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CYRUS, AN ANNOITED ONE

By M.B. Hammond Jr.

We read in Biblical history about a great emperor who was charged by God to return Jews to Jerusalem in Judah, to rebuild the temple foundations, and to return back to living under God's law.

Cyrus the Great became emperor of the Persian Empire in 538 BC. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24th Edition, puts Cyrus the Great as reigning over Persia from 538-529 BC. He conquered Greece, Assyria and Egypt, making up the Empire of Persia. The Persian Empire became greater in its holdings than any previous empire. One of the first acts of Cyrus was to authorize and fund the return of the Hebrews to their own land and Jerusalem. Cyrus did not want them as slaves, but rather as self-governing people and paying tribute (about 537 BC). This special kindness to Israel may indicate why God has honored Cyrus as His anointed in Isaiah 45:1. Jeremiah had predicted that there would be 70 years of exile (Jer. 25: 11) before God's people would be returned to the land. Daniel, the prophet, had been among the first group to be exiled to Babylon (Dan. 1:1-3, 606 BC). Some 40,000 Jews returned to Judah after the proclamation of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2-6, 536 BC) and the temple foundation was laid, but the temple was not completed until 516 BC (70 years after the destruction of Solomon's temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC). The Jews had been hindered by neighboring countries which opposed reconstruction and intimidated them. The work had been stopped until the second year of Darius I (521-485 BC), King of Persia, who found a copy of Cyrus' proclamation. The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, were sent by God (in 520 BC) to get the temple finished and consecrated for the worship of the living God. Much is said in the Bible about God's desire to live there among His people. God's love for Cyrus was apparent. When conquering large and small countries, he placed people of the land in positions of authority that were competent to rule and who were loyal to him. The Lord later gave

Isaiah a knowledge of how this foreigner, Cyrus, will help in the future kingdom of God, keeping order and moving other peoples to new places so the Hebrews can have a large plot of land that God is planning to give them (see Ezek. 48).

The story of Cyrus' future work describes how God maintains order while He is teaching the Israelites about how they will represent Him in the premillennial Kingdom. Today, all of Israel's neighbors hate her and would like to destroy her. If the Kingdom came today there might be great outbreaks of violence, as large numbers of people would have to be removed and displaced throughout the world. As we see Cyrus' working as God's anointed in the future, we realize what a big job it really is.

The resurrection and return of the Jews to Jerusalem will occur in the future Kingdom. They will be trained to be a nation of priests. They will meet in the wilderness. They will be put in their proper lineages by the Prophet Elijah, who will be responsible for this undertaking (Malachi 4:56). He will also put the various tribes in their proper locations. (Read also *The Coming Greater Exodus*, by David R. Hettema. Also, see seedandbread.org, More Full Length Studies, No. 012.)

In Isaiah 44:28 (NASB throughout) the Lord, in a series of passages describing the powers of God, says, **It is I who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire." And He declares of Jerusalem, "She will be built," and of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid."** Such a promise had been followed with more detail in Isaiah 45, and the Jews (perhaps including Daniel) used these words of Isaiah, written in 712 BC, to convince Cyrus the Great, in 536 BC, that God had predicted his conquering of Babylon and other countries. Words like these in Isaiah 45 : 1-4 had a strong effect on Cyrus, **Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut. I will go before you, and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name: I have also given you a title of honor, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD and there is no other. The**

Scriptures gave the King of Persia the motivation to give freedom to the enslaved Jews to return to Jerusalem.

The prediction from Scripture that Cyrus would build the temple again could have convinced him to rebuild it. The proclamation of Cyrus-King of Persia said, **The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel, He is the God who is in Jerusalem. Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2-4).**

The Jews returned to Jerusalem, as recorded by the historian Ezra, and they got the foundations built before their construction was stopped by neighboring countries. The next Persian king, who was Cambyses, (529-522 BC) was not as accepting of God's will. It would be almost ten years before the next king, Darius I (521-485 BC), went back into the archives and found the Proclamation of Cyrus. He then empowered the Jews who had already started rebuilding under the urging of their prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.

This was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah, but not the final fulfillment, because it appears to be a double prophecy. Too many conditions of the prophecy in Isaiah 45 were not fulfilled, and it appears that the real fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is scheduled for the premillennial Kingdom of God.

The act of Cyrus to send the Jews back to Judah is documented in the book of Ezra and does not give evidence of satisfying back then the conditions written by Isaiah, following God's statements. In the future, the Lord is working with Cyrus to bring the nations to the place where they will live in peace with each other. Men are confused with the change of dispensation at the beginning of the Kingdom, and God is making His desire clear. God then instructs Cyrus: **I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hidden wealth of secret places; so that you may know it is I, the God of Israel Who calls you by your name.** God assures Cyrus he will be successful in bringing the treasures and hidden wealth of the world to provide for the temple construction, just as Isaiah 60:5 says that the wealth of the nations will come to you. The Lord then says, **For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name, I have given you a title of**

honor, though you have not known Me. It is evident from the verses quoted that the Lord will use Cyrus to remove the current residents, protect His land, and get the city of Jerusalem under construction before the Jews and Israel make their homes in Israel. Isaiah 60:10-12 says, **And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you, for in My wrath I struck you and in My favor I have had compassion on you. And your gates will be open continually, they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined.**

The passage in Isaiah 45:5-6 says: **I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God, I will gird you (Cyrus), though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other.** Thus Cyrus will be making me know about God and the Kingdom.

Here are some of the things that Jehovah says to make clear His intention with Cyrus and His works with men. Isaiah 45:8 says, **Drip down, o heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness; let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, and righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD have it. And Isaiah 45:11 says, Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his maker, "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, and you shall commit to Me the work of My hands."** Going on to Isaiah 45: 13: **I have aroused him in righteousness and I will make all of his ways smooth (Cyrus). He will build My city, and will let My exiles go free, without any payment or reward, says the LORD of hosts. Isaiah 45: 14 is more forceful about Cyrus; it says, Thus says the LORD, The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush (Ethiopia), and the Sabeans, men of stature, will come over to you, and will be yours; they will walk behind you, they will come over in chains, and will bow down to you; they will make supplication to you; surely, God is with you, and there is none else, no other God. The chapter ends with the exclamation of God: Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance; they will say of Me, "Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength."** Men will come to Him and all who were angry with Him will be put to shame. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified (made righteous) and will glory (Isa. 45:22-25).

This chapter suggests that the Lord will protect Israel from outside interference when He has taken them into the place of separation. This will

happen at the beginning of the Kingdom, and while there He will acquaint them with their service as priests of the Kingdom (Exod. 19:6). At that time they may be vulnerable to rebels who have not been yet excluded from the Kingdom. However, Cyrus' future strength will be seen not just as a defense, but actually reaching the Jewish people and bringing them into the work of rebuilding the temple and city of Jerusalem.

God used this ruler, Cyrus the Great, when the Jews rebuilt the foundations of the temple and Jerusalem in the past. In the future Kingdom of God, Cyrus will have another purpose in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, subduing nations around Israel and regathering Jews to rebuild it. He will be truly one of God's "anointed ones."

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