



### **The Prayer of Cyrus the Great:**

*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, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4)*

In a lonely little valley a few miles from the summer palace of Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes at Persepolis is a grove of trees that partially obscure the remains of ancient structures at Pasargadae – the home and birthplace of Cyrus the Great. A short walk from the outer ruins, one sees a simple, but magnificently fashioned structure of solid stone resembling a large house – perhaps 75 feet tall. This is the Tomb of Cyrus the Great. Over the entrance of the tomb are inscribed these words: *O man, whosever thou art, and from whithersoever thou comest (for I know thou must come), Behold I am Cyrus, son of Cambyses, who founded the empire of Persia and ruled over all of Asia. Therefore, begrudge me not this small dust that covers my bones.* Before the death of Cyrus, large trains of servants, soldiers and royal guards followed him wherever he went; but, now, his grave stands a lonely and silent vigil over the desolate environs<sup>1</sup>; and no guard stands at the tomb to protect against pilferers.

Cyrus the Great was my first childhood hero (the second being General Robert E. Lee). I read of the biblical account of Cyrus the Great while attending public school in the third grade. (I never suffered any debilitating side-effects from such biblical training in school) I learned that he was a fierce conqueror, but a kind and gentle governor of the lands he conquered. He was, by faith, a Zoroastrian whose priests were called Magi! Inscribed on the walls of Babylon subsequent to its fall to him, in ancient Mesopotamian Cuneiform letters, (from whence Daniel prophesied in his early years) are these words, *My numerous troops moved about undisturbed in the midst of Babylon. I did not allow anyone to terrorise the land of Sumer and Akkad. I kept in view the needs of Babylon and all its*

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<sup>1</sup> Though the “awesome” ruler of the known world, like every person ever made by God in His Image, Cyrus went before Him at his judgment alone. On his own merits? He best hope not.

sanctuaries to promote their well being. The citizens of Babylon ..... I lifted their unbecoming yoke. Their dilapidated dwellings I restored. I put an end to their misfortunes. The bank cheque was introduced by Cyrus (on clay tablet), as well as the first pony express from Susa to the Mediterranean Sea. Herodotus commented in admiration of the Persian pony express: "Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers. The entire plan is a Persian invention. Along the whole trail there are men stationed with horses, and will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to travel.

All of this background history aside, Cyrus was the anointed of the Lord and His Shepherd whom God called and even NAMED, two hundred years before his advent, to restore the captivity of Judah to Jerusalem. *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.* (Isaiah 44:28) <sup>1</sup> Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; <sup>2</sup> I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: <sup>3</sup> And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. <sup>4</sup> For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. (Isaiah 45:1-4)

It is not clear, based on Cyrus' prayer in Ezra 1, if Cyrus finally accepted the God of Heaven as his own god. But whether Cyrus was aware or not, God used Cyrus to perform His will. He empowered and guided Cyrus, and gave him ultimate victory over the known empires of the world. But He did so with one particular aim – to harbor and advance His people in returning to Jerusalem.

I cannot make better comment than that already provided in Ezra: <sup>5</sup> Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. <sup>7</sup> Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; <sup>8</sup> Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. <sup>9</sup> And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, <sup>10</sup> Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. <sup>11</sup> All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:5-11)

If history is a subject that bores the reader, then you have my apologies. But I see in the perfect prophecies concerning Cyrus to be ones which enhance our appreciation and understanding of the Providence and All-Powerful nature of God. He not only holds the past in His hands, but the present and future as well. Whatsoever thing God ordains shall come to pass without possibility of failure. It is likely that God not only called Cyrus by name two hundred years before his taking of Babylon, but perhaps far earlier in the eons of time before the world was made.

This is the striking and cardinal message that I derive from the life of Cyrus – that God ordains all things prior to their eventuality. Nothing in the Kingdom of God happens by accident or mere fortune. He called Cyrus long before his conception in his mother's womb. So did He call Jeremiah: *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* (Jer 1:4-5) The Old Testament

presents an abundance of evidence of the fore-ordaining nature of God in His Providence. So presents the New Testament – one grand example: *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* (Romans 8:26-30)

***How readest thou?*** (Luke 10:26)