

year, conquering peoples that had quite different languages and culture, some of whom had been separated from them by hundreds of miles. Within the Assyrian empire any individual or group was fairly safe from molestation, provided he submitted to the central authority, though there was always the danger that an individual might be drafted into the Assyrian army to fight for additional conquests.

The Assyrian kings introduced principles of "frightfulness" in controlling the people they conquered, punishing with terrible cruelty any group that revolted and often moving large groups of conquered people from one area to another. Among their conquests were the Syrian (or, more accurately, Aramean) kingdom, with its capital at Damascus, and the northern Israelite kingdom, with its capital at Samaria.

Although Babylon was never happy under Assyrian domination, its language and culture were fundamentally the same as those of its conquerors. Eventually Nabopolassar, the viceroy of Babylon, revolted against the Assyrians, and, in league with the Medes, a people outside the Assyrian empire, he attacked and destroyed the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, put a final end to the Assyrian empire at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., and himself continued the tyrannical methods that had been characteristic of the Assyrians. In the course of his extensive military activities he conquered the southern Israelite kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, and carried away its people into captivity in distant lands.

It is quite reasonable to think of Nebuchadnezzar's power as a continuation of the Assyrian empire, which it so closely resembled in language, culture and methods of operation, and to consider the two together as the first great empire.

Nebuchadnezzar was followed by a series of weak kings. A few years after Nebuchadnezzar's death the ruler of a small section of the group of tribes that had been under the domination of the Medes gained his independence and then brought all the Medes under his authority. His name was Cyrus, and the area he originally ruled was known as Persia. Cyrus led his armies west and north, conquering most of