

## A Trek Through Isaiah 58: 44:24 - 45:8

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For this week: Cyrus: Builder and Conqueror 44:24 – 45:8

Context

- The book of the Servant (38 - 55): How will God’s people be redeemed from captivity?

Structure

<b><u>The LORD’s Plan Unfolded (42:18 - 44:23)</u></b>	
<b>Israel’s captivity and liberation 42:18 - 43:21</b>	<b>Israel’s sin and redemption 43:22 - 44:23</b>
<b><u>The LORD’s Plan Fulfilled (44:24 - 55:13)</u></b>	
<b>The Great Deliverance: the Work of Cyrus (44:24 - 48:22)</b>	<b>The Greater Deliverance: the Work of the Servant (49:1 - 55:13)</b>

<b>The Great Deliverance: the Work of Cyrus (44:24 - 48:22)</b>
Cyrus: builder and conqueror 44:24 - 45:8
Rebellion and resolve, quibbling and consolation 45:9 - 46:13
Free but not yet home 47:1 - 48:22

- Two sections about the LORD’s plan paralleled by two sections about fulfillment.
- First fulfillment section describes the work of Cyrus: rescue from political bondage.
  - Cyrus’ commission
  - The reaction of God’s people, and His resolve
  - The fall of Babylon and the return of God’s people to Jerusalem.

## Cyrus: Builder and Conqueror 44:24 – 45:8

- God and His word 44:24-26a

24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, 25 who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, 26 who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers

- V24 The LORD reminds His people **who** He is
  - Looks back to v23: “the LORD has redeemed Jacob”
  - His relationship to them.
    - the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb:
      - Formed them
      - Redeemed them
  - His relationship to creation
    - Made...stretched out...spread out.
      - The Creator
    - All things...heavens...earth
      - All things
  - His sovereignty
    - Alone...by myself
      - Act by Himself with no help.
- V25 He makes the **wisdom** of men foolishness
  - signs of liars
    - False prophets who relied upon signs to validate their message.
  - diviners.
    - Fortune-tellers of the false religions.
  - wise men
    - Those who seek to understand life apart from God.
- V26a He performs His **word**
  - who confirms the word of his servant
    - Servant. Not the nation but the Servant.
    - Confirms. As Is 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.
  - fulfills the counsel of his messengers
    - messengers. Prophets.
    - Fulfills the counsel. Brings about His word given through the prophets.

- God and His purpose 44:26b-28

26 ...who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins'; 27 who says to the deep, 'Be dry; I will dry up your rivers'; 28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.' "

- V26b-27 God's **purpose**

- To raise up Jerusalem and the cities of Judah from their ruins
- To make a way for His people.
  - Language reminiscent of the Exodus.
  - Deep.
    - May refer to water obstacles encountered during the Exodus (Red Sea, Jordan river)
    - May refer to the Euphrates river, which was diverted to allow Cyrus entrance into Babylon.
    - May refer to the great wickedness of Babylon

- V28 God's **means**

- who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose';
  - Kings were often called shepherds of their people.
  - Cyrus was not just another conqueror. He would lead God's people to their proper pastures and accomplish the LORD's purpose.
  - Josephus indicates that Isaiah's prophecy was instrumental in stirring Cyrus up to accomplish it: "When Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was written." (*Antiquities* 11.1.2)
- Your foundation shall be laid
  - Only the foundation of the temple was laid under Cyrus.

- God and His Anointed 45:1-7
  - V1-3 Cyrus' **commission**.

1 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 2 "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places,

- V1 to his anointed, to Cyrus
  - Cyrus (a pagan king) is God's anointed one
  - Anointed = set aside to accomplish God's purpose.
  - Hard for Isaiah's contemporaries to understand.
- V1 whose right hand I have grasped
  - To be led
  - To be kept from falling
- V1c-3a What Cyrus will accomplish: subdue nations, humiliate kings, open gates, level temples of pagan gods, obtain treasures and hoards.
- V2ff Only time in the Bible where God speaks directly to as pagan king.

o V3b-6 The **reasons** for raising up Cyrus:

3 ...that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.

■ V3b that you may know

- Not that Cyrus will be saved, but that he will know who brought about his accomplishments.
- Josephus notes “Cyrus knew these things since he had read the book of his prophecy which Isaiah had left behind two hundred and ten years earlier.” (*Antiquities* xi.1.2f)
- He acknowledged the LORD in his proclamation Ez 1:2-3: Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.
- However, in his proclamation to Babylon he referred to Marduk as the one responsible for his victories: “[Marduk] inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took the hand of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.” (*Cyrus Cylinder*)

■ V4-6 Two more reasons, each followed by an assertion that Yahweh is the only God.

4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen	6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me
5 I am the LORD	6...I am the LORD

■ V6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me

- Not fulfilled in Cyrus’ time.
- But Cyrus made it possible for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, through whom this would be fulfilled.

- V7 God the **first** cause

7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

- Calamity. Heb ra. Strong's: bad or (as noun) evil.
- Does this verse say that God is the author of evil? No.
- Two parallel truths: (1) All that happens is foreordained by God. (2) Each creature is responsible for his own actions. These cannot be reconciled by us, only by God.
- God is behind both the seemingly good and the seemingly bad.
- For the true believer He can turn all things to good.
- So, the believer trusts in Him no matter what the circumstances.

- God and His **Creative** Resolve 45:8

8 "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.

- V8 Picture of the earth blossoming after a rain
- V8 righteousness.
  - The LORD's righteous purpose executed through Cyrus.
- V8 salvation.
  - Of Israel from Babylon.
- V8 I the Lord have created it.
  - Created. As Gen 1:1. A new thing brought into being.
  - Perfect tense: determined in God's mind but yet to take place in history.

## **Discussion**

We will break into three groups for discussion. The questions are

- 1. God fulfills His word 44:24-26a**
  - a. Liars and diviners frustrated**
  - b. Wise men made foolish**
  - c. God's word confirmed and fulfilled**
- 2. God achieves His purpose 44:26b-28**
  - a. Ruins rebuilt**
  - b. A way made**
  - c. A foundation laid**
- 3. God uses unexpected means 45:1-7**
  - a. An unexpected one anointed**
  - b. For the sake of His people**
  - c. So that all the world may know**

Remember to worship the Lord: (1) See (2) Know (3) Respond

For next week: Rebellion and resolve, quibbling and consolation 45:9 - 46:13

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