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This is What the LORD says to Cyrus His Anointed 45: 1-8

DIG: In the past, only Israelite kings were called God's anointed. What is the significance of the LORD's using this title for a pagan king? Why does God give victory after victory to Cyrus? Since no other deported people ever maintained their ethnic and religious heritage, how will the re-establishment of the Jews fulfill these purposes in 45:6-8? Several times in this section Ha'Shem repeats that there is no God but Him. Does ADONAI's deliverance of the Jews from Babylon by the hand of a Persian prove this claim? How so? What does this communicate to the Jews? What does 45:6 communicate to the Gentile nations? Persian religion taught that a god of light and a god of darkness were in perpetual warfare with each other. What light does this shed on 45:7? What are the implications of 45:7 (Job 2:10, Amos 3:6, and Romans 11:36)?

REFLECT: Do you think that the LORD still shapes all of history around the purpose of saving His people? How might the purpose of God be traced in some recent world event? From this passage, what should be your response to that event? Think about the continued existence of the Jews, despite their long history of persecution and oppression, even today - what does that show us of ADONAI? In what ways are the actions of Cyrus like the work of Messiah? What other Christ-like figures today do you think God might be using to accomplish His purpose?

This chapter begins with **Cyrus** as the last chapter ended with **him**. Here, **ADONAI** talks directly **to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of (45:1b)**; however, this message is not really addressed to **the Persian king**. It was meant for the downtrodden **Israelites** who could not see how **God's** promise of restoration could possibly happen. The great issue was convincing **the LORD's people** that **He could** rescue **them**.



From the famous **Cyrus** Cylinder, discovered by the Assyro-British archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam in 1879, we have learned that Marduk, the chief god of **Babylon**, was highly displeased with the **Babylonian** king Nabonidus' cruelties. Therefore, he called upon **Cyrus** to conquer **Babylon**, and restore the proper devotion to himself. So there was a dramatic difference between Marduk's supposedly calling **Cyrus** and **ADONAI's** calling of **him**. Marduk supposedly chose **him** because of **his** admirable qualities, strength and leadership skills. But with **God** those traits did not matter. What really mattered was **the God of Isra'el** had **summoned him by name (45:3)**, even though **Cyrus did not acknowledge Him (45:4)**, so that men and women everywhere would **know the LORD (45:6)**. As a result, **Cyrus' mission** was solely dependent on the nature and character of **ADONAI**, not the calling of Marduk. It is not the perfect **man** that would save the world, but a holy **God**.

Cyrus was named almost two hundred years before **he** was born. I believe there are three reasons. First, primarily for identification. When **Cyrus** did appear on the scene, there would be no misunderstanding about whom **Isaiah** had spoken about. Secondly, **Cyrus** would be **the man** responsible for a decree that would return **the Israelites to the Land**. Thirdly, it would prepare **the Israelites** for the coming of **Messiah**. If in two hundred years **Isaiah's near historical prophecy** about **Cyrus** was accurate, then **God** could also be trusted that **His** future prophecy about **the One** born of a **virgin, Immanuel (to see link click Cb - The LORD Himself Will Give You a Sign)**, would also be accurate.

This is what the LORD says to His anointed (45:1a). If **Isaiah's** hearers were shocked earlier at **Cyrus' being called God's shepherd (44:28)**, they must have been even more so at his now being called **My anointed**. This title had previously been reserved only for priests, prophets, and kings of **Isra'el**. Could **God** possibly use a Gentile to accomplish **His** purposes? Yes! That is exactly the point that **Isaiah** is making. **God** is not **the LORD** of **Isra'el** alone; **He** is the **God** of the whole world. **Israel's** election is not for itself, and thus neither is its deliverance necessarily to be effected by itself. It is this sense in which

anointed is used here; **Cyrus** has been especially chosen and empowered to carry out the purposes of **God**. In that sense he is **God's** chosen instrument through whom **God's** gracious purposes will be accomplished, especially that through him **God** will be revealed to the world. **To subdue the nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut (45:1c)**. The true **Messiah** will bring spiritual deliverance to **Isra'el**, but **Cyrus**, pointing us to the true **Messiah**, would bring physical deliverance to **Isra'el**.¹⁷⁰

