

Isaiah Chapter 45- John Karmelich

1. Back when I made the decision to teach Isaiah, I have to admit, there were three lessons that I was really looking forward to do. The first was "The tale of two cities", which you may recall was my alternative title to Chapters 13-14, as it described the destiny of the second most discussed city in the Bible, Babylon. By the way, we do get some discussion of that city here in this lesson as well. My other favorite, which is coming up in the not too distant future is Chapter 53. It's well known amongst many Christian bible scholars as the "Holy of Holies" of bible text written prior to Jesus' time. That's because that chapter describes in detail the events of the cross 700 years earlier, as if Isaiah was there to witness the details. Those two lessons are examples of my favorite prophecy lessons in Isaiah.
 - a) My third favorite, which if you haven't guessed by now, is Chapter 45. If you enjoy bible predictions about the future, this is one of the most remarkable predictions in the bible as it names by name the Persian emperor who overthrew Babylon without a battle.
 - b) It may help at this point if one is familiar with the book of Daniel Chapter 5. That chapter tells essentially the same story as this chapter. Daniel tells this story from the perspective of the Babylonians who went down to defeat that day. Isaiah tells it from the perspective of the Persians who were the ones who conquered that city without a battle.
 - c) A reason many "so called" bible scholars have to late date the second half of Isaiah is that they can't stand the accuracy that Isaiah had in describing this event two centuries before it occurred. As I've stated in previous lessons, there are a number of ways to prove there's only one Isaiah, but for the Christian, there is the fact that Jesus quoted from both the first and the second "sections" of Isaiah and the verse between those two quotes, Jesus said that people couldn't believe because the same (big emphasis) Isaiah said again. (John 12:30).
 - d) There is a nonbiblical tradition that I suspect is true: It is that when Cyrus (the translation of his name as spelled in Persian) walked into Babylon as it was taken over without there being any battles, Daniel himself handed Cyrus a (roughly) 200 year old scroll of Isaiah. Cyrus was so impressed how this Jewish God mentioned him by name and described the details of how the city was taken over, he was impressed enough to let the Jewish people return to their homeland. That decree is stated in the first few verses of the Book of Ezra, which was written around the time of the Israelites return.
 - e) The reason I suspect it was Daniel who handed him that scroll, is because Chapter 5 of the book of Daniel, describes how he was called to go to a party where the king was at. There, Daniel described a message from God that the Babylonian Empire was about to end. That chapter described the Persian troops entering the city. I picture Daniel at that point, when asked where the king was, he responds, "The king is down the hall first door on your left, can't miss him." Daniel Chapter 6 tells us Cyrus made Daniel the top administrator in the Persian government, and I suspect Cyrus did that as Daniel is the one who personally told him what Isaiah wrote. Again it's just a legend, but it fits the facts of what's written in the books of Daniel and Ezra that happened centuries after Isaiah was written.
2. OK, you can tell by now I'm excited about this lesson and I haven't even described all of it yet. It is a strange chapter in that Cyrus is referred to as "A" Messiah, the only time a non-Jewish person got that title in the bible. The reason this chapter is here is not just to give us another interesting history lesson, but also to help us understand the role of "The" Messiah and what He does in His Second Coming. Let me put it this way, if Isaiah Chapter 53 describes in detail the key events of Jesus First Coming, Isaiah 45 describe both by example and then by direct reference to "The" one what it is the Messiah does in what we Christians call His Second Coming.
 - a) Therefore, my title for this lesson is "Understanding what it is Jesus actually does at His Second Coming". We'll discuss why that is and what that role is in this lesson.

- b) I love this lesson for other reasons as well. We just finished four chapters that focused on the topic of God's judgment of us. In effect, we're not done yet, as this chapter uses Cyrus as an illustration of who's doing the judging. Then the last part of this chapter focuses on "The" Messiah Himself (who we Christians call Jesus) and how that judgment process will work when He returns.
