

## Isaiah 45

*Is. 45:1 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:*

God recorded valuable truth concerning *Cyrus* in Isaiah 44:28, but in Isaiah 45:1-7 He speaks directly to *Cyrus*. *Cyrus* was God's *anointed* in that he would be the man whom God would use to overthrow *nations* and free His people, Israel. Note: *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* defines "*anointed*" in the following manner:

**...usually a consecrated person (as a king, priest, or saint); specifically, the Messiah:**

*Cyrus* was a "type" of Messiah in that he would deliver the Jews physically from Babylon. However, Jesus the Messiah will bring both spiritual and physical deliverance to the nation in preparation for the Millennium. Jehovah would clear the way for *Cyrus*, for his enemies would be easily conquered, a fact which is recorded repeatedly in the historical record from *Cyrus'* day. There is no doubt that Jesus will easily conquer His enemies at the Second Coming (read Revelation 19:11-21).

*Is. 45:2 "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars.*

God would *make the rough places smooth* for *Cyrus* in that he would face little resistance from the nations he desired to conquer (this is in complete agreement with Isaiah 41:2-3; so you might want to read those notes). Even secular history from this period records that *Cyrus* took cities that other kings found impossible to infiltrate. With this in mind, it makes the phrase, "*I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars,*" quite interesting; for it points to Babylon, a city that was fortified beyond comprehension. One historian recorded that Babylon was a city possessing 100 gates of brass. From Daniel 5, it is obvious that the Medo-Persian Empire overthrew Babylon without resistance. Read the following quote from *Bible Knowledge Commentary*:

**The city had been under assault by *Cyrus*. In anticipation of a long siege the city had stored supplies to last for 20 years. The Euphrates River ran through the city from north to south, so the residents had an ample water supply. Belshazzar had a false sense of security, because the Persian army, led by Ugbaru, was outside Babylon's city walls. Their army was divided; part was stationed where the river entered the city at the north and the other part was positioned where the river exited from the city at the south. The army diverted the water north of the city by digging a canal from the river to a nearby lake.**

**With the water diverted, its level receded and the soldiers were able to enter the city by going under the sluice gate. Since the walls were unguarded the Persians, once inside the city, were able to conquer it without a fight. Significantly the defeat of Babylon fulfilled not only the prophecy Daniel made earlier that same night (5:28) but also a prophecy by Isaiah (Isa 47:1-5).**

Babylon fell to Cyrus in 538 BC.

*Is. 45:3 "And I will give you the treasures of darkness, And hidden wealth of secret places, In order that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

The *treasures* and *wealth* addressed in this verse probably point to the riches of Croesus, king of the Lydian Empire from 560 to 546 BC. When Cyrus overthrew King Croesus (at Sardis, the capital of the Lydian Empire) with ease, a vast amount of capital fell under Persian control. The following quote from Herodotus, a fifth century BC historian, confirms the swiftness with which Cyrus overthrew Croesus and took Lydia:

**Cyrus won a victory outside the walls of Sardis and the Lydians hoped for a long siege. Yet Cyrus swiftly manages to storm the place. Cyrus lets the army rape and pillage the town, yet he does restrain his men from total destruction. This is because he looks at the people as potential tax payers, not as a future enemy which shows good initiative.**

With the conquest of the Lydia Empire (v.3) in 546 BC, followed by the fall of the Babylonian Empire (v.2) in 538 BC, the Persian Empire, in control of the combined *wealth* of both of these defeated powers, was established as the major empire of the world. It was the Lord who had orchestrated these events in order to confirm to Cyrus who He was: "*In order that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name*" (Isaiah 45:3).

Although Cyrus believed that Jehovah had established him as a great ruler, he never accepted Him as the one and only God, as verse 4 confirms.

*Is. 45:4 "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.*

God *called* Cyrus by his *name* (some 150 years before his time) and gave him a *title of honor* for Israel's *sake*, the nation of *Israel* being God's *servant*, God's *chosen one*. (For more input concerning the term "*servant*," read the notes associated with Isaiah 41:8. For additional input relating to *Israel* being God's *chosen one*, read the notes associated with Isaiah 42:1.) God had prophesied through Jeremiah that the Jews would be in *Babylon* for *seventy years* (Jeremiah 25:11). Therefore, through God's assistance, Cyrus was allowed to overthrow the Babylonians so the Jews might return to their homeland (after exactly seventy years). Jehovah did all of this even though Cyrus did *not know* Him, as confirmed by the last phrase of Isaiah 45:4. (Cyrus also possessed a free will to choose as he pleased.) Truly, God is sovereign!

*Is. 45:5 "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;*

Jehovah again states that *no God* exists besides Himself. He also reiterates that He had granted power to Cyrus even though he had *not known* Him.

*Is. 45:6 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,*

Jehovah had also granted power to Cyrus so all mankind (nations) might *know* that He is the only true God. However, when you read the events that transpired subsequent to Cyrus' rise to power,

you find that the nations continued to reject the God of the Jews. How then is this apparent contradiction reconciled? Through the deeds of Cyrus, the Jews were allowed to return to their land. As a result, the Messiah would later be born, crucified, resurrected, taken up to the Father, and return at the Second Coming. It will be in conjunction with the Tribulation and Second Coming that all nations (on the earth at that time) will accept Jehovah as the only true God, fulfilling precisely the prophecy of Isaiah 45:6. Apparent contradiction resolved!

