

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

354

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a remarkable prophecy made by Isaiah. (The following information is taken from my book "*Beyond the Veil*" (https://boycemouton.com/downloads/Beyond%20the%20Veil_all.pdf) While this letter is longer than usual I believe it will be worth the read and hope it will build your confidence in the Bible. Isaiah wrote: **"That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord 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 before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut"** (Isa. 44:28-45:1).

Isaiah lived in the eighth century before Christ. His prophetic ministry came during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1). If he began his ministry while in his twenties, he would have been over eighty years of age when Hezekiah died. Cyrus, about whom he wrote these prophecies, would not even be born until about 600 B.C. Most children are expected only nine months before their birth, but Bible students expected Cyrus some 200 years before he was conceived in his mother's womb. Isaiah also predicted that Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem with its temple, but Jerusalem would not be destroyed for 200 years. Today's letter will focus on Isaiah's prediction that Cyrus would subdue nations, loose the loins of kings, and enter the two leaved gates.

Keil and Delitzsch observe that Cyrus is the only Gentile king whom Jehovah has called His "anointed." As we shall see, the prophecy of Isaiah contains historical facts which cannot be denied. Since both Jesus and Cyrus are called the Lord's anointed, we should not be surprised to discover some similarities surrounding the circumstances of their entrance into the world. In particular, we would point out that Satan knew of these prophecies and did his best to have both babies killed.

The name Cyrus is the Latin form of the old Persian word "Kurush" and is applied to three prominent men in history. Cyrus I - the son of Teispes and grandfather of Cyrus the Great. He lived and reigned in the 7th century before Christ. Cyrus II - called Cyrus the Great. He reigned from 559 B.C. until his death in 530 B.C. It is this Cyrus that Isaiah predicted. Cyrus the Younger - the son of the Persian King Darius II. As we have said, our study will focus on Cyrus the Great. Let us begin our story with Astyages, the wicked grandfather of Cyrus. Astyages was the last King of the Median Empire and reigned from 586 - 550 B.C. He had a dream that terrified him. He dreamed that his daughter, Mandane, would give birth to a child who would rule all of Asia. Like the paranoid Herod the Great, this wicked king did not want anyone to succeed him. In an attempt to dilute his daughter's royal blood, he had her married to a Persian whom he deemed as inferior. When her child was born the wicked grandfather ordered that the child be killed. This child would be miraculously delivered from death and would grow up to be known as Cyrus the Great.

It is immediately obvious that the things which happened to baby Cyrus did not happen by accident. God was determined to keep him alive, and the Devil was determined to kill him. The task of killing baby Cyrus was delegated to Harpagus, the king's most trusted servant. Harpagus, however, had second thoughts about killing the king's grandson. Since the king had no sons to succeed him, he reasoned that upon the death of Astyages, the scepter would pass to his daughter, Mandane. Once in power, he feared she would seek vengeance upon the man who had killed her son. At last he determined that the baby had to die, but not by his hand. Thus, he delegated the task of killing the baby to a herdsman of the king named Mitrdates. Mitrdates was instructed to take the baby into the mountains and leave it to die.

The plot thickens . . . Mitrdates was married to a female slave named ‘Spaca,’ which incidentally means “bitch.” This, as we will later point out, is quite significant. Spaca, not by accident, had just given birth to a stillborn baby boy. The herdsman and his wife conspired to exchange their dead baby for Cyrus. Thus, their dead son would have a royal burial and Spaca would not be deprived of the joys of motherhood. Accordingly, Mitrdates took the corpse of his own son into the mountains and exposed it. Three days later he presented that same corpse to Harpagus for burial.

The deception was not discovered for ten years, and its discovery grew out of an innocent game played by the village children. By “chance” the herdsman’s boy was chosen to play king. In the course of their game, he ordered that one of his disobedient subjects be whipped. Since the boy who was so punished came from a prominent family, the incident came to the attention of some important people. The herdsman’s boy became the object of careful scrutiny and the herdsman was tortured on the rack until he told the whole story.