 - c) In summary, I am looking forward to discussing the details of this chapter as I consider it one of the great accurate bible predictions about the future from Isaiah's perspective in the 7th Century BC, while it is accurate history from our perspective. Remember when this is written, Babylon was just a small city that hasn't even risen to power yet. Isaiah describes the rise and fall of Babylon as if it's a "done deal", with Chapter 45 describing the events of the fall of the Babylonian Empire from the conquering Persian's perspective.
 - d) The reason it ties to Jesus Second Coming is just as Cyrus became the judge of all nations, so Jesus will judge us individually and corporately when He returns. That just means He is going to decide which nation groups will be blessed and cursed when He rules as well as our individual salvations and rewards.
 - e) OK, I'm ready to jump out of my chair with excitement, and I haven't even started any of my verse by verse commentary yet. I ask that you join me as I discuss this key moment in world history and how that event models Jesus Second Coming. We should care about all of this history as it models how Jesus will judge us when we each have to face Him when He judges us. Enough of that, let's get started.
3. Chapter 45, Verse 1: "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:
- a) First, realize that this is the third time Cyrus is mentioned by name. He's also mentioned in Chapter 41 and the last verse in Chapter 44. I waited until this lesson to really discuss this man as the first half of the chapter focuses on his life.
 - b) Next let me give you a little more background. The word Cyrus is transliterated from the original "Farsi", the native language of what is today Iran. There are two major historians who write about this event. One many Christians are familiar with named Josephus who lived around the time of Jesus. He wrote one book on Israel's history including this event of Cyrus conquering Babylon. His other famous book was about the Romans conquering Israel in and around 70AD. The second source of this event was a man named Herodotus who'll I may mention a few times in this lesson.
 - c) Speaking of Herodotus, he wrote that Cyrus conquered the Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappodcians, Phrygians, the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, the Bactrians, Indians, Cilicians, Sacians, Paphloagonians, Maryandines, and many other nations. Don't worry, there is no quiz on remembering all those nations. My point is this king not only defeated the capital city of the largest emperor the world had known up to that date, but he also defeated a lot of other nations that existed back then. He didn't defeat Egypt, but his son took care of that.
 - d) Next I love to share the story of how he conquered Babylon. That city had walls that were reported to be 300 feet high and 85 feet wide. The Euphrates River ran under the city with a series of moats that ran around the city for protection. Babylon was considered to be an unconquerable city as it had water and food stored up for years with walls that were hard to conquer. Cyrus defeated Babylon by going way upstream, and diverting the water into another place. As the river stopped flowing around the city moats, his soldiers were able to walk under the city gates. By "accident" the inner iron bar gates were left open that day so the soldiers entered that big city with no resistance.
 - i) The Babylonian emperor was busy having a party with the top officials when all of this occurred. That's why the army defeated them without a battle. Daniel saw all of this and wrote about it in Daniel Chapter 5.

- ii) The city residents didn't even know it was taken over for a few days.
- iii) Cyrus himself was like a general watching the action from the outside of this city. The reports are that Cyrus only entered the city 17 days later with a lot of fanfare to announce him as the new leader of this city, let alone the emperor. I believe it is at this moment when Daniel greeted him and read to him from the first few verses of Isaiah Chapter 45. As I said in the introduction, Cyrus made Daniel a leader in his administration even though he was a top official for the Babylonians. I suspect that's true as Cyrus was impressed with Daniel's loyalty to the true God and not to the Babylonian deities.
- iv) That same historian also said Cyrus carried statues (idols) of the Persian gods with him as he went into battle. Yet his gravestone credits the God of the Israelites with his victory in Babylon and he honored that God for guiding his life.
- e) With all that background fresh in our minds, I'd like to repeat Verse 1 again: "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:
 - i) Visualize Daniel with a 200-year-old scroll of the book of Isaiah in his hand. Now picture Daniel reading this scroll to Cyrus. Imagine Cyrus hearing his name being read and what he accomplished. Notice the reference in this verse to nations being subdued by this king. Notice the reference in this verse to "gates not being shut". I can just picture Cyrus with his mouth wide open thinking, "Whoever this writer is, some god must have given him that knowledge as it's describing what I've done a long time before it happened."
