Persia or Greece which come immediately afterward. You find all types of information about Alexander the Great, an entire section. A college textbook, a major one, has to have at least 100 to 150 pages on Greece or you cannot understand our civilization today. Rome? Why that takes up another 100 to 150 pages for a major work of history.

- ***What about early European nations like Russia and Germany, England and France, and so forth?*** You cannot understand how they developed unless you know about Rome. The chain of civilization goes back to Babylon. Before that time most people say such knowledge is not essential, forget about it. Most chronologies of the earlier period have no conception of what occurred much before Nebuchadnezzar.
- ***Was Jeremiah's commission "to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to demolish" (Jeremiah 1:10) accomplished? Yes!***
- ***What about the second or "B" point to this commission, "... to build and to plant" (verse 10)? Was there building and planting? Yes again! Our modern civilizations began around the 5th and 6th centuries BC. This is exactly what the Bible says.***

Jeremiah's Prophecy of Destruction

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 25. This is almost the middle chapter of the book of Jeremiah. Prior to this, Jeremiah gave many prophecies on the destruction of Judah and other nations round about. But chapter 25 is where he gives an epitome of the destruction coming, not only to nations adjacent to Israel, but to nations throughout the entirety of the earth. Look at Jeremiah 25:15–16,

"For thus says Yahweh Elohim of Israel to me: 'Take this cup of wine (that of fury) from My hand, and give it to all the nations to drink, to whom I am sending you. When they drink, then they will reel and rave because of the sword that I am sending among them.'"

A sword is a symbol of war. It means a great destruction by war. The nations will be angry, shaken, moved visibly. They will drink of ***"this cup of wine (that of fury)"*** coming from God's hands. Note verse 25:17:

“So I took the cup from the hand of Yahweh, and I gave it to all the nations to drink, to whom Yahweh had sent me.”

I ask this question: *to what nations was Jeremiah sent?* He lists them beginning at Jerusalem. Remember that in **“this cup of wine (that of fury),”** Jeremiah is not only putting into action God’s commission of destroying nations, but also his commission **“to build and to plant.”**

What was the first nation he was sent to? Jeremiah 25:18 says the prophet was first sent to:

“Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and her kings and her chief officials, to make them [1] a waste, [2] a desolation, [3] a hissing [scorn] and [4] a malediction [curse], as at this day.”

The first nation and kingdom was Judah, starting at Jerusalem. It will result in destruction of the kings, princes, and all the cities of Judah in total desolation. But he does not stop there. Note verse 19, **“... Pharaoh king of Egypt and his courtiers [servants], his chief officials and all his people.”** They will also drink of **“this cup of wine (that of fury)”** of God. What happens to Jerusalem and Judah will happen to Pharaoh. Verse 20,

“... all the mixed multitude [the people around Egypt] and all the kings of the land of Uz [east of the Jordan River], and all the kings of the land of the Philistines [on the eastern Mediterranean seacoast], [1] Ashkelon, [2] Gaza and [3] Ekron, and the remnant of [4] Ashdod ...”

Those were four of the Philistine cities (the fifth city of Gath is not mentioned). They will also drink the wine cup of the fury of God. They will be angry, moved, be drunk, and they will be destroyed.

You must put that all together because that is what the Scripture means. Look at Jeremiah 25:21–22. Jeremiah was also sent to,

“Edom, Moab, the children of Ammon and all the kings of Tyrus [Tyre], all the kings of Zidon. And the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea.”

They will be destroyed too. Even the Phoenician colonies in the western Mediterranean, going out to North Africa and Europe, would be brought to destruction. Verse 23: **“... Dedan, Tema and Buz, and all who cut away the edge of their hair.”** These lands are close to the Arabian desert. Indeed look at verse 24,

“... all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who tabernacle in the wilderness [the desert].”

They will also drink of **“this cup of wine (that of fury)”** of God.

