

Give the paragraph a title

Structured Reading— Nebuchadnezzar

Summarise the paragraph into a sentence

Highlight the key information in the paragraph—never highlight more than 6 words at a time

Nabopolassar had formed his empire through conquest by 616 BCE and Nebuchadnezzar II drew on these resources to strengthen and enlarge his armed forces as well as engage in building projects. He took over all of the former regions of the Assyrian Empire and crushed whatever resistance was offered. In 598/597 BCE he marched on the Kingdom of Judah in Canaan and destroyed its capital city of Jerusalem, sending the citizens of the city back to Babylon. Further resistance by Judah resulted in another round of military campaigns between 589-582 BCE which destroyed the kingdom and scattered the population.

Nebuchadnezzar then engaged in monumental building projects which developed and improved 13 of his cities completely but he put the greatest effort into the most famous: Babylon. By 600 BCE, Babylon was so impressive it was considered the center of the world. A clay tablet dating to this time describes the ancient world revolving around Babylon.

The great temples and monuments were improved and made accessible by new roads and special attention was given to the creation of the Processional Way for the Festival of Marduk during which the god's statue was taken from the temple and paraded through the city and out beyond the gates. This road was 70 feet (21 meters) wide and ran from the temple complex in the heart of the city out through the Ishtar Gate in the north, a considerable distance of over half a mile (nearly a kilometer) in length with walls rising over fifty feet (15.2 meters) on either side.

These were decorated with over 120 images of lions, dragons, bulls, and flowers in gold. Nebuchadnezzar II was especially proud of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way and left an inscription describing them and his reason for creating them which reads, in part, how he had the gates made. The walls of Babylon and the Ishtar Gate were considered so impressive that some ancient writers claimed they should have been included on the list of the Seven Wonders. Babylon was included on that list but for a different attraction: the Hanging Gardens.

The Hanging Gardens are the only one of the ancient Seven Wonders whose existence is disputed (argued over) because no archaeological evidence has been found of them and, further, the only known reports of them come from after Babylon's fall. Even more significantly, the famous East India House Inscription - a piece of praise written by Nebuchadnezzar II himself boasting of his beautification (making something beautiful) of the city makes no mention of the Hanging Gardens.

Even though no physical evidence of the Hanging Gardens has been found at Babylon, there is no reason to believe that Nebuchadnezzar II would not – or could not – have built them there. Scholar Paul Kriwaczek notes: *Nebuchadnezzar marked the city's regained status by raising it to its greatest prominence ever. He made it the largest, the most splendid, and in some eyes the most glamorous city the world had ever seen. (262)*

Although there is no doubt this is true – almost every ancient writer addresses Babylon with a tone of awe and reverence – it was not an opinion shared by all and, unfortunately for Babylon's reputation, those who did not would become the most widely-read source on the city: the Hebrew scribes responsible for the narratives of the Bible.