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Isaiah 41

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Isaiah 41.

Topics.

- The LORD stirs up a righteous man who tramples nations underfoot.
- Fear not you worm Jacob; the LORD of Israel is your redeemer.
- You shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.
- Tell us the future, that we may know you are gods and be terrified.
- I, stirred up one from the rising of the sun, he shall call upon my name.
- The LORD was first to say to Zion, I give to Jerusalem good news.
- Their works are all a delusion; their metal images are empty wind.
- God used Cyrus king of Media Persia.
- An overview of the history of Assyria, Israel, Babylon and Judah.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster. Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it:

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They

are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application: of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

2

Following is a brief outline of the history and context of Isaiah's previous chapters, having some knowledge of these helps understand the focus of this chapter and where it fits within the history of Israel.

Earlier chapters of Isaiah: speak of Assyria conquering many nations including the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and almost all of the fortified cities of the two tribes of Judah.

In Isaiah chapter 37: speak of Sennacherib king of Assyria armies surrounding Jerusalem and the angel of the LORD utterly destroying the Assyrian might and power by striking down 185,000 of Sennacherib soldiers which resulted in the king and those who survived returning to their own land in Nineveh. (The story is also found in 2 Kings 19:32-37).

Isaiah chapter 38: speaks about the LORD adding fifteen years to Hezekiah's life, and delivering Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and his mighty armies.

Isaiah chapter 39: speaks of Hezekiah showing all his gold and silver; the treasures of his kingdom; his storehouses of food and his entire armoury to an envoy of ambassadors sent to him by Merodach-baladan the king of Babylon and Isaiah telling him that in future time to come all the riches and treasures and even his own new born sons will be carried to Babylon. (Isaiah 39:2-7) This was a prophetic prediction of the seventy-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon which commenced about one hundred and twenty years after this prediction.

Isaiah chapter 40: speaks of the restoration of the kingdom and the return of the people from the Babylonian captivity. But this amazing prophecy is not confined to the restoration of the royal family and of the tribe of Judah only, but reaches forward to the whole Gospel age from the coming of John the Baptist to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ISAIAH 41:1-4

God stirs up a Righteous Man who Tramples Nations Underfoot.

- **Isaiah 41:1-4:** Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment. ²Who stirred up one from the east (the righteous man from the east in KJV) whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings underfoot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow. ³He pursues them and passes on safely, by paths his feet have not trod. ⁴Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

A principal of Bible prophecy: often the names of places, town's countries and people are left out of a prophecy allowing the message to transcend the era of the prophet to a future age or a future person. This chapter is very much like that as it applies to Cyrus king of Babylon who destroyed nations and set God's people free from their seventy year captivity, but the language of the prophecy transcends the Empire of Babylon to embrace the entire earth and the return of the LORD Jesus Christ in glory which introduces a New Age of peace and abundant blessing. Although these things were yet to come to pass, Isaiah speaks of them as if they had already happened this is not unusual with biblical prophecies. In the previous chapter Isaiah spoke as if God's people were actually in captivity in Babylon and now in this chapter, he speaks of them as if they were actually brought out their captivity by Cyrus. In this chapter Isaiah is prophetically presenting to the people the future seen as present.

Bible prophecy and present tense: often a prophecy is spoken in the present tense as though the event has already happened when in actual reality the fulfilment of it may still be many years away. This is because the prophet is seeing the vision in the present moment and speaks it as he sees it in present time. The people the prophet is speaking to know when the prophecy is a future event, but sometimes it can be difficult for those reading it thousands of years later to realise, because of the tense it is written in. When a prophet speaks, he is often speaking as the voice of God, therefore the words he speaks are guaranteed to come to pass. This is another reason the prophet can speak the words of God in the present moment because they are certain to happen at the right time in the future. Another reason many future prophecies are spoken in the present tense, is because the prophet is speaking the words of God or the vision as they come to him in his time. The prophet himself may not always be aware of the echoes contained in his prophecy or that the words he is speaking, actually have contained within them the ability to transcend time and travel thousands of years through history to a future age or a future person.