*Is. 45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.*

The phrases, “*The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity*” are interesting indeed. What we must realize is that the Persian religion in Cyrus’ day was Zoroastrianism. One school of thought within Zoroastrianism promoted a cosmic dualism which divided the one nature of the deity into two independent powers, forces, or gods. The following is taken from a website titled Religious Tolerance:

**One school of thought promotes a cosmic dualism between:**

- 1. An all powerful God Ahura Mazda who is the only deity worthy of being worshipped, and**
- 2. An evil spirit of violence and death, Ahriman, who opposes Ahura Mazda.**

**The resulting cosmic conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity who is required to choose which to follow. Evil, and the Spirit of Evil, will be completely destroyed at the end of time. Dualism will come to an end and Goodness will be all in all.**

With this in mind, note the last phrase of verse 7—“*I am the Lord who does all these.*” In other words, the God of the Jews is superior in that He need not be divided into two separate deities, for He, being totally sovereign and omnipotent, rules over all, even the powers of *darkness*. This is why He (Jehovah), who brings *light* and *well-being* upon the obedient, can, at the same time, bring *calamity* and *darkness* upon the disobedient—a principle witnessed throughout the Scriptures. The amazing thing is that God can bring all of this about with man possessing a free will to choose as he pleases.

Some have attempted to use Isaiah 45:7 to prove that God is the author of evil. There is a great difference between bringing *calamity* upon the disobedient through the use of the powers of darkness, which He does, versus being the author and source of evil. Even Romans 5:12 teaches that it was through Adam’s choice to disobey that *sin* (evil) *entered into the* realm of mankind (Romans 5:12); for Adam’s decision was blatant disobedience, not a result of being *deceived* (1Timothy 2:14). Consider the following as it relates to this subject matter.

If man does not possess a free will, then God is the author of evil (Adam would have been programmed to sin, God being the cause of his disobedience). However, if man possesses a free will, evil can be generated without God being responsible. And how can this be? Adam’s choice to rebel against God, freely (and intentionally) choosing to partake of the forbidden fruit (1Timothy 2:14), was the means *through* which evil *entered* into *man* (Romans 5:12). It is

interesting that even Satan, who tempted Adam in the first place, chose to rebel against *God* long before Adam came on the scene (read Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:14-15). Therefore, evil first came into existence through Satan's decision to rebel, but sin entered into man as a result of Adam's decision to rebel. Can we, therefore, afford to believe anything other than free will? If

not, then God is the author of evil, tarnishing His name and everything else associated with His impeccable character.

*Is. 45:8 ¶ "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 created it.*

God's ability to raise up Cyrus, for the purpose of ultimately bringing *salvation* through the Messiah, very much affects the future state of the *heavens* and *earth*. In association with the Messiah's reign in Jerusalem, the *heavens* and *earth* will be richly blessed as they bask in their ultimate fulfillment. They will have looked forward to this future blessing for some time (read Romans 8:19-22); for in conjunction with the Second Coming and reign of Christ, the *heavens* and *earth* will be renovated for the purpose of accommodating the truth present in the Messiah (read Isaiah 65:17 and Psalm 85:11-12). What a wonderful sight for the redeemed to behold throughout the Millennium! Therefore, in verse 8, Isaiah prays that the prophecies relating to this future time of blessing will be fulfilled.

*Is. 45:9 ¶ "Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?"*

Evidently, there were those who disagreed with God's choice of Cyrus as the man through whom Israel would be delivered from Babylon; for Cyrus was a heathen Gentile ruler who did not worship the God of the Jews. However, to disagree with the all-knowing Sovereign of the universe is equivalent to *the clay* disagreeing with *the potter*. Is not *the clay* subject to *the potter*—not *the potter* to *the clay*? Therefore, just as *the potter* knows what is best for *the clay*, Jehovah knows what is best for Israel. Consequently, these critics are silenced in verses 9-13. Note: The prophet Habakkuk doubted God's plan when it was revealed to him that the wicked Babylonians would overthrow the southern kingdom of Judah (read Habakkuk 1:1-2:1). After God revealed His intent to Habakkuk, however, the prophet submitted to His sovereignty and, in faith, waited for the fulfillment of His word.

*Is. 45:10 "Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?'"*

Again Isaiah emphasizes the futility of arguing with the agenda of the God of the universe. Can a child in the womb argue with the parents concerning how he is being fashioned and shaped? Of course not! He may complain about his physical and mental makeup after he is born, but not while he is being formed in the womb.

*Is. 45:11 ¶ 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.*

In verses 11-13, God explains why He is free to exercise His plan for mankind. After all, He is the only being capable of seeing eternity past and eternity future at the same time. Therefore, Father knows best, regardless of what man might conclude. In verse 11, He encourages those who might disagree with His plan to challenge Him *concerning...the things to come*.

*Is. 45:12 "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands, And I ordained all their host.*

The reason God is free to plan, fulfill what He plans, and work those plans for the good of man, is

because He is the Creator of *all* things. And, by the way, the Creator is greater than the *created*! Consequently, He can do whatever He wishes with what He has *created* so long as it is in agreement with His truth and, therefore, in harmony with His character.

*Is. 45:13 "I have aroused him in righteousness, And I will make all his ways smooth; He will build My city, and will let My exiles go free, Without any payment or reward," says the Lord of hosts.*

The "*him*" in verse 13 is Cyrus, who is part of God's righteous plan (this verse is not saying that Cyrus was righteous). God *aroused him* and would *make all his ways smooth* because it was Cyrus who would allow the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem. Cyrus would do this *Without any payment or reward*, in fact, he even went so far as to bless the Jews materially as they departed for their homeland (read Ezra 1:7-11). Note: From Isaiah 44:28 and Ezra 1:1-2, we know that Cyrus sanctioned the rebuilding of *the temple* as well (your might want to read the notes associated with Isaiah 44:26 and 28).