Jeremiah 25:25, **“... all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam and all the kings of the Medes.”** The ancient Elamite kingdom was the same area as Persia in later time. But how many of us ever heard of the kingdom of Elam? Elam existed from fewer than 100 years after the Flood to the time of Jeremiah and Nebuchadnezzar as one of the mighty powers in the Near East, east of the Mesopotamian area. Jeremiah was sent to Elam. You never hear of Elam afterward. It was gone.

Not only was Jeremiah to go way east to the Elamites, but it says, **“... and all the kings of the Medes.”** The Medes were north of the Elamites, within and somewhat south of the Caucasus Mountains. Going on, verse 26, **“... and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another ...”** Note how extensive Jeremiah’s commission was.⁶ Look at the middle part of verse 26, **“... each after his brother, and all the kingdoms of the earth that are on the surface of the ground [Hebrew, *ha-adamah*], and the king of Sheshak, he shall drink after them.** His commission stretched out to the entirety of the earth. All kingdoms were to drink of **“the wine cup of this fury”** of God. All were to undergo waste, desolation, hissing [scorn] and malediction [a curse] (verse 25:18).

The Prophecy for Babylon

It says here, **“... and the king of Sheshak shall drink after them”** (Jeremiah 25:26). Sheshak [spelled

⁶ Did Jeremiah personally deliver YHWH’s message to all these places? He may have done so with God’s protection. DWS

Sheshach in the King James Version] is a cipher or code for Babylon, and all scholars recognize this.⁷ It means the King of Babylon would be the last to drink of “**the wine cup of this fury**” of God. It does not say how long after the others Babylon would drink of the cup, does it? [Read more on Sheshak at “[The Rebirth of Babylon.](#)”]

We can know how long from the vision God gave to Nebuchadnezzar about the Head of Gold. It would be until Babylon itself would drink from the cup. We also know that when the stone is cut out of that mountain and rolls down the hill, and strikes the Babylonian image on its toes, on its base, it falls over and is destroyed. That is when Babylon will be destroyed, finally, just as these other nations were destroyed much earlier. That has not happened yet in history.

We know that Babylon was taken over by the Medes and the Persians. But you know something? The city of Babylon was not destroyed at all. It was built up after that time. Alexander the Great took it over from the Medes and the Persians. Did he destroy Babylon? No. He continued to build it up for a short time.

The Babylonian kingdom, the Babylonian system has not yet seen its destruction like these other kingdoms. Its “system” is still very much around, though actual Babylon has gone. However, the religious, political and economic philosophies that govern ancient Babylon at the beginning of the Axial Period still govern our society today, and will not end until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

This is why Babylon “**shall drink after them**” — in fact, long after them. It has not happened yet but it will find its destruction as totally as the others had their destruction. The next Axial Period will come at the end of the age at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. A new civilization will emerge when He comes, just as one began when Nebuchadnezzar started his rule in Babylon.

“You will say to them [all the nations listed], **‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, Elohim of Israel: Drink** [of the cup of YHWH’s fury] **and be drunk and vomit, and fall so that you cannot rise, because of the sword** [war] **that I am sending among you.’”**

• *Jeremiah 25:27*

Some will not want to drink. But ...

And it will come to be when they [the nations] **refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you will say to them,**

‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts: You shall drink, yea drink; for behold, in the city over which My Name is called [Jerusalem], **I am starting to bring evil, and you, shall you be exempted, yea exempted? You shall not be exempted!** For I am calling a sword [war] **on all the dwellers of the earth, averring** [declaring] **is Yahweh of hosts.’”**

• *Jeremiah 25:28–29*

That destruction took place back then, spreading from nation to nation, it even went to India, though we have little record of it doing so. It even went to China. It had to. It spread into Europe, and Africa. It must have. We can demonstrate it from history, though particulars in the outer areas of the world are difficult to demonstrate. **“a sword** [war] **on all the dwellers of the earth, averring** [declaring] **is Yahweh of hosts.”**