3

The following verses are a good example of this principle:

- For a nation (Babylon) has come up against my land (Judah), powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. ⁷It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white. (Joel 1:6-7).

This event has not taken place, yet Joel speaks it in the past tense as though it has already happened. This is simply because Joel is speaking what he is seeing happening in his vision. God is giving Joel a complete picture in his mind of what is about to take place. Joel in a sense is watching a movie being played out in his mind and is simply speaking it out as the events take place, thus the reason Joel speaks in the past tense, in his mind the events have already taken place, but in real life they are still to be played out in the future

Listen to me in silence, O coastlands: (v1) the expression, "listen to me in silence," carries the idea of listing in stunned awe and fear. Here Isaiah is calling all the people dwelling along the coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea to gather together to prepare for the LORD'S judgment and assist each other for their common safety because the LORD has stirred up Cyrus king of Media Persia in the east and his armies to trample to dust every nation they come against.

Who stirred up one from the east: (v2) (who stirred up the righteous man from the east in KJV) refers to the LORD stirring up Cyrus king of Media Persia, the future restorer of Israel. He came from Persia, which was directly eastward from Judea and from Babylon; while in (Isaiah 41:25) he is said to come from the north, because the reference here is to Media. It is interesting to notice that righteousness was always raised up from the East. Paradise was east of Eden. The cherubim were at the east of the garden. Abraham was called from the East. Judea, the birthplace of Messiah, was in the East. The following verses show that there can be no doubt that the focus of this chapter and the following chapters is upon Cyrus.

- The LORD 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." (Isaiah 44:28).
- 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, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴For 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. (Isaiah 45:1-4).
- I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the LORD of hosts. (Isaiah 45:13).
- Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. (Isaiah 46:11). (this is said of Cyrus)

These verses clearly show there can be no danger of error in crediting the focus of this chapter as being upon Cyrus and that the entire description applies to him in a remarkable and extraordinary manner.

Cyrus the righteous man: (v2) Cyrus is called righteous because of the favour and fairness of justice he showed toward God's people and because God used him as His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28). (Isaiah 45:1-4) to set His people free

- I have stirred him (Cyrus) up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the LORD of hosts. Isaiah 45:13

Cyrus fulfilled God's great purpose in that he manifested God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise of delivering His people out of Babylon, and of God's justice in punishing the enemies and oppressors of His people.

He pursues them and passes on safely: (v2) refers to Cyrus invading foreign lands and conquering all the nations, cities, towns and villages that the feet of his troops march up against.

Who has performed and done this: (v4) was it by the arm of Cyrus and human power and skill or by some other greater power? The purpose of this question is to shine a brilliant spotlight upon the fact that it had been done by God, and that He had raised up and equipped Cyrus to accomplished and fulfil the promises He had given to His people. It is to

lift up the thoughts from the conquests of Cyrus to God's universal dominion over all kingdoms from the beginning of the world. The idea here is that all nations that dwell on the earth owe their origin to God

- The Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. (Deut. 32:8).
- He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. (Acts 17:26).

The idea is that should God choose to bless or judge a nation no king no matter how powerful can stand against His sovereign and eternal will, they may make their plans and set their goals, but it is God who decides the outcome.

I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he: (v4) carries the following five ideas (but not limited to them):

1. I am He who existed before all things and will forever exist.
 2. I am He who is everlasting the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last
 3. I am He who created mankind and sustain their existence and continuance of life on earth.
 4. I am He who has set in motion eternal plans and promises that will come to pass from the beginning to the end they are unchangeable.
 5. I am He who will be the same as I was in the beginning as I will be forever and ever.
- Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. (Isaiah 44:6).
 - Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. (Isaiah 48:12).

ISAIAH 41:5-6

Coastlands and the Earth Tremble but Israel will Not be Cast Off.

- **Isaiah 41:5-7:** The coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come. ⁶Everyone helps his neighbour and says to his brother, "Be strong!" (Of good courage in KJV) ⁷The craftsman strengthens the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good"; and they strengthen it with nails so that it cannot be moved. ⁸But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off."

