

CYRUS

Isaiah 44:21-45:13

Isaiah chapters 40-66 were written by Isaiah to the Jews in exile from 605 B.C. to 538 B.C. In the service of Yahweh, the Babylonians drove the Jews from their land and left Jerusalem and the Temple in ruins. Through the Prophet Jeremiah Yahweh revealed the duration of the Exile would be 70 years; one year for every 7-year cycle the Jews failed to give the land its Sabbath rest (Leviticus 26:27-39; Jeremiah 25:8-14; 29:10-14). The majority of Jews in exile remained entrenched in idolatry. The Exile was nearing completion and Yahweh was revealing His program for their Return to Israel. But the majority of the Jews were not responding in faith, but in cynical disrespect. Gracious God that He is, Yahweh sought to persuade His rebellious, disrespectful people to believe and leave when the decree to return was declared.

In Isaiah 44 & 45, Yahweh, speaking through Isaiah in 700 B.C., revealed in detail how He will accomplish His people's return to Israel and how He will accomplish the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple.

As we begin reading at Isaiah 44:21, remember what precedes. In verses 9-20 Yahweh ridicules idol worshippers by exposing the absurdity of worshipping something made by human hands. This ridicule was aimed at the idol worshipping Jews.

Isaiah 44:21-22 (ESV) Yahweh reminds them they are His servants, not the other way around. He formed them. They did not form Him like they do their "no gods". Though many Jews accused Yahweh of forgetting them in the sense of giving up on them, Yahweh has in fact forgiven them and redeemed them. The sense of "redeemed" here and elsewhere is that Yahweh has bought Israel out of her exile to bring her home. In other words, the word "redeem" refers to the *Return*.

Isaiah 44:23 (ESV) In verse 23, Isaiah calls upon creation to celebrate Yahweh's redemption of Israel.

Isaiah 44:24-28 (ESV) Yahweh will bring about the *Return* through a man named **Cyrus**. Remember, Yahweh revealed this through the Prophet Isaiah 160 years before it happened; well before the birth of this man named Cyrus. Who was Cyrus? Cyrus was the King of the Persians. He led the conquest of the city of Babylon in 539 B.C. In 538 B.C. he issued a decree freeing all captives to return to their ancestral homes. And he financed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple of Yahweh.

Isaiah 45:1-7 (ESV) In verses 1-7, Yahweh speaks directly to Cyrus over a hundred years before Cyrus is born.

Isaiah 45:8 (ESV) In verse 8 Yahweh calls upon the heaven and earth to assist Him in accomplishing the return of His people.

Isaiah 45:9-12 (ESV) In verses 9-12 Yahweh anticipates criticism from the Jews that Yahweh would choose a pagan like Cyrus to be His servant. As Creator, Yahweh has the authority to do with His creation as He desires. Yahweh has the authority as Creator to use pagans to accomplish His will! Cyrus will serve Him not only to set the Jews free to return to Israel, but Yahweh will use Cyrus to finance the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Isaiah 45:13 (ESV) Cyrus will exercise more faith and obedience than the Jews in exile who refused to return to the Land!

Archaeological Record: Cyrus' Cylinder

The Biblical Record

EZRA 1:1-4 (ESV)

Either through direct revelation or through the reading of Isaiah or Jeremiah or a combination of both, King Cyrus encountered Yahweh, the God of Israel. Contrary to the majority of Yahweh's people, Cyrus obeyed Yahweh's call freeing the Jewish exiles to return and financing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. This was all miraculously revealed by Yahweh through Isaiah 160 years before it occurred.

Yahweh is our God. Our God

Yahweh reveals the future and brings it to pass. Here, in chapters 44 & 45 Yahweh revealed that through Cyrus He would deliver His people from Exile. In Isaiah 52 & 53 Yahweh revealed His Servant through whom He will deliver His people from their sins.

Reflection for Communion: *As we read through Isaiah 52 & 53 realize that not only does it describe this Servant Who is to come, but it describes what will be the attitude and the treatment of this Servant by the Jews when he comes and eventually what will be their realization after He has accomplished Yahweh's will.*

Grace News and Needs

VOM Needs for December: Fleece blankets, hairbrushes.

Ramona Pregnancy Care Clinic Adopt-a-Mom: Take an ornament, bless a family.

Women's Christmas Gala: December 8th & 9th. Purchase tickets on patio.

Youth Ministry: Mexico Missions Trip Info. Meeting, Sunday, December 10th, 11:15, Youth Room.

Family Event: Cookies & Carols, Sunday evening, December 17th, 6:00 – 7:30 PM, Sanctuary.

Christmas Eve Day Schedule: Sunday services at our regularly scheduled times: 8:30 & 10:00 AM.

Cyrus Cylinder

Babylon, Achaemenid Dynasty (539 BC)

Clay foundation cylinders were often placed inside the walls of buildings in order to preserve a record of a king's achievements. This cylinder recounts the conquest of Babylon in 539 BC and confirms the decree given by Cyrus, King of Persia, allowing exiles to return to their homes in order to rebuild their temples (Ezra 6:3-5).



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