“As for you, you shall prophesy to them all these words, and you will say to them:

‘Yahweh shall roar from the height, **And from His holy habitation He shall give forth His voice; He shall roar, yea roar over His homestead; He shall answer with a vintage-shout like the grape treads to all the dwellers of the earth. The tumult will come unto the end of the earth, For Yahweh has an indictment against the nations; He shall enter judgment upon all flesh; The wicked, He will deliver them to the sword** [war], **’ averring** [declaring] **is Yahweh.**

Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, And a great tempest is being roused from the remote parts of the earth. Those slain by Yahweh will be in that day from one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth; They shall not be bewailed

⁷ In the Hebrew alphabet listed vertically, start from the bottom up (instead of from the top down). Look at the second letter going up from the bottom and you get “Sh,” and double it (“Sh-sh”). DWS

nor gathered nor entombed; They shall become manure on the surface of the ground.”

• **Jeremiah 25:30–33**

Most commentators apply those last verses only to the future End Time. Those things will occur when Babylon is finally destroyed. It says here, **“Sheshak shall drink after them”** (Jeremiah 25:26). Sheshak has not gone through it yet. It will happen to Sheshak at the Second Coming of Christ. Most everyone ignores the time period in the 6th century BC when Jeremiah was told to prophesy. As I said earlier, this has been substantiated by historians, not in every detail, but in a general way, and in some instances quite specifically.

Karl Jaspers, Historical Philosopher

I will now give excerpts of a book by Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*.⁸ He wrote it first in German in 1949, later translated into English. Professor Jaspers lived into his 90s, dying in 1969. Jaspers was recognized as one of the greatest historical philosophers of our generation. That is without any doubt. Many works have been written about Karl Jaspers himself, and the philosophies he wrote about.

In my judgment he is one of the most profound observers of ancient history from a philosophical point of view. I must also say that Karl Jaspers was not what you would call a religionist. He was a man who believed perhaps there is a God, and perhaps there is not. He was not certain. He was not an evangelical. Notice what he says on page 1 of his Introduction to what he calls the “Axial Period,” the very time we are talking about here, the time of Jeremiah, and the time when the Head of Gold began. He is trying to view this period of time strictly from historical evidence and not at all from biblical evidence.

“It would seem that this Axis of History is to be found in the period around 500 B.C., in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 B.C.”

• **Jaspers, Origin, 1**

So, Jaspers puts the “Axis of History,” in the middle of that 600 year period.

“It is there that we meet with the most deep cut dividing line in history. ... Man as we know him today⁹ came into being. For short, we may style this the ‘Axial Period.’”

• **Jaspers, Origin, 1**

Farther on he speaks about Jeremiah’s time,

“The thousands of years-old ancient civilizations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period which melts them down, assimilates them, or causes them to sink from view.”

• **Jaspers, Origin, 6** (italics are Jaspers’)

“It was an age of simultaneous destruction and creation.”

• **Jaspers, Origin, 5**

To me that is a most remarkable statement from a secular historian, because Jeremiah 1:10 says that God sent him [Jeremiah] **“to root out, pull down, to destroy and throw down,”** and also **“to build and to plant.”** And what does Professor Jaspers say here? **“It was an age of simultaneous destruction and creation.”** That is absolutely true. Jeremiah chapter 25 shows Jeremiah’s close personal involvement in the overthrow of the ancient world, and it was a comprehensive involvement. Jaspers goes on by saying, quote,

“The conception of the Axial Period furnishes the questions and the standards with which to approach all preceding and subsequent developments.”