The ends of the earth: (v5) in this context refers to the people dwelling on the coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea and all the nations Cyrus marches against. These nations are pictured as seeing the strength power and unity of Cyrus and his armies. Isaiah in this prophetic vision sees in his mind (like a dream) or passing before his eyes (similar to a hologram) the worker of the coastlands helping and encouraging the craftsman and the craftsman helping and encouraging the worker and everyone helping their neighbour in preparation for the invasion of Cyrus and his armies.

Everyone helps his neighbour: (v5) in verse five the people of the coastlands are pictured as being in fear and terror and in verse ten God tells Israel not to fear because He is with them and will strengthen them. Based upon these verses the things the craftsman and the goldsmith are making on the anvil would be weapons of war and the thing that is strengthen with nails so that it cannot be moved would refer to their fortress.

Israel, who I took from the ends of the earth: (v8) carries the idea that God took Israel from amongst the ends of the earth referring to Egypt.

You are my servant I have chosen you and not cast you off: (v8) there is no other nation on earth that has history with their God as Israel does. Their history with the LORD their God goes back to the beginning of time no other nation or religion can claim such miracles and wonders or history no matter what god they may believe in. The following verses show that the United Kingdom of Israel has always been God's special and unique nation unlike any other nation. God said:

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deuteronomy 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deuteronomy 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation:

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power. (Exodus 20:1-17).
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules. (Rom. 9:4)
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises. (Romans 3:4)
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Romans 3:5)
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted. (Rom. 3:2)
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith. (Romans 9:7)
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world. (Rom. 9:5)
- God declared his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation (Psalm 147:19-20).

6

Isaiah speaks of Israel being born by God:

- Listen to me (Isaiah), O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; ⁴even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. (Isaiah 46:3-4)

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges. These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God.

The thermometer of God's prophecy: it is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures

that are dangerous for the good health of the skin and our well-being. Likewise Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God. Israel's love for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob cannot be doubted and when their Messiah does return in glory and they do recognise him not only will the entire nation weep over the horrific crime they committed against him, but the entire world and its systems of global finance, trade and governments will be changed as we know them today. For further information concerning the new nation God is building in Christ, see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel, at the end of this chapter.

ISAIAH 41:10

Fear Not You Worm Jacob, the LORD of Israel is Your Redeemer.

- **Isaiah 41:10:** fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ¹¹Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. ¹²You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. ¹³For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you." ¹⁴Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

7

These are prophetic words of the LORD Israel's Redeemer the Holy One of Israel are words of enormous comfort for the people of Israel who are held in captivity to Babylon and under their authority and oppression, but all the following statement also apply to all the faithful who belong to the global Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Fear not for I am with you be not dismayed, for I am your God (v10).
- I will strengthen you I will help you (v10).
- I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (v10).
- All who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; (v11).
- Those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish (v11).
- Those who war against you shall be as nothing at all (v12).
- I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand (v13).
- Fear not, I am the one who helps you (v13).
- I am the one who helps you (v13).

In the same way an earthly father holds the hand of his child as they pass through trials and troubles the LORD likewise holds the hands of those who belong to Him.

Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel: (v14) does not mean that Israel is considered as a worm in the eyes of God, but that their enemies count them as a worm. When these events come to pass Jerusalem will be in ruins, all the gold and silver and the scared vessels of the Temple will have been taken to Babylon and the people will be in

captivity. The surrounding nations will be mocking them and holding them in scorn this is why their enemies count them as worms which carries the idea of them being powerless and the lowest of nations.

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand: (v10) God's righteous hand refers to the following two men the Bible calls righteous:

1. To Cyrus who the LORD called His anointed shepherd and who set God's people free from the oppression of Babylon (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1-4).
2. To the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's true anointed Shepherd who sets God's people free from the condemnation of the law and mortal death.

ISAIAH 41:15-20

You shall Rejoice in the LORD of Israel, and you shall Glory.

