

he united with Egypt against Assyria. Nabuchodonosor then hastened to Jerusalem which he took after a siege of two years. Sedecias was punished by having his eyes torn out, and was then led into captivity to Babylon together with all the inhabitants except the poor, the vine-dressers and the husbandmen who were allowed to remain in Judea. The Temple was destroyed, the walls of Jerusalem were thrown down and the houses burned. Nabuchodonosor then invaded Egypt and gained great victories over Neeho but did not succeed in wholly crushing his power.

During times of peace Nabuchodonosor did a great deal for the welfare of the nation, and to him Babylon is indebted for this period of prosperity. The last years of his life were devoted to the building of walls around the city, the reconstruction of temples and the repairing of the irrigation system.

Babylon could boast of well laid out streets, high dwellings, temples, sumptuous palaces, hanging gardens, and extensive terraces which rose one above the other on pillars and arches. Trees were planted on each terrace and from a distance, these groves, thus arranged in the form of an amphitheatre, might have been taken for forests on the mountain-side.

Nabuchodonosor's victories and works over-elated him. To show him the futility of his power, God deprived him of his reason. This insanity lasted seven years, during which time the Queen Nitocris wisely ruled the empire.

End of the Babylonian Empire. — 26. The glory of the Babylonian Empire waned with Nabuchodonosor. In 538 B. C., Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, invaded Chaldea which was poorly defended by Balthassar.

The Persians, having turned the waters of the Euphrates from their course, entered Babylon during a night of revelry and took the city by storm. A hundred and fifty years before this event, the prophet Isaiah had foretold the fall of Babylon with such a precision of details that it might be taken for history rather than for prophecy : Chap. XLVII, 1-II. Chap. XLV, 2. Chap. XXI.