• **Jaspers, Origin, 8**

That is rather involved language, so it must be pointed out what he is talking about here. The Axial Period not

⁸ Dr. Martin quotes from the 1953 edition of Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale Univ, Press). DWS

⁹ That means our present civilization and our basic cultural values. DWS

only furnishes the questions, but also gives the standards for the **“preceding”** generations and also the **“subsequent developments.”**

That is absolutely true if we look at the Bible. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar **“You are this head of gold”** (Daniel 2:38). Then comes the Medo-Persian Empire, finally the Greco-Macedonian, the Seleucid, the Roman empires and so forth, and European Kingdoms. We must also include the Chinese, Indian, and other empires. It is interesting, our standard of civilization today goes all the way back through Rome, Greece, Persia, to where? To Babylon. This is exactly what Jaspers said happened (without acknowledging Biblical revelation). It furnishes the standards by which we approach subsequent developments.

It also tells us what happened before, **“The outlines of the preceding civilizations dissolve”** (Jaspers, Origin, 8). They are gone. Ancient civilizations: Assyrian, Egyptian, Hittite, Elamite, Midianite, Phoenician, Philistine, Ammonite, Moabite, etc., all of them, Jaspers says, they all dissolved. And that was what Jeremiah was to bring about, the dissolution of these empires.

“The peoples [and the earlier civilizations] that bore them vanish from sight [in history] as they join in the movement of the Axial Period.”

• Jaspers, Origin, 8

This is interesting because Professor Jaspers did write that a great external power must have had a hand in bringing to pass this new and totally different civilization, the social system that we are accustomed to today. Look at this next interesting quote by Jaspers,

“It might seem as though I were out to prove a direct intervention on the part of the Deity, without saying so openly. By no means.”

• Jaspers, Origin, 18

Of course, he does not want to do that because he does not believe it. If you read Jeremiah and Daniel you would find that it is true. The hand of the Almighty God was in it.

“... the Axial Period is in the nature of a miracle, in so far as no really adequate explanation is possible within the limits of our present knowledge.”

• Jaspers, Origin, 18

Why should all of the ancient civilizations perish? And why should we have brand new civilizations coming up? It is incomprehensible. So Jaspers puts it in the realm of a miracle. No wonder he says it looks like a mighty power, the Deity, has something to do with this. Jaspers continues,

“If the Axial Period gains in importance with the degree to which we immerse ourselves in it, the question arises: Is this period, or its creation, the yardstick for all that follows?”

• Jaspers, Origin, 18 (underline emphasis is Jaspers’)

The answer is yes. It is the yardstick or standard **“for all that follows.”** Nebuchadnezzar was the Head of Gold — the standard. Coming out of him will be a standard of civilization until the Second Coming of Christ.

The Book of Revelation still calls our system Babylon!¹⁰ Babylon gave the standard for the world after the destruction of the old civilizations. Everything else that follows, including the 10 toes at the end of this age, have a Babylonian, philosophical basis to them. That is why the Book of Revelation calls our endtime **“Babylon.”** It has not been destroyed yet. Sheshak must wait for the rock or stone to come down to destroy it (Babylon) — just like these former kingdoms vanished into dust.

¹⁰ At the end of the age there will be a world capital city in the Middle East. See the information about physical Babylon in [“The Rebirth of Babylon,”](#) [“More on Rebuilding Babylon,”](#) [“Will Babylon be Rebuilt?”](#) and [“Is America Babylon?”](#) A new physical Babylon will arise, but there will be another capital city. See Dr. Martin’s 1974 article [“Mystery Babylon the Great.”](#) Jerusalem will control the entire earth in the religious realm of the Babylonian system. God calls it “Mystery Babylon” because it is the last remnant of this image from Daniel chapter 2 that has the term Babylon on it. DWS

New Beginnings of the Axial Age

“In this age were born the fundamental categories within which we still think today¹¹ and the beginnings of the world religion, by which human beings still live, were created. The step into universality was taken in every sense.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 2*

In other words, the idea of one world religion and one world government were unified and started at the time of Nebuchadnezzar. **“For the first time philosophers appeared”** (Jaspers, *Origin*, 3).