Harpagus, whom the king had originally commissioned to kill the child, was destined to pay a terrible price for his disobedience. He was invited to a sumptuous banquet and before him were placed the choicest morsels of boiled and roasted meat. At the end of the feast, he was presented a basket which contained the hands and the head of his own 13 year old son. It was only then that Harpagus realized that he had just dined upon the flesh of his own child. This fact too, was to be of critical importance in fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.

The wicked grandfather, still troubled by the dreams of his daughter’s child, summoned his Magi. After much consultation, the Magi concluded that the king had nothing to fear from the boy Cyrus, for the fulfillment of the dreams, they said, had already been accomplished by the child’s game. Thus, Cyrus was sent to Persia to be with his parents, who for the past ten years had believed him dead. Now ancient peoples were much given to mythology. Rome, for example, was said to have been founded by Romulus and Remus, who were abandoned in the wilderness and were suckled by a she-wolf. Since the foster mother of Cyrus was named “Spaca” which means “bitch” the story soon was circulated that Cyrus too had been abandoned and raised by a bitch. As Cyrus grew to manhood, his fame increased. Ultimately, Harpagus saw him as a vehicle through which he could gain vengeance over the king for the brutal murder of his son. Skillfully, he planted seeds of discord and rebellion in the minds of influential Medians. Ultimately, he sent a secret message to Cyrus which was sewn up inside the body of a dead rabbit, Cyrus, upon reading the details of the coup, fomented a rebellion in Persia and led an army to attack his grandfather, Astyages. The wicked king, as if deprived of his senses, appointed Harpagus to be the commander of his army, not realizing that he was, in fact, the principle conspirator against him. Astyages was defeated and was kept in prison until the day of his death. Cyrus then became the supreme monarch of the Medes and the Persians. The remarkable and incredible prophecies of Isaiah were in the course of being fulfilled.

Since Isaiah 45:1 mentions the conquest of nations, loosing the loins of kings, and opening the two leaved gates, the description of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus will be of particular interest. As Cyrus advanced toward Babylon, he came to the banks of the river Gyndes which empties into the Tigris. The river was so swift and treacherous that one of the sacred white horses was drowned trying to swim across. Cyrus was so enraged at the insolence of the river that he determined to break its strength so that a woman could walk across its waters without wetting her knees. Accordingly, he directed his army to dig 180 trenches on each side of the river, leading off in all directions. The water of the river thus diverted in 360 different channels was tamed, but not without the loss of an entire summer season. This “chance” incident, however, would play a critical role in the conquest of Babylon.

Having wreaked his vengeance upon the Gyndes, Cyrus set out the following spring for Babylon. A battle was fought some distance from the city, and the Babylonians were forced to retreat

into the city. The city of Babylon was virtually impregnable. Its towering rampart walls formed a perimeter 56 miles long around the city. The walls were 300 feet high and 90 feet thick. The River Euphrates flowed through the midst of the city, but was adequately protected by walls on each side of the river. Cyrus, however, had recently discovered that the waters of a river could be tamed. He therefore, left part of his army where the Euphrates entered the city, and part of his army where it made its exit. He then took a third group of men upstream from the city and diverted the waters of the Euphrates into a marsh. The river thus became so shallow that it reached only midway up to a man's thighs.

This information is recorded by Herodotus in Herodotus 1:191, and I will here report the next part of the story in his own words: *“Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy as it were in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city ...”*

Herodotus continues that the city of Babylon was involved in a festival of dancing and revelry. We read about this same great festival in Daniel 5:1-31. During the midst of the banquet a sleeveless hand wrote Belshazzar's doom across the wall. Belshazzar's **“face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way” (Dan. 5:6)**. It was not necessary for a lengthy siege to batter down the walls of Babylon for as Isaiah predicted some 200 years before, “God loosed the loins of kings” and “opened before Cyrus to two leaved gates”. Consequently, on that very night Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom was given into the hands of the Medes and the Persians (Dan. 5:30).

Cyrus also rebuilt Jerusalem just as Isaiah predicted, but that is a story for another day. Please read the Bible for it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce