

Cyrus Predicted by Name

In Isaiah 44:24-28, we have a poem constantly increasing in strength and emphasis, stressing the omnipotence and especially the omniscience of God, and reaching its great climax with the declaration that God will rebuild Jerusalem, that He will destroy the Mesopotamian power (which He indicates by the statement "dry up thy rivers"), and that He has raised up Cyrus as His instrument to perform these things.

This mention of the name of Cyrus, not as one newly introduced but as one known to the readers, has presented a great problem to many students of the book of Isaiah. His name occurs in this last verse of chapter 44 and again in the first verse of chapter 45. It is a striking instance of predictive prophecy, that God would thus give the name of the king who would deliver the people from the Babylonian power, more than one hundred years before his actual appearance on the scene of history. Destructive critics use it as one of their main arguments to show that this part of Isaiah was not written by the prophet but is a product of a later age. Yet anyone who believes in the supernatural should find no difficulty in believing that God might choose to predict the exact name of a ruler over a century before his time. Although we do not often find this occurring in Scripture, this is not the only instance. In 1 Kings 13:2 the name of Josiah, king of Judah, was predicted three hundred years before his appearance.

The first three verses of chapter 45 declare that Cyrus is commissioned by God to conquer many nations; God will open before him even the two-leaved gates of powerful Babylon. The riches hidden in secret places by mighty Babylonian kings will be given to him; when this occurs all those who have read Isaiah's prediction will have convincing proof of the power of the God of Israel. Verse 4 tells us that all the victories of Cyrus are brought about for the sake of "Jacob my servant." Although Cyrus has not known God by name, God has named Cyrus a century before his time and God is bringing Cyrus into history in order to fulfill God's purposes. Thus the prophet makes the claim that history is controlled by God and that God is sovereign in all that occurs. Many