“What was later called reason and personality was revealed for the first time during the Axial Period.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 4*

“Mighty empires made great by conquest, arose almost simultaneously in China ..., in India ..., and in the West ... Everywhere the first outcome of the collapse was an order of technological and organizational planning.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 5*

There was a former collapse, then new mighty empires simultaneously began to appear. It is not only in Babylon, but it reached out into India and to China.

In Jeremiah 25:15–16 God says to Jeremiah, you are sent — whether he went to China or not is another point — but you are sent to all peoples on this earth and **“they shall drink.”** They will have their empires destroyed. But you shall plant and build too. This is what Jaspers said happened. Other historians have noted the same thing. The next quote by Jaspers cites a French historian:

“It cannot possibly be an accident that, 600 years before Christ, Zarathustra [Zoroaster] in Persia, Gahatma Buddha in India, Confucius in China, the prophets in Israel, King Numa in Rome [a philosopher and religious innovator] and the first philosophers — Ionians, Dorians and Eleatics — in Hellas [Greece], all made their appearance pretty well simultaneously as reformers of the national religion.”¹²

• *Jaspers, Origin, 8*

New religions began at that time, based upon old in some cases, but new concepts came into existence. Israel certainly had a history before that, we know. But as far as these other religions are concerned, the world religions of Buddha and Confucius (Confucianism is a type of philosophy cum religion). China never heard of these things before, and India never heard of them before, until this time. The standard of the world began with Babylon, **“You are this head of gold.”**

Jaspers gives a quote by Viktor von Strauss from 1870:

“During the centuries when Lao-tse and Confucius were living in China [in the 6th century BC], a strange movement of the spirit passed through all civilized peoples. In Israel Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel were prophesying in a renewed generation (521–516) the Second temple [a new beginning for Judaism] was erected in Jerusalem. Among the Greeks, Thales [the first real Greek astronomer] was still living. ... In Persia an important reformation of Zarathustra’s [Zoroaster] ancient teaching seems to have been carried through, and India produced Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 8–9*

All in this same period. These are the religious philosophies and beliefs that dominate Asia and the West today. It all stems from Babylon. Note this next quote,

¹¹ Meaning our philosophies, our way of looking at things. Jaspers says, **“Human beings dared to rely on themselves as individuals. ... Man proved capable of contrasting himself inwardly with the entire universe”** (Jaspers, *Origin*, 3). *ELM*

¹² Jaspers is quoting from Ernst von Lasaulx’s *Neuer Versuch einer Philosophie der Geschichte* (Munich: 1856), p. 115. *DWS*

“The mystery of the simultaneous inception [all around the world] of the Axial Period appears to me to be situated at a much deeper level than the problem of birth of the ancient civilizations. In the first place, the simultaneity is much more exact ...”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 14*

In the Axial Period, they seem to emerge instantaneously and simultaneously — everywhere.

“... and, in the second [place] it relates to spiritual, historical developments in the whole conscious, thinking aspect of humanity.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 14*

In other words the mind is now involved in new concepts arising. And it all started with the Head of Gold, and that came from God’s Word. Now in the next quote it says,

“But that which is familiar to us [today, our philosophical and religious thinking] only starts with the new age of the break-through.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 52*

He means the axial period, that is where the standards began. The last Jaspers’ quote is this,

“To them, it was a second birth, so to speak, and through it they laid the foundations of man’s spiritual being and his [that is, our] present history properly so-called. The axial peoples are the Chinese, Indians, Iranians, Jews and Greeks.”

• *Jaspers, Origin, 51*

These quotes to me are just dumbfounding. They are true and right, looked at through the eyeglasses of historians (not only Jaspers, he quoted others as well). People have noted this Axial Period of history whether you believe the Bible or not. But is it not interesting, the Bible said a man was to be raised up, before he was born, to tear down, and to build and to plant.

