



Among the last and most important conquests of the Persian king Cyrus was Babylon, perhaps the world's greatest commercial center at the time. As shown above, the city's seven-storied ziggurat — recorded in the Bible as the Tower of Babel — dominated an enclosed sacred precinct located near a bridge spanning the Euphrates. Opposite the ziggurat, another huge temple housed the statue of Marduk, most esteemed of the Babylonian gods. Cyrus proved a tolerant conqueror: When he entered Babylon in 539 BC, he ordered his troops to show respect for the city's temples and religious customs.