Isaiah describes **God's** work on behalf of **Cyrus**. **I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron (45:2)**. It is **God** who will go before the conqueror and prepare the way for **him**. It is **God** who declares that **He** will ensure **his** victories over impregnable cities. We have many extra-biblical records to support this. When **Cyrus** began **his** conquest **he** was unstoppable, and supposedly unconquerable cities like Sardis were captured easily. **Isaiah** describes the victory **Cyrus** will have over **Babylon** because **God** talks about the **gates of bronze** and the **bars of iron**. **According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Babylon had 100 gates around the city all made of bronze**. Yet, **God** declares that these **bronze** gates will be powerless to stop **Cyrus** and **he** will be given **Babylon** as part of **his** conquest. In addition, **God** will give **him** victory over **the nations before him**, which included Croesus and the Lydian Empire.

As reported by Herodotus, the thing Croesus was famous for was his wealth. In fact, the legend of the king with the golden touch actually comes from Croesus. Midis was another name for him, but Croesus was actually his Greek name. Croesus had his headquarters in the city of Sardis. There he hid his gold in underground tunnels. That is why **God** says: **I will give you treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places**. Yet, **Cyrus** was able to defeat Lydia with ease, and all the wealth of Croesus, in the billions of dollars by today standards, went into the pockets of **Cyrus** the Great. Thus, **God** declared that **He** would conquer **Babylon** and Lydia, the two major empires that **Cyrus** conquered to establish the Medo-Persian Empire.

In **Matthew**, **Yeshua** tells us that: **The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field (Matthew 13:44)**. The possession of wealth often becomes a problem in the east, because of its insecurity. With every man being his own banker, ingenuity is taxed to devise some plan of concealment, or to find some place where money, jewels, and other valuables may remain free from molestation or suspicion. Sometimes these treasures are hidden in secret closets in the house, or in vaults under the house; sometimes

they are buried in the field, in a spot unknown to all save the owner. It frequently happens that the owner goes away and dies before the time of his intended return, his secret dying with him. Times of war and pestilence carry off great numbers, who leave treasures concealed; no one knows where. There are, no doubt, deposits of immense value thus buried in different parts of the east. These facts illustrate the text. Other references of a similar character are made in different parts of the Bible, showing how ancient and how widespread is the custom of hiding treasures (**Joshua 7:21; Job 3:21-22; Proverbs 2:4; Ecclesiastes 5:12**).¹⁷¹

Then **God** gives **three reasons** why **He** would use **Cyrus** to free **the Jews** from **Babylon** and bring **them** back to **the Land**. **First**, **God** would use **Cyrus for Cyrus' sake**. **I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Isra'el, who calls you by name (45:3)**. **God** is giving **Cyrus**, a Gentile monarch, an opportunity to **know the LORD**. To some extent, **Cyrus** did recognize that the **God of Isra'el** was aiding **him**. But **he** did not submit himself to the **God of Isra'el**; in other words, **he** was never a true believer in the **God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. **Cyrus** was polytheistic; **he** simply included the **God of Isra'el** with all **his** other gods. He gave **the LORD** credit for victory, but he also gave **Marduk**, the god of **Babylon**, credit for victory. So ultimately, **he** did not make **ADONAI** his only **God**, the one true **God**. **He** had the opportunity to **know the LORD**, but **he** didn't take it.

The **second** reason why **God** is going to use **Cyrus** is **for Isra'el's sake**. **For the sake of Jacob My servant, of Israel My chosen, I call you by name and bestow on you a title of honor**. But even **though Cyrus** would enjoy a special relationship with **God (43:1)**, and was honored by **the LORD**, **he** still was not a believer for **he did not acknowledge ADONAI** as the true **God (45:4)**. Because of **God's** covenantal relationship with **Isra'el**, **He** promised that **Cyrus** would be **His** human instrument to end the **Babylonian** captivity after 70 years.