During that time King Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had this dream, Daniel interpreted it for him and said, you are the first world empire that God will recognize, **“You are this head of gold.”** Your philosophies, your ideas, being the Head, will permeate this entire system. It will last for a long time until the next Axial Period takes place, when the stone comes down and destroys this Babylonian civilization, which has spread everywhere. The last Babylon, Sheshak, will have his judgment and the drinking of the wine fury of the Cup of God, at the Second Coming of Christ. Soon we will be coming into a new Axial Period. It will be more profound than any that has happened in the history of the world.

The important thing to recognize is this: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others were written at the very beginning of what historians tell us was the Axial Period. These biblical writers would have no way of knowing that all these early empires like the Elamites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, Egyptians and the rest, would end all of a sudden, and a new system develop. How would they have known that living in their time? They were told by Almighty God. Everyone was told at the very beginning of its occurrences.

This shows that God is controlling the destiny of nations and humans on this earth. When He says in prophecy that things will take place (though we may think they are not occurring in the way we want), they will occur. Look at history and compare it with the Bible, Jeremiah and Daniel, and you will see that the two dovetail remarkably.

Karl Jaspers was right when he said it looks like there was an intervention by the deity in this period here. It was a miracle. But I will tell you, God is about to intervene down here very shortly. This time it will not only be Karl Jaspers and other historical philosophers who will see these things, but the whole world will finally know that a new Axial Period is arriving when Jesus Christ comes back to this earth.

Questions to Ask

I want to ask a few questions. First of all: ***How extensive was the destruction in the Axial Period?*** I think we are all aware that Jerusalem and Judea, indeed all of the central Palestinian region, was virtually wiped

out. People were taken captive, cities left in ruins, and it has been proved archeologically so there is no doubt about it. It was no wonder that the people had to go to Babylon and stay some 70 years before they could come back. The land was in such total desolation that it was almost impossible for anyone to make any living in Palestine once the destruction by the Babylonians took place. What Jeremiah said was going to happen did take place, and there can be no doubt about that.

What about the other nations round about? As you will recall, in Jeremiah 25 the prophet was sent to all the nations of the world, near and far. They were all to drink of the winecup of the fury of God, which would result in waste, desolation, and things like that.

How extensive was the destruction in the Axial Period? Do we have more biblical evidence of the destruction? The answer is yes. Look at Egypt. Of all the nations of the ancient world we would have to recognize Egypt as one of the greatest. Going back to immediately after the Flood, Egypt became very powerful. Pyramids began to be built not long after the Flood. By Joseph's time and the time the Israelites were in Egypt, there was a tremendous amount of monumental building which lasted for some time.

When you look at Egypt today, or rather the ruins of Egypt, anyone has to acknowledge that it was one of the major nations or empires of the ancient world. But in this period of the Axial time when Jeremiah was prophesying that God would wipe out the nations of the world, Egypt was no exception. We have prophecies by Ezekiel concerning Egypt.¹³ He talks of the destruction of Egypt in an even more profound way than Jeremiah. Look at Ezekiel 29:8–10:

“... thus says my Lord Yahweh: Behold, I shall bring a sword against you [Egypt], and I will cut off from you human and beast, so that the land of Egypt will become a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am Yahweh. Because you say, ‘The waterway [the Nile] is mine, and I made it,’

therefore behold, I am against you and against your waterways [canals and tributaries of the Nile]; and I will give over the land of Egypt to waste, sword and desolation from Migdol to Syene and as far as the boundary of Cush [Ethiopia].”

That means from the top of the delta region where the Nile flowed into the Mediterranean, down to the southern borders of Egypt. All of Egypt will be utterly waste and desolate. Look at Ezekiel 29:11:

“No foot of a human [adam] shall pass through it, and no foot of a beast shall pass through it, and it shall not be indwelt for forty years.”

