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## Isaiah 46

(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 46.

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### Topics.

- Bel and Nebo's idols that cannot save are carried on beasts.
- I will save Israel who has been carried from the womb by me.
- The greatness of the LORD and the futility of idols.
- I am God there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning.
- God calls a bird of prey and a man of righteousness from the East.
- Cyrus the king of Persia in prophecy and Scripture.

**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.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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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.

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## ISAIAH 46:1-2

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### **Bel and Nebo's idols that Cannot Save are Carried on Beasts.**

- **Isaiah 46:1-2:** Bel (Baal) bows down; Nebo stoops; their idols are on beasts and livestock; these things you carry are borne as burdens on weary beasts. <sup>2</sup>They stoop; they bow down together; they cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity.

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In this chapter the Israelites are in captivity to Babylon, the LORD is highlighting the vanity and foolishness of believing in idols and calling them to turn to Him the only true God. He tells them that He is bringing His righteousness to them (v13) (referring to Cyrus the king of Persia who the LORD used as His anointed shepherd to set those in captivity free) (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1).

**Bel:** comes from the Hebrew word (*Bel*) and (*Ba'al*) and refers to the Baal of the Babylonians and a Phoenician deity, the plural is Baalim. It means Lord, possessor and husband. Since the Hebrew husband was regarded as the literal owner of his wife Baal was the common term for a husband. Most often however the word refers to the Semitic deity or deities called Baal. Baal is not the name of one god, but the name of the presiding deity of any given locality. Throughout the land of Canaan, the worship of Baal was much the same and because of this the name Baal over time came to represent the idea of one god to the people in Canaan.

The Baal was believed to be the god owning and controlling the land and the god that increased its crops, fruits, and cattle and because of this belief the farmer was completely dependent upon the Baal. Some Baal's were believed to be greater in power than others and others were believed to be in control of entire cities. The struggle between Baalism and Judaism came to a head on Mount Carmel when the prophet Elijah met the priests of Baal and slew four hundred and fifty of them.

However, the cult quickly recuperated and prospered until crushed by Jehu, but Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, the wife of Jehoram, gave the worship of Baal a new impulse. In the worship of Baal, incense and burnt sacrifices were offered to him and on extraordinary occasions the victims were children offered by their parents. Lascivious rites accompanied the worship and on various occasions' priests, danced around the altar in a

state of frenzy slashing themselves with knives. At first the name Baal was used by the Jews for their God without discrimination, but as the struggle between the two religions developed, the name Baal was given up in Judaism as a thing of sham.

**The Bel or Baal of the Babylonians:** the Babylonians wrote a Hymn to Bel it reveals him as the supreme ruler; the life-giver; the god of justice; the god who holds society together; the controller of the elements and especially of fire.

**Nebo:** was a god of Babylonian mythology believed to be the god of science and learning his special seat of worship was in the Babylonian city of Borsippa.

**These things you carry are burdens on weary beasts:** (v1) carries the idea that rather than the idols of Bel and Nebo (made of metal, wood or stone), being a blessing, they cause even the animals that carry them to buckle and stoop under their weight. The LORD is basically highlighting the truth that their gods are so powerless that they are even a burden to the beasts of the field that carry them and since this is the case what makes them believe that such gods that they believe in can save and deliver them from their enemies. The LORD here is showing how extremely foolish it is to believe that idols are gods. To a sane mind it is enormously difficult to comprehend how anyone could believe that something that had to be carried around on donkeys was a god that possessed power over life, creation and enemies.

**They cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity:** (v2) carries the idea that those who worshipped Bel, Nebo and the Babylon idols could not save their gods and neither could Bel, Nebo and the Babylon idols save the nations that worshipped them, both the nations and their idols were taken captive to a foreign land, neither could help each other. This shows the stupidity of worshipping idols, those who worship idols cannot save the idol from being broken and the idol cannot save them from going into captivity.

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## ISAIAH 46:3-4

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### **I will Save Israel who has been Carried from the Womb by Me.**

- **Isaiah 46:3-4:** "Listen to me, 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; <sup>4</sup>even 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.

In contrast to Idols that not only cannot save, but are a burden to the animals that carry them the LORD tells Israel that He has known them before He even gave birth to them and has not only carried them from the womb even to their old age, but has made them a nation that and will continue to bear with them and carry them home and save them.

**Israel a unique nation:** 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 (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 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. (Rom. 3:4).
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Rom. 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. (Rom. 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).

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.

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### THE THERMOMETER OF GOD'S PROPHECY

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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. When their Messiah does return in glory and the LORD pours upon them a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy when they look on him whom they had pierced, not only will the entire nation weep over the horrific crime they committed against him (Zech. 12:9-14), but the entire world and its oppressive systems of global finance and trade will be changed and its corrupt governments will be replaced for the better. 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.

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**I will bear; I will carry and will save:** (v4) can refer to the following two events:

1. To Cyrus the king of Persia who God used 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, <sup>3</sup>I 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*. <sup>4</sup>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. (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*, <sup>6</sup>that 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).

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.

## 2. To the following prophetic words of the prophet Zechariah: -

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- On that day (the day the Lord protects the inhabitants of Jerusalem) I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>"And I 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. <sup>11</sup>On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great the priests will mourn by themselves and each family will mourn by themselves (Zech. 12:9-14).

There is no doubt that faithful Jews today love the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but sadly not only did they not recognise their Messiah when he came to them, but actually had him put to death. imagine for a moment how terrible they will feel when they see the Messiah the Scriptures and their prophets speak of and the one who they have always believed was to come is the who they rejected and crucified, is it any wonder they will be struck with deep grief, sorrow and mourning?

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### ISAIAH 46:5-7

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#### The Greatness of the LORD and the Futility of Idols.