 - ii) Notice the first part of this verse: It contains God's most holy name, referred to as LORD in all capitals. Then the verse refers to Cyrus as "his anointed".
 - iii) That's important because God's calling Cyrus "His Messiah". As I just stated a few paragraphs back, Cyrus carried emblems of his foreign gods (idols) into battle, yet we read here of Isaiah referring to Cyrus as "His Messiah"? OK, what gives?
 - iv) The answer is not that Cyrus was "The" Messiah. My proof is that Isaiah said that when "The" Messiah comes He will rule the world from Jerusalem, something that we never read Cyrus doing. Isaiah wrote chapters ago that changes to the natural world do occur when the Messiah comes such as "the wolf laying down the lamb". All I'm saying is Cyrus is not "it", just a model of "it". Just as God allowed Cyrus to conquer that large list of cities and countries and have all those residents judged as part of Cyrus's new empire, so the Messiah will rule over the entire world and the world must answer to Him.
 - v) Cyrus is also a model of "The" Messiah as Cyrus rescues God's people from living in the Babylonian Empire and he'll make a decree to allow the Jewish people to go back to their homeland. Again, that decree is listed in the first three verses of Ezra Chapter 1.
 - vi) With that said, we're almost done with Verse 1. The rest of the verse correctly says how this man Cyrus will subdue nations before him and strip kings of their armor as he conquers. I admit that if I was Cyrus and I entered Babylon for the first time as a conqueror, I'd be impressed if an old scroll had all that information on it. It'd get me to somehow acknowledge the God responsible for writing it. It must have made Cyrus's ego go up a few notches as God describes it as it happened.
 - vii) If all of that isn't impressive enough, the last part of Verse 1 mentions open doors that the gates were not shut. Again I believe it was Herodotus who wrote that the iron inner gates to Babylon were unlocked when the Persian army entered. What I suspect is the guards were busy drinking with the king and forgot to close up the gates, which is how Cyrus's army was able to enter that city.

4. Verse 2: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.
- Remember who the "I" is in this verse. It is describing God. It's saying God will go before this king to "level the mountains". No, it doesn't mean Cyrus cut roads in mountains. It is referring to kings of other large places that fell. It is a poetic reference. One has to realize that in that time era, cities were surrounded by high walls to protect themselves against a foreign army. Yet God's saying he will lead Cyrus to overcome the obstacles of traveling great distances (over mountains) and entering well secured cities to conquer them. If one looks at an ancient map of the Persian Empire at it's peak, it covered the Middle East and it went east to India and included Egypt and what is Saudi Arabia today. It went west to what is Turkey today and bordered Greece. Verse 2 was a literal fulfillment of history.
 - This chapter also builds up momentum as later it will discuss "The" Messiah as He will be conquering all of the known world. I've never had a problem with how Jesus will do all of this simply because I figure if Jesus is God, He can do what He wants when He wants. If it takes an army of believers or angels to follow Him, so be it. Either way, I accept it as Gospel truth just as I accept the life of Jesus as being Gospel truth. In the meantime, we're just getting warmed up dealing with a model of the Messiah. Let's read on.
5. Verse 3: I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
- Picture Cyrus hearing all of this read to him on an old scroll by some man he's never met as he first enters the city of Babylon. Remember in my introduction how I said Babylon's considered a city impossible to conquer? Remember the 300 (plus) high walls, that were 85 feet thick with a moat that runs around it, and a river running through it? That city is considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Yes it was also full of valuable treasures of all the places the Babylonians had conquered. Yet Cyrus is famous for taking over this city without a battle and inheriting all this treasure.
