

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 107

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Paul and Barnabus at Lystra by Adriaen van Stalbeem cir 1650

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message One-Hundred-Seven

THE LORD CALLS CYRUS THE PERSIAN

April 11, 2021

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Isaiah 44:28-45:7

44 ²⁸That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

45 ¹Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: ²I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; ³and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. ⁴For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. ⁵I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; ⁶that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else. ⁷I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things (ASV, 1901).

THE PROPHECY OF CYRUS

Isaiah 44:28

²⁸That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (ASV, 1901).

Here begins the magnificent prophecy of Cyrus the Persian who will conquer Babylon and release the Jewish prisoners of war at Babylon. Cyrus is said to be the Lord's *shepherd*, who will lead His people who are now captive in the wilderness of Babylon and who will shepherd their return to their homeland. This term *shepherd* is used in a variety of ways in the Old Testament. The main application is to God Himself (Isaiah 40:11), and to the Christ (Ezekiel 34:23; Matthew 25:32; John 10:1–14; I Peter 2:25). It is used also of kings as the heads of their people (II Samuel 5:2; Jeremiah 3:15). Here in this passage the Lord speaking through the prophet shows the close relationship between Himself and Cyrus in that Cyrus is chosen to perform this important function of shepherding God's own people Israel back to the promise land after seventy years of captivity. It was Cyrus who allowed the Jews to return back to Israel to begin to rebuild the temple that the Babylonians had severely damage in the final siege in 586 B.C. By the use of this designation Cyrus is greatly honored, to shepherd God's people because here he is used as a type or example

of the Lord's Servant, the true Messiah and Shepherd of His people who gives His life for the sheep. The Temple is one goal of his work. Since it is declared that the Temple is to be restored the city must also be built, and it is Cyrus who makes this possible. The Jews were languishing in Babylon yearning for release as the Lord had promised through the prophet several hundred years before their actual release. According to Josephus this prophecy was given nearly two hundred years before Cyrus was born. And that Cyrus read the prophecy himself which is a proof both of God's accuracy in His prophetic Word, and of the truth of divine revelation.¹ We must take this truth as a witness to strengthen our faith in Christ and the Scriptures.

Psalm 137:1-6

¹By the rivers of Babylon, There. we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion. ²Upon the willows in the midst thereof We hanged up our harps. ³For there they that led us captive required of us songs, And, they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. ⁴How shall we sing Jehovah's song In, a foreign land? ⁵If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let, my right hand forget her skill. ⁶Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I remember thee not; If I prefer not Jerusalem Above my chief joy (ASV, 1901).

During the time of Cyrus only the foundation was laid. The Jews were greatly discouraged and hindered by their enemies from continuing on with the building during his reign, until the times of Darius, a subsequent king of Persia (Ezra 1:1, 2, 3 and 3:10 and 4:1-5). The prophet Daniel who lived to prophecy during the reign of Cyrus was also given prophecies regarding the difficulty the Jews would experience in trying to get the Temple and city of Jerusalem rebuilt.

Daniel 9:25

²⁵Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times (ASV, 1901).

THE LORD PAVES THE WAY FOR CYRUS TO CONQUER

Isaiah 45:1-4

¹Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: ²I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; ³and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of

¹ Josephus, Flavius, William Whiston translator, The Works of Josephus, Published by Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1987, Antiquities. l. 11. c. 1. sect. 2, pg. 286

Israel. ⁴For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. (ASV, 1901).

Cyrus is called the Lord's anointed, because he was appointed by the Lord, and was given skills by Him to carry out great achievements for Him in the world, and particularly of delivering the Jews from their captivity, and restoring them to their own land. When He says *whose right hand I have holden*; whom he raised up, supported, strengthened, guided, and directed to do what he did: *to subdue nations before him*; which was surely accomplished by him, He says I directed his movements.

