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The Deliverance by Cyrus the Great 44:24 to 45:25



ADONAI, the Redeemer of Isra'el and the Creator of the universe, has appointed Cyrus to accomplish His plans for His people. In this **near historical prophecy**, God names **the man** that **He** is going to use to deliver **the Jews** from Babylon (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). **Isaiah** is living 150 years before **Cyrus** comes on the scene. Throughout **Chapters 40** through **44**, **the LORD** has been hinting of **a man** coming from the east and from the north, because one of **Cyrus'** parents was Persian from the east and the other one was Median from the north. But **God's** prophecies in those five chapters were becoming more and more specific. Throughout **His** hinting of the coming of **Cyrus**, without actually naming **him** so far, **ADONAI** has been comparing **Himself** with false idols and false prophets. This was to show that idolatry, especially Babylonian idolatry, is incapable of prophesying and predicting anything. But **the LORD** will predict everything in detail and everything **He** predicts will come true. Now in **44:28**, **God** will specifically name the deliverer **Cyrus**.

The rise of **Cyrus**, king of Anshan (a city in Persia), was swift and impressive. When he came to the throne in 559 BC, Persia was subject to Media. By 549 BC, **he** was strong enough to rebel, kill the Median king Astyages, and found the Medo-Persian Empire. In the next few years **he** pushed out its boundaries dramatically. **He** first moved west, conquering King Croesus of Lydia in 547 BC and subduing Asia Minor (now Turkey). Then **he** turned east to extend **his** rule into northwest India. By 540 BC he had brought much of the former

Babylonian Empire under his rule and was threatening Babylon itself. It fell to **his** general Gubaru without a fight in 539 BC, and seventeen years later **Cyrus himself** entered the city. There was no bloodshed; the previous king, Nabonidus, and his son Balshazzar, were deeply unpopular with the people of Babylon, many of whom regarded **Cyrus** as a liberator. For those who had been brought to Babylon against their will, the advent of **Cyrus** proved to be a blessing. **He** reversed the Babylonian policy of deportation and quickly embarked on a policy of repatriating displaced people and restoring their places of worship, the captives from Jerusalem being one of the first groups to benefit. The substance of **his** decree permitting **their** return is recorded in **Ezra** (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ai - The Decree of Cyrus**).¹⁶⁸

This important passage bursts upon us rather surprisingly at this point. The surprise is that **Cyrus** should be spoken of as **the LORD's shepherd (44:28)** and **His anointed (45:1)**, immediately after a passage in which idolatry had been so strongly condemned. For **Cyrus himself** was an idolater! But there is an important lesson here. **ADONAI** may disapprove of idolatry but use an idolater for some good purpose. The fact that **He** uses someone in a specific way does not mean that **He** approves of that person's lifestyle. Because **the LORD** uses the Adversary's evil schemes to achieve **His** own godly purposes, it should not surprise us that **He** could use a pagan king. As a result, we should not stand in judgment of **God's** actions nor draw wrong conclusions from them. **His** use of **Cyrus** to **shepherd His** people home was a stunning demonstration of that sovereignty.¹⁶⁹