- **Isaiah 46:5-7:** "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? <sup>6</sup>Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! <sup>7</sup>They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble.

Again the LORD is magnifying the utter foolishness of worshipping idols, He is basically saying to the people Israel who have given themselves to idols, "Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, who are far from righteousness



will you compare me with a god that a craftsman makes with his own hands for you to fall down and worship! A god you have to carry because it cannot move from its place and if any one of you cries to it, it does not answer?

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## THE LIVING BIBLE AND IDOLS

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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 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)

## I am God, Declaring the End from the Beginning.

- **Isaiah 46:8-10:** "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, <sup>9</sup>remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, <sup>10</sup>declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'

Before the world began God being eternal and therefore having eternal foreknowledge not only planned and purposed in His eternal mind that Jesus Christ would be the Saviour of mankind, but also in His foreknowledge was able to see the future before it came to pass and the path that man's free will would take and therefore able to inspire the prophets by His Spirit to predict future events. In the book of Proverbs, it is written:

- Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21).

This principle is not limited to men and women only, but also applies to kings, rulers of nations, governments, ministers and leaders of churches, organisation and groups. We all make our plans, but none of them no matter how great will hinder the eternal and sovereign plan that God planned and purposed in His eternal mind before time began and set in motion by His spoken word at creation. This is the mystery of God, somehow in ways that we cannot understand our will works within God's sovereign will.

**A personal note:** when speaking of such topics as God's sovereignty, God's timeless mind, predestination and God's foreknowledge I am fully aware that it is with a fallen and finite mind that is limited to time (as we understand it) that I am attempting to understand God's eternal wisdom and God's eternal knowledge which is far higher than my limited fallen mortal mind can comprehend therefore I never claim perfect understanding and would certainly not be dogmatic concerning my explanations and understandings when speaking of God's eternal sovereignty, but always allow for a certain amount of mystery. The following verses show that man cannot find out God's works upon earth:

- God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes. 3:11).
- Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17).
- The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. <sup>12</sup>For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them. (Eccles. 9:11-12).

This means that no one no matter how intelligent or how much they study can find out the works of God upon the earth. The LORD has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow. This chapter is shining a spotlight upon the truth that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the only God that can plan history or an event and then bring it to pass there is no other god that can do such a thing. The apostle Peter wrote in his letter:

- We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," <sup>18</sup>we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.



<sup>19</sup>And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup>knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:16-19).

Here Peter is saying that their faith did not solely rely upon the testimony of others or upon the glorious fact that while on the Mount of Transfiguration they heard God Himself say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," (Matt. 17:5), but was founded upon something even more certain than these two things. This is a stunning statement, what could be more-sure than the testimony of the faithful and the LORD'S voice? The answer is, "the fulfilled prophetic words of God." These are more certain than the testimony of others and the voice of God, because people can exaggerate their testimonies and the mind can be deceived by visions and trances and only the person themselves have experienced them. In contrast to this everyone can check out the prophetic prophecies against history since they are all recorded in Scripture and there is no clairvoyant, god or man who can predict the future. Clairvoyants may at times make a prediction that may come to pass and men who have a certain amount of wisdom and insight may at times predict future events by observing past history and current events happening on earth at the time, but no clairvoyant, man or god can predict the future in such exact detail as God does and sometime hundreds of years before they come to pass. Added to this they are all written down so that anyone can check the detail of them against history for themselves. The Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled when Jesus came into the world prove that Jesus is Israel's Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world. This is why the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes, the keepers of God's word should have recognised Jesus when he came to them and why they are without excuse.

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### ISAIAH 46:11-13

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#### **God calls a Bird of Prey and a Man of Righteousness from the East.**

- **Isaiah 46:11-13:** 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. <sup>12</sup>"Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness: <sup>13</sup>I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory."

**Calling a bird of prey from the east:** (v11) this is said of Cyrus king of Media Persia who the LORD stirred up to be the future restorer of Israel, here it is said that he came from the East while in (Isaiah 41:25) it is said that he came 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.

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.

**I bring near my righteousness:** (v2) this refers to Cyrus he 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 is also referred to as God's righteousness because 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.

**The Empire of Persian and Media:** Cyrus the great the king of Persia was notable for embracing various civilizations and becoming the largest empire the world had ever seen. At the end of Cyrus's rule, the Achaemenid Empire (also called the First Persian Empire) stretched from Asia Minor in the west to the north-western areas of India in the east. Cyrus respected the customs and religions of the lands he conquered and his reign lasted between 29 and 31 years. He built his empire by conquering first the Median Empire, then the Lydian Empire and eventually the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

Either before or after Babylon, he led an expedition into central Asia, which resulted in major campaigns that were described as having brought "into subjection every nation without exception." Cyrus did not venture into Egypt, as he himself died in battle. It is said that in universal history, the role of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus lies in its very successful model for centralized administration and establishing a government working to the advantage and profit of its subjects.

**The history of Israel and Assyria and Judah and Babylon:** 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).

For further information concerning Cyrus see the notes under the title: "I will bear; I will carry and will save," following (v3-4).

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## CYRUS THE KING OF PERSIA IN PROPHECY AND SCRIPTURE

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The following verses show the awesome brilliance and amazing detail of the prophecies of the LORD'S prophets concerning Cyrus:

- 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: <sup>23</sup>"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: <sup>2</sup>"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. (Ezra 1:1-2).
- However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. <sup>14</sup>And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Shesh-bazzar, whom he had made governor; <sup>15</sup>and he said to him, "Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site." <sup>16</sup>Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been in building, and it is not yet finished.' <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter." (Ezra 5:13-17).
- In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. (Ezra 6:3).
- The elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia. (Ezra 6:14).

*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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