Cyrus conquered many other nations before fighting with Babylon. First, he conquered Asia Minor. Then the Lydians submitted to him. Then he overran the northern mountainous region between the Caspian Sea and the northwest corner of India. By 539 B.C. Cyrus was ready to move against Babylon. The Babylonian governor of Elam defected to Cyrus and joined his army. With a minimum of opposition, the armies of Cyrus entered the Babylonian capital in 539 B.C. Nabonidus the Babylonian prince was taken prisoner but was treated with respect and mercy. Although he is not mentioned in the Old Testament his son Belshazzar is depicted in the book of Daniel as king of Babylon when it fell to Cyrus. Sixteen days later Cyrus himself entered the city, to the acclaim of many of its inhabitants.² Exactly how he did it is recorded by the Greek historian Herodotus. He said that the Babylonian soldiers came out to meet him wherein they were defeated by Cyrus causing them to retreat to the city. Previously the city of Babylon was thought to be impregnable.

Here are some facts regarding the city according to the historian Herodotus about Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon³

- In the form of a square, 14 miles on each side
- -The brick wall was 56 miles long, 300 feet high, 25 feet thick with another wall 75 feet behind the first wall, and the wall extended 35 feet below the ground
- -250 towers that were 450 feet high
- -A wide and deep moat that encircled the city
- -The Euphrates River also flowed through the middle of the city. Ferry boats and a 1/2 mi. long bridge with drawbridges closed at night
- -"Hanging Gardens"(one of the wonders of the ancient world) and water was raised from the river by hydraulic pumps
- -Eight massive gates that led to the inner city and 100 brass gates
- -Streets were paved with stone slabs 3 feet square
- -The great Tower (Ziggurat) and 53 temples including the "Great Temple of Marduk." 180 altars to Ishtar
- -Golden image of Baal and the Golden Table (both weighing over 50,000 lbs. of solid gold.)
- -2 golden lions, a solid gold human figure (18 feet high)

² Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Cyrus the Great](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 564). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

³ Herodotus, translated by Aubrey de Selincourt *The Histories*, The Easton Press, Norwalk, CT 2000, pg. 71

- -Nebuchadnezzar’s palace was considered at that time to be the most magnificent building ever erected on earth.

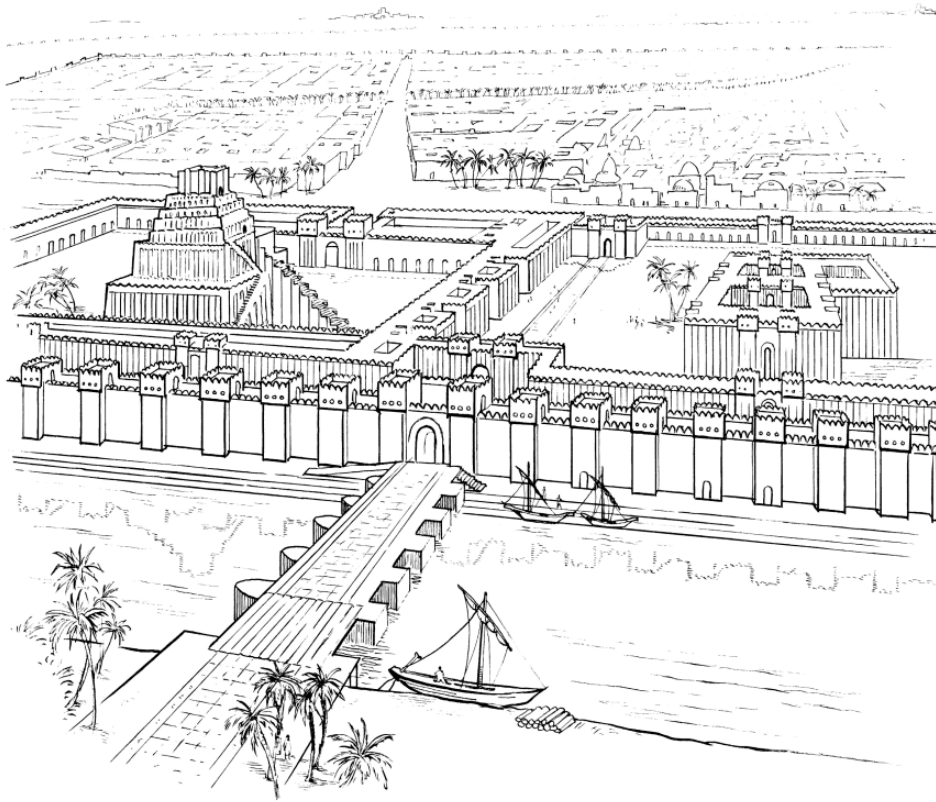


Image from Logos Software

Darius the Mede was the nephew of Cyrus was instrumental in accomplishing the *literal* fulfilment of this in regard to Belshazzar, king of Babylon, when the city was taken by Cyrus. *To open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut* means that the gates within the city which led from the streets to the river were left open. The city was not only *enclosed* with walls, but there were walls within the city on each side of the river Euphrates with gates, by which the inhabitants had access to the water of the river. If these gates had not been left open the Persians would have been shut up in the bed of the river, and not been able to enter the city. Herodotus (i. 191) says,

