

Is Donald Trump a Modern-Day Cyrus?

Ever since Donald Trump began to surge as a candidate last year, Christians have been pointing to the book of Isaiah and comparing Trump with the ancient Persian King Cyrus. Some have even claimed that God has revealed to them that He will use Trump for the good of America just as He used Cyrus for the good of the Jewish people, even though Cyrus was a “pagan” king.

Could this be true?

Let’s first look at the biblical and ancient Near Eastern evidence.

Cyrus (whose name was pronounced “ko-resh” in Hebrew) became king of Persia in 559 B.C. and conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. He is mentioned in a majestic passage in Isaiah where the Lord says of Cyrus, “‘He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My desire’; and he declares to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’” (Is. 44:28).

In other words, Cyrus would be the one who would cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt after it had been destroyed decades earlier by the Babylonians.

But there’s more that Isaiah says about Cyrus as the prophecy continues into chapter 45: “Thus says the Lord to Cyrus, His anointed, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and to loosen the loins of kings, to open doors before him so that the gates will not be shut: I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and shatter the bars of iron. And I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places so that you may know that I,

the Lord, who calls you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake and Israel My chosen one, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me'" (Is. 45:1-4).

Notice the beginning and the end of this passage. First, Cyrus, a non-Israelite king, is called God's anointed, a term elsewhere only used for Israelite leaders. Second, Cyrus, although called by the God of Israel, doesn't actually know the God of Israel. Instead, like the vast majority of people in the ancient world, he worshipped different deities in the form of idols.

In fulfillment of this prophecy, the Scriptures record how Cyrus made this decree to the Jewish people living in Babylon, where they had been taken in exile: "The LORD [meaning Yahweh] God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has commanded me to build for Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may the LORD [Yahweh] his God be with him. Let him go up" (2 Chr. 36:23).

So a pagan king encouraged the Jewish people to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple, also helping to finance the endeavor.

But Cyrus did not only do this for the people of Israel.

This became a standard Persian policy, allowing exiles to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples as subjects of the Persian empire.

We know this from the famous Cyrus Cylinder that was discovered in 1879. There, we read that Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon and called "the king of the gods" in the text, "took the hand of Cyrus ... and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything."

We also read in the text that Cyrus restored the various idol temples in his empire, which gives further confirmation to the biblical account.

So, here, it is Marduk who is given credit for the reign of Cyrus. In the Bible, it is Yahweh, the God of Israel and the only true God, who takes the credit. Obviously, Cyrus did not know Him, just as Isaiah said.

Could Donald Trump, then, be a modern-day Cyrus? Could it be that Trump, like Cyrus, clearly does not know the Lord in a real and personal way but could still be used by God to accomplish His purposes?

As the saying goes, let God be God, meaning, it's up to Him to do what He wants to do. Only He can answer this question for sure.

Or, from a more secular perspective, only time will tell.

What's clear, though, is that God did not raise up an idol-worshipping king to rule the nation of Israel. That would have been a curse rather than a blessing.

In contrast, Christians are talking about God raising up Trump to lead America, which would be very different than Cyrus being used to help the exiles return to Jerusalem and rebuild it.

That doesn't mean, of course, that Trump could not be a Cyrus-type of figure. It simply means that the parallel breaks down when applied.

But there's another possibility to consider.

There was another ancient king named Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian leader who, decades before Cyrus became king, led his armies to destroy Jerusalem, burn down the temple and send the Jewish people into exile in 586 B.C.

He too was an idol worshipper, yet shockingly, Yahweh called him "My servant," stating plainly, "I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land [meaning Judah] and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations; I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations" (Jer. 25:9; see also 27:6; 43:10).

So Cyrus was anointed by God to restore the Jewish people from captivity and to rebuild Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar, as a vessel of divine judgment, was called by God to send the Jewish people into exile and to destroy Jerusalem.

Two pagan kings, one raised up to bring judgment and the other raised up to bring restoration.

Is Donald Trump a Cyrus or a Nebuchadnezzar, if either?

Let God be God, and only time will tell.

But while we wait and watch and vote and act, let's not forget to pray: God, have mercy on America!

The one thing of which we are sure is that this is a very critical season in the history of our nation.