- **Isaiah 41:15-20:** Behold, I make of you (Israel) a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; ¹⁶you shall winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory. ¹⁷When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. ¹⁹I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, ²⁰that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The LORD here promises to make Israel a powerful nation and scatter all their enemies to the wind. The expression, "the tempest shall scatter them," (v9) refers to Cyrus the king of Persia and his armies that marched against all nations that had been enemies to Israel.

8

You shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory: (v16) refers to the people of Israel returning as one united nation with triumphant joy to their beloved city Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed. Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again, but sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

They may see and know that the LORD has created this: (v20) when Israel was held in captivity their deliverance and freedom not only appeared impossible to those held in captivity, but also appeared impossible to all the surrounding nations. So, when they looked upon the multitudes of families of Israel rebuilding their beloved city and the Temple of God and establishing their true faith, they would credit the God of Israel for their amazing freedom, deliverance and prosperity. However contained within the language of this prophecy is an echo of the Lord Jesus Christ returning in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish

God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote:

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ISAIAH 41:21-24

Tell us the Future, that we may Know you are gods and be Terrified.

- **Isaiah 41:21-24:** Set forth your case, says the LORD; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. ²²Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. ²³Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. ²⁴Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you.

During the era of Isaiah there were false prophets and counsellors speaking against what Isaiah was prophesying and claiming that they themselves had heard from God. The LORD here is asking such prophets and counsellors (v28) to show some proof to back up what they are saying, of course they can't and God rebukes them and says that anyone who

chooses to follow them is not only an offence to Him, but also an abomination. This is a great warning for all who are seeking God today to go to the Scriptures to check out for themselves that what they have been taught is in harmony with the Scriptures of the Bible. Paul in his letters called those who gathered together in their homes to check out what he had actually taught was actually noble and commended them for doing so. The great apostle Paul was not offended because those he taught studied together to see if what he was saying was in harmony with what the Scriptures taught. In the following verses of this chapter the LORD goes on to prove His power and His case by telling the counsellors that He raised up one from the north (referring to Cyrus king of Persia) (v25).

ISAIAH 41:25

I, stirred up One from the Rising Sun, He shall call upon My Name.

- **Isaiah 41:25:** I, stirred up one from the north (raised up one from the north in KJV) and he has come, from the rising of the sun, and he shall call upon my name; he shall trample on rulers (princes in KJV) as on mortar, as the potter treads clay.

I, stirred up one from the north: (v25) (raised up one from the north in KJV) since this is not actually fulfilled until a hundred fifty years afterwards it is better read "I will raise up one from the north." The fulfilment of this prophecy brought about a great revolution and change in the world, had the LORD not called Cyrus to set His people free from their seventy-year captivity it is very likely the nation of Israel may not be existing on earth today. The LORD here proves His claims to divinity on this ground, that He had power to foretell future events. In illustration of this, He appeals to the fact that He had raised up for His purposes, or would afterward raise up Cyrus, in accordance with His predictions, and in such a way that it would be distinctly seen that He had this power of foretelling future events. Verse two of this chapter says that the LORD stirred up one from the east, and here it says that He stirred one up from the north. Both statements are correct and can be easily explained in the following four ways:

1. Cyrus was born in the land of the east and was by birth a Medo-Persian since he was a Mede (north) by his mother and a Persian (east) by his father.
2. The forces Cyrus brought with him against Babylon were partly Medes, and partly Persians (partly north and partly east).
3. Cyrus was born in Persia in the country called in the Scriptures the east, but in his earlier years he went to Media in the north and came from Media when he attacked and subdued Babylon.
4. Media in Scripture is said to be northward in reference to Babylon (Jer. 50:9) (Jer. 50:41) (Jer. 51:48) while Persia was eastward from Babylon.

He has come from the rising of the sun: (v25) upon kings and princes of the nations against whom he shall make war. Though this is used in a general sense of the nations that Cyrus invaded the primary focus is upon the king and princess of Babylon.