As for Judea and Jerusalem a 70-year period was to pass over that area. But with Egypt, it was to be only a 40 year period of complete and utter destruction, at the time of the Axial Period [when it began]:

“I will give over the land of Egypt to desolation in [within] the midst of desolated lands, and her cities shall become a desolation in the midst of deserted cities forty years. [1] I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and [2] toss them away among the lands. For thus says my Lord Yahweh:

‘At the end of forty years I shall convene the Egyptians from the peoples where they are scattered. [1] I will reverse the captivity of Egypt, and [2] I will restore them to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin. There they will be a lowly kingdom.’”

• **Ezekiel 29:12–14**

No longer would they glory and exult among the nations of the world. The people would return to Egypt after that 40-year period, but they would go to the original birthplace, Pathros the central area of Egypt. The Bible and even history show that the nation of Egypt immediately after the Flood, began existence in the central area near Pathros.

¹³ Ezekiel was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. Both were alive in the 6th century BC before the axial period began. *ELM*

Now Egyptians returned to this central area, they were to thrive again, but only in the manner of a base kingdom. Egypt has never returned to its former greatness. They could never again build pyramids as before. Under the Persians they were relatively base. Under the Greeks they were that way. In the Roman period they regained some power, but Rome and other areas of the Roman empire eclipsed them as far as power and glory were concerned. In later periods Egypt never rose above other nations. To this day in 1975 [when Dr. Martin wrote this article] Egypt is not among the powerful nations of the world.¹⁴

If you want to know how it was in the days of Egyptian greatness, go to Egypt, look at the remains, and you will stand in awe and admiration of what the ancient Egyptians were able to accomplish. Since the time of the Axial Period they have never been a major power. They truly became base.

Look at the nations east of Jordan like Moab and Ammon and Edom. They were always reckoned as warlike powers. Their country was very good; it had great agricultural potential as we find this in the book of Isaiah. But after the Axial Period we find much of their land turned into desert, not at all productive, with the people becoming more or less nomadic in the region.

The only area to come out of the Axial Period unscathed (because it was head over all from that time forward), was the area of Babylon. This is according to the Bible, but history substantiates that Babylon survived. Babylon became the capital of the world when the rest of the nations were destroyed. Egypt was eclipsed, Moab and Ammon and Edom and Tyre, as well as Israel and Judah and Syria, other areas were destroyed or set in a very, very low condition.

The one that came out the highest was Babylon. Even when the Babylonian empire was transferred to the Persians according to the book of Daniel, the city of Babylon was not destroyed, it was still the world capital. After the Persian period was over and Alexander the Great came and established Greco-Macedonian leadership and suzerainty in the area of Babylon, the city was still not destroyed. It continued on. It began to decay through neglect, but the basic philosophy of Babylon passed down to Persia and from there to Greece. Greece passed it to Rome, and Rome passed it down to us today.¹⁵

Babylon became the Head of Gold because all competing nations were virtually wiped out, leaving only one nation, Babylon, exactly as Jeremiah and Daniel said would occur. Almost all of our modern arts, whether they be literature, medicine, science, history, philosophy, sculpture, architecture or even religions, seem to begin just during or immediately after this Axial Period. Remember that Jeremiah was also **“to plant and to build.”**¹⁶ The building and the planting was a worldwide construct, as well as the destroying and the pulling down. That was worldwide also.

Jeremiah was the key prophet in accomplishing all of this. Daniel helped in the process as well. But looking at our modern age today, the arts and sciences that you and I are familiar with, all look to ancient history to find when these arts had their origin. Almost all of them can be traced back to the 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6th century BC, but that is about as far back as you can go.¹⁷ For example ...