The **third** reason is **for the world's sake**. **I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from Me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged Me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides Me. I Am the LORD, and there is no other (45:5-6)**. **I will**, so that all nations may know **the Lord**. Here **Isra'el** is regathered in belief (**27:12-13**) with the key purpose that the entire world would know **Him**. However, in the days of **Cyrus** that never happened. Yet, **God** says that **He** is going to use **Cyrus** for the ultimate accomplishment of this third purpose; that *all nations* would know **Him**. **Cyrus** has long been dead, and the day when all nations will know **ADONAI** is still in the future. So how will

God use **Cyrus** for this? **God** is going to bring the **Babylonian** captivity to an end so that **the Jews** can go back to **the Land**. Then **Messiah** could be born in Bethlehem. After **He** is born, and leaves after **His** First Coming, **He** will come back a second time. At that time, all nations will know **the LORD**. So in that sense, **God** is using **Cyrus** to accomplish the ultimate goal that all nations will know **Him**. Someday, because of **Cyrus**, **every knee** will **bow** and **every tongue** confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11)**.

The climax of this section speaks to the fact that nothing and no one compares to **the LORD**. Here **Isaiah** spells out exactly what **he** means when **he** says that there is no other **God**. If any questions still remained in the minds of **the Israelites** of the uniqueness of **ADONAI**, **he** would put them to rest. **He** chose two polar opposites in the realm of nature and history to make **His** case. Here, **Isaiah** declares that **the LORD**, as **Creator**, is ultimately responsible for everything in nature, from light to darkness, and for everything in history, from good fortune to misfortune. No other gods or forces can effect anything.

First, **Isaiah** addresses nature and speaks against the very religion of Persia, of which **Cyrus** is a part. Zoroastrianism was their religion and was a religion of dualism. It said there are two independent forces, the god of **light** and peace and the god of **darkness** and calamity. There was a duel between good and evil, with no god ever having complete control. But here **God** speaks directly against this dualism. **He** says that **He** is the **God** of both **light** and **darkness**. **ADONAI** says: **I form the light and create darkness (45:7a)**. **He** was answering Zoroastrianism that worshiped the god of light. It was as if **God** was saying to those devotees, "I want you to know that **light** is no god. **I** created it!"

Secondly, He addresses history by saying: **I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things (45:7b)**. The Bible here says that **God** created **disaster**. Some have interpreted this as **God** creating *evil*. But there is a basic misunderstanding as to the usage of the Hebrew word *ra* (*short a*). It is used in classical Hebrew in two different senses. It could mean *evil* in the sense of sin, but it can also mean *evil* in the sense of **disaster** or **calamity**. That is the way it is used in reference to **God**. The Bible makes it clear that **God** is not the author of sin and **James** argues that in detail. **God** does not create sin, nor does **He** tempt anyone to commit an act of sin (**James 1:13-15**).

But, **Ha'Shem** certainly *does* cause **disaster** such as the flood of Noah, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and other physical judgments. That is the meaning of the text in reference to **ADONAI**. It is also true that Satan's ability to do evil is within the permissive will of **God**. What the Adversary could or could not do to **Job**, his family, and his property was based on what **YHVH** permitted him to do. As **the LORD of heaven's armies**, **He** can

do anything, even use the schemes of Satan, to fulfill **His near historical** purposes and desires. And **His** desire was to use **Cyrus** to free **the Jews** from **Babylon** and bring **them** back to **the Land**.

But there was also **a far eschatological purpose** for **God's** calling of **Cyrus**. When the messianic Kingdom is established on the earth (see the commentary on **Revelation Fh - The Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom**), the **heavens above** will figuratively **rain down righteousness on the earth (45:8a)**. **God's** holy standard of **righteousness** will be followed. **The** inspired **prophet** declared: **Let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up like a great harvest, and let righteousness grow with it. I, the LORD, have created it (45:8)**. For this to happen **the Israelites** needed to be sent home to **Judah**; to be sent home to Judah, **Babylon** had to be defeated; for **Babylon** to be defeated **Cyrus** needed to become **the LORD's anointed**. That was the big picture.

In the prospect of this ultimate and saving purpose of the mission of **Cyrus**, in other words, the redemption of **Isra'el** and the conversion of the Gentiles, **heavens** and **earth** will then be summoned to bring forth and pour down spiritual blessings according to the will and in the power of **the LORD**.¹⁷² **Isaiah** says it is the work of **God**. This verse is actually a prayer that interrupts the flow of the prophecy and serves to highlight an important feature of **Chapters 40** through **48**, the people's unbelief. **Isaiah** is praying that the prophecies given in **44:24** through **45:7** might begin the process of delivering every person from the consequences of his or her own sin, if only he or she will allow **Him** to do it. When that happens people everywhere will know **ADONAI, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14)**.