He shall call upon my name and trample on rulers and princes: (v25) this expression means that he will acknowledge the name of Israel's God to be the true God, and recognize Him as the source of all his success. This Cyrus did in his proclamation respecting the restoration of the Jews to their own land: There is no absolute evidence that Cyrus regarded himself as a worshipper of Israel's God, but it is very clear that he was brought to make a public recognition of Him as the true God, and to feel that he owed the success of his armies to Him. These prophetic words of Isaiah find their fulfilment in the proclamations of Cyrus cited in the following verses:

- Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²³”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. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’” (2 Chron. 36:22-23).
- In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²”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. ³Whoever 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. ⁴And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4).

He shall call upon my name does not necessarily mean that Cyrus renounced idolatry, but upon hearing the prophecy that Isaiah's spoke a hundred fifty years earlier, caused him to fully recognize that Israel's God was the true God, but he may will of continued to retain to his idol or the idols of Media and Persia. This was common amongst secular nations as the following verses show:

- They (every nation) feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. (2 Kings 17:33).
- These nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day. (2 Kings 17:41).

As on mortar, as the potter treads clay: (v25) today mortar or clay is mixed in wheel barrows with a shovel, concrete mixers or trucks, but in ancient times it was mixed by feet walking over it until it reached the proper working consistency for the brick layer or the potter. The picture here is of the feet of Cyrus's troops tramping underfoot the cities, towns and villages that they came up against as easily as those who tramp upon mortar. To appreciate the amazing wonder of this prophecy, it must be remembered that these predictions of Isaiah were uttered at least a hundred and fifty years before the time of their fulfilment.

ISAIAH 41:26-27

The LORD was First to say to Zion, I give to Jerusalem Good News.

- **Isaiah 41:26-27:** Who declared it from the beginning, that we might know, and beforehand, that we might say, "He is right"? There was none who declared it, none who proclaimed, none who heard your words. ²⁷I, was the first to say to Zion, "Behold, here they are!" and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good news.

Here the question is asked, "Who would have thought that the LORD would raise up one from the north to give Jerusalem the good news that the people of Israel would be set free?" When this event comes to pass the people of Israel will say, "We were told this beforehand," and say, "The LORD was right," especially since there were no counsellors who proclaimed such a thing. It was the LORD and the LORD only who said to the people of Zion that one will come from the north to bring good news to the people of Zion. The LORD says, from the beginning He has been telling Israel the good news that He would raise up one from the north so that Israel would know before it actually happened. From the beginning means prior to the event actually happening. However, the scope of the whole prophecy is realized only in Israel's Messiah the Christ and Saviour of the world. Cyrus' can be seen as a forerunner of Christ going forth as

the Universal Conqueror of the nations. The kingdom of Persia rose on the ruins of Babylon. Its vast Empire was organized by Cyrus the Great king and Darius who succeeded him. It embraced almost one million square miles and emerged as the greatest West Asian Empire of ancient times. It dominated the whole complex of the Iranian tribes and was one of the largest Empires in the world. Persia was the first of the world's great imperial organizations and a foreshadowing of the system of Rome. The Persian Empire embraced Assyria, Syria, Turkey, Iraq Palestine and the surrounding nations, the land area Persia encompassed may be taken to mean Iran today as in 1935 the government of Persia/Iran requested that the name Iran be used instead of Persia. Like the LORD'S anointed shepherd Cyrus set God's people free and conquered nations and subdued them the final and true anointed Shepherd of the LORD will likewise return in glory and set God's people free and go forth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:15-16) subduing nations and bringing them under his authority as the following verses show.

- Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:8-9).
- I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Rev. 19:11-15).
- I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer. (Rev. 6:2).
- The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. (Revelation 2:26-27).

ISAIAH 41:28-29

Their Works are all a Delusion; their Metal Images are Empty Wind.

- **Isaiah 41:28-29:** But when I look there is no one; among these there is no counsellor who, when I ask, gives an answer. ²⁹Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are nothing; their metal images are empty wind.