More Questions About the Origins of Our Civilization

- ***Who Was the First Epic Poet?*** It was Homer. Some people put him around the 6th century BC. Others put him earlier, it is true, but not much earlier.
- ***Who Was the Father of History?*** Surely there were many historians that wrote before Herodotus, the

¹⁴ At the very end of the age, prophecy says Egypt will get gold and silver and other wealth. Perhaps there may be a major oil or gold discovery in Egypt, but that is at the very end of our age, when the 10 toes come into existence as in Daniel. *DWS*

¹⁵ Dr. Martin's book [*The People That History Forgot*](#) explains how the religious teachings of Babylon were transmitted through heretical Christianity. *DWS*

¹⁶ This has nothing to do with British-Israelism. *DWS*

¹⁷ Perhaps you can go back to the 8th century BC with Homer, who was the father of epic poetry, but most of the arts and sciences, the major religions we know today that make up our civilizations, the way we think and act, all have their genesis after the Axial Period. It is difficult to penetrate beyond that time historically. *ELM*

Father of History. He lived in the 5th century BC. The biblical narratives certainly are historical, but secular history as we know it today began during the Axial Period.

- ***Who Was the Father of Medicine?*** Almost all people have seen the Hippocratic Oath in doctor's offices, named after Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine. Here again this takes you to the 5th century BC, coming immediately out of the Axial Period.
- ***Who Was the Father or the Founder of Geometry?*** His name was Euclid. Again a Greek, but coming out of the period of the Axial times.
- ***Who Was the Father of Geography?*** Strabo, 1st century BC it is quite true. But most of his evidence goes back to people who lived no earlier than the Axial Period, back to the 5th or the 6th centuries BC.
- ***When Did Philosophy Begin?*** The philosophies you or I are familiar with today started about the time of Socrates, in the 5th or late 6th century BC. There were certainly pre-Socratic philosophers, that is quite true [Solomon was a philosopher], but all these were at a time very near to Socrates himself. Almost all Gentile philosophies you and I are familiar with came out of the Axial Period, not before.

The great ruins of ancient Egypt were built before the Axial Period. There *must* have been ancient mathematicians long before Euclid. There must have been physicians, of great prominence in those earlier days. We know that is a fact. We know there were historians back there. We know there were all types of these artists and scientists. They had to have been around. But, if you have a world completely destroyed, all of those men's names vanish. Who then becomes the Father of Medicine, the Father of History, the Father of Geography or the Father of this or that, it would be people who lived *after* the Axial Period? The new "fathers" get the credit because almost all the former records were destroyed.

Our modern history begins with Babylon in the 6th century BC just as the Bible prophesied. Nebuchadnezzar, **"You are this Head of Gold."** That is when our present civilization began. Babylon has been with us since then in its various stages and various dresses. It is quite true, different areas of the world have come up to power, but all within the Babylonian philosophy of things.

Babylon will continue to exist until the next Axial Period occurs. That will be at the Second Coming of Christ. Just as civilizations in the time of Jeremiah were completely and utterly destroyed and a new civilization came up that we are familiar with today, when Jesus Christ comes the second time and establishes His way on this earth, believe me, there will be such a difference between the two that there will be for all practical purposes a new earth. All I can say is, God speed that day.

Ernest L. Martin, 1975

Edited by David Sielaff, October 2020

Two follow-up articles by Dr. Martin expand the historical background and information in Daniel: "[Origin and Goal of Western Civilization, Part 1](#)," and "[Origin and Goal of Western Civilization, Part 2](#)." DWS

Below is the complete and important quote from [page 8](#) of Karl Jaspers' *The Origin and Goal of History*, which was divided in Dr. Martin's analysis of the Axial Age concept in context with Jeremiah's prophecies.

"To sum up: The conception of the Axial Period furnishes the questions and the standards with which to approach all preceding and subsequent developments. The outlines of the preceding civilizations dissolve. The peoples that bore them vanish from sight as they join in the movement of the Axial Period. The prehistoric peoples remain prehistoric until they merge into the historical movement that proceeds from the Axial Period, or die out. The Axial Period assimilates everything that remains. From it world history receives the only structure and unity that has endured — at least until our own time."

- **Jaspers, Origin, 8** [underline mine, DWS]