‘If the besieged had been aware of the designs of Cyrus, or had discovered the project before its actual accomplishment, they might have effected the total destruction of these troops. They had only to secure the little gates which led to the river, and to have manned the embankments on either side, and they might have inclosed the Persians in a net from which they could never have escaped; as it happened, they were taken by surprise; and such is the extent of that city, that, as the inhabitants themselves affirm,

they who lived in the extremities were made prisoners before the alarm was communicated to the centre of the palace.’⁴

Euphrates River ran through the middle of Babylon and divided it into two parts. Cyrus decided that the river channels under the walls provided the only chance of gaining entry, but the volume of water and the strength of the current were too great. The forces of Cyrus diverted much of the river into an artificial marsh. When the water level had dropped sufficiently low, the Persian soldiers made their way in under the wall and captured the Babylonian capital.⁵

The scene of the leaders inside the city was one of joyful indifference as they engaged in a drunken orgy. It was depicted by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel 5:1–31

¹Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. ²Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink therefrom. ³Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them. ⁴They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. ⁵In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶Then the king's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. ⁷The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. ⁸Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation. ⁹Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were perplexed. ¹⁰Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed. ¹¹There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; ¹²forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of dark sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. ¹³Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, who art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah? ¹⁴I have

⁴ Ibid pg.76

⁵ ibid pg. 75

heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in thee. ¹⁵And now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing.

Then Daniel is brought in to interpret the writing.

¹⁶But I have heard of thee, that thou canst give interpretations, and dissolve doubts; now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. ¹⁷Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. ¹⁸O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: ¹⁹and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. ²⁰But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: ²¹and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. ²²And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, ²³but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. ²⁴Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end; ²⁷TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. ²⁸PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. ²⁹Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old (ASV, 1901).

Only the Lord could have predicted, a hundred and fifty years before it occurred, that such an event would take place; and this is one of the many prophecies which demonstrate in the most outstanding manner factual nature of this book of Isaiah and of the Scripture itself.

And I will give thee treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, references the private places, and had been hidden for many years. Nebuchadnezzar having amassed together many

riches hid them in Babylon. All this was given to Cyrus by God for freeing His people the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name here the Lord describes why He is doing all this. It is not so much for the sake of Cyrus, giving honor to him. It was to assure His people, the Jews, the Lord's chosen people, and who were his servants, of the source of their deliverance. He wanted them to know what He was doing as their deliverer being mentioned by name; and it was for their sakes, and not His, that he called Cyrus, and raised him up to do such great things as he did, that he might deliver them from their captivity. *I have surnamed thee;* which says that God not only called him by his name, Cyrus, but surnamed him his *shepherd*, and his *anointed*, *though thou hast not known me;* as yet not being born; and when he was born and was grown up, he was ignorant of the true God because he was a Gentile pagan. Cyrus upon seeing the prophecy, he acknowledged the God of Israel to be the God of heaven to some extent believed in Him (Ezra 1:1–3).

THE LORD DECLARES HIS SOVEREIGNTY

Isaiah 45:5–7

⁵I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; ⁶that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else. ⁷I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things (ASV, 1901).

The Lord concludes this magnificent prophecy with again affirming His role in the creation and sustaining it. He says that He will *make peace, and create evil*. Spiritual peace of conscience comes from God, through Christ, by the Spirit. He is creating calamity (evil) to bring about His goal of subduing the earth since the Fall introduced by the evil Satan. Sin was introduced into the creation by Satan. God uses the evil to punish sinners and discipline the saints. The Hebrew word which gets translated out as evil is actually calamity or distress.

Next message SAFETY AND SALVATION ONLY IN THE LORD

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