The focus here is counsellors who consult their idols made of silver and gold (the metal images) and then give counsel as though they have heard from God. God is saying that He searched for wise counsellors, but could not find any. None wanted to hear Isaiah's prophetic message that proclaimed doom was coming upon them. They were mad over their idols as the following verses show and loved their sinful ways and therefore chose to follow the false counsellors who told them what they wanted to hear rather than heed the words of Isaiah.

- A drought against her (Babylon's) waters, that they may be dried up! For it is a land of images, and they are mad over idols. (Jer. 50:38).
- Behold, the days are coming when I will punish the images of Babylon; her whole land shall be put to shame, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. (Jer. 51:47).

The destruction of the Babylonians, who were a people mad upon their idols was not only evident proof of God's almighty power, but also proof of the vanity and weakness of idols. In Isaiah chapter forty it is written:

- To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? ¹⁹An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. ²⁰He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. (Isaiah 40:18-20).

When speaking of idols the Living Bible says, "O foolish man you chop down a tree and use some of the wood to build your homes, some to cook your food, some to warm your hands and some you carve into an idol and bow down before it to worship it, can't you see it's just a block of wood (Isaiah 44:19). The service of idols is so absurd and illogical that it is enormously difficult for a person with a sane mind to understand how anyone in their right mind chooses the service of idols before the service of God. It is common for cultic religions to be heavily laden with ritualism. This is because a heavy focus and adherence to outward ritual and ceremony gives the worshipper a sense of reverence and a close connection and adoration to their god. These rituals may involve candles, occultist symbols, mystical rites, drinking the blood of bull, chicken-beheading, prayers, songs and such like things, but the most seductive is sexual ritual that involves all sorts of sexual immorality since this type of ritual appeals to the lowest level of the flesh (i.e., the lower nature of mankind). One of the reasons people do choose a false faith is because idols and false gods do not put demands upon their outward lifestyle, as long as the believer adheres to their ceremonial rituals and outward religious practises they are accepted by their god and free to live as they please.

There are other gods besides the LORD God of all creation; however, all other gods are created by the imagination in the mind by a strong belief in them. This is because the human nervous system does not have a mind of its own and therefore automatically responds to whatever is pictured on the imagination of the mind whether it is real or false. The stronger the belief the greater effect the mental image on the imagination of the mind will have on the human nervous system. This is why deception is so deceptive. It matters not if the god an individual believes in is real or not the nervous system responds accordingly. If the god an individual believes in is a wrathful, vengeful and judgmental god they will feel emotions of guilt and fear in contrast to this if the god an individual believes in is a god of love and compassion, they will feel emotions of love and comfort. The imaginary, but real images of the mind creates a real entity that affects the emotions and feelings through the human nervous system.

These feelings convince those that believe in idols that there are evil gods and spirits, but in reality, they do not actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the individual believing in idols and false gods they are very real entities. This is why faith should be based upon the Scriptures of the Bible and never upon on emotions. This does not mean emotions should be denied, God gave them to us to enjoy (especially in worship and praise) it just means that they should not be the foundation of our faith and what we believe. It is through reading the Bible that we learn who the one and only immortal, invisible, eternal God is and His eternal will, plans and purposes for the world, the earth and for eternity.

Clearly no god of the imagination has any power to create the earth, the mountains and the seas, there is only one God who has such awesome power and He is the immortal invisible, Holy Almighty God of all creation and the source of all life the great I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the heavenly Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To understand how idols and false gods gain controlling power over the minds of individuals and nations see the title:

- Demons in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU)

God used Cyrus king of Media Persia to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin and set the people of Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon. The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and called him by name, but also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- 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. (Isaiah 45:1).
- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name*. ⁴For 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. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me*, ⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you*, and there is no other, no god besides him.'" (Isaiah 45:14).

At this time Isaiah is speaking to Israel who is held captive in Babylon. God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after Conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God.

OVERVIEW: ASSYRIA, ISRAEL, BABYLON AND JUDAH'S HISTORY

The history: God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them. But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deut. 28:1-14). The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.).

Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God molded them like a master potter molds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly, Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ. This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

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The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace,¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles).¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews).¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father.¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God,²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together

into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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