 - If nothing else, this verse is a good reminder that God interferes with the affairs of man as He rules over the world. This verse describes Cyrus by name, said that God specifically is summoning him by name so "deal with it". So how do we know whether or not God only intervenes in the affairs of world leaders and not everyday people like you and me? Well, to start the bible is full of stories of God using "everyday people" to accomplish His will. If you give your life to Jesus, then whether you realize it or not, you become one of His who is now subject to His will for our lives. My point is that if God can call a non-Jewish king by name in the bible to do His will, He can just as easily work with you and me to do His will in our lives in the world around us.
 - In the meantime, I picture Cyrus's already big ego going up a few more notches as He is listening to what is said about him as Isaiah describes in detail what he has accomplished.
6. Verse 4: For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.
- Speaking of ego's going up a few notches, I now picture Cyrus shutting his mouth as he is listening to Verse 4. To give one of loose translations, "Hey Cyrus old buddy even though you have no idea who I (God) am, I've given you all of these victories and taking over the Babylonian Empire not because I think you're greater than most men, but because I want to use you for the sake of my people (the Israelites) so they can go free.
 - Picture Cyrus with his mouth wide open as he has Verses 1-3 read to him. Then when this next verse is read, I picture Cyrus shutting his mouth as if to say, "OK this God said I was going to do all of this, I better acknowledge Him as whoever He is, He's a powerful god as He knew of history in advance."
 - Notice no mention of Isaiah here. He's giving all the credit to God as if to state, God's the one who predicted all of this and I'm just a messenger to be used by Him for His will. (A good attitude for us to have!)

7. Verse 5: I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.
- a) Imagine how this Persian king could have reacted: He could have said, ok, I'm impressed with what this foreign god predicted but I can't turn my back on the gods I've worshipped all my life just because this foreign God made an accurate prediction.
 - b) History records some interesting facts about Cyrus. Yes he did have idols carried around with him as he entered newly conquered cities. That may have been the politically correct thing to do as Cyrus was leading a large army. Yet Cyrus did acknowledge God as he did make the decree allowing the Jewish people to return to their homeland and even gave up some treasures to allow the Jewish people to go rebuild the temple. Remember that at his gravesite, Cyrus's grave marker did acknowledge the God of the Bible as the one who led him to the victories. My point is once God gets his "foot in the door of our lives" we then begin to see Him work in our lives for His glory.
 - c) So is Cyrus in heaven? No idea. I just know that God used Cyrus for his purposes. We'll have to see if Cyrus is there when we get there.
 - d) The point is these two verses are the classic reminder that there is no other way to get into heaven other than to acknowledge the true and living God. For those who were naïve on the topic of God, He expects people to see the world around them and realize that there's got to be something greater than ourselves who created everything. Even for Cyrus, who had multiple gods of the ancient Persian world as gods, he had to realize there has to be a single God greater than all of those false gods that created everything. The good news for Cyrus is he did acknowledge God's existence and "put his money where his mouth was". What I mean by that is he allowed the Israelites to go home and even financed the temple to God that was built when some of the Israelites did return to Israel.
 - e) In effect, this verse is God's response to the concept that there are lots of ways to get into heaven without acknowledging the god of the bible. It's the classic reminder there is only one way to get to heaven, and that's through the Israelite God, so "don't mess with Him".
8. Verse 7: I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.
- a) Well, if the first six verses were not controversial enough, Verse 7 is a doozy! It describes God as not only creating light but darkness and evil too. OK, here we go:
 - i) To start, realize Verse 7 echoes Genesis 1:2. The wording is the same. There is a classical theory (one I don't agree with) that the fall of Satan came between Verses 1 and 2 in Genesis Chapter 1. That's because the Spirit of God was over the face of the deep in Verse 2. The idea here is Genesis 1:1 is about perspective. The world as we know it hasn't been made yet. Still God needed a point of reference in order to describe what He was making. Imagine standing on earth yet it wasn't created yet. That's sort of the idea of Genesis 1:1, our "perspective point" for reference as we describe what God is creating.
 - ii) Anyway, some bible scholars theorize that Satan's fall occurred between Verses 1 and 2, as Verse 2 describes God's Spirit hovering over this point of reference.
 - iii) I bring all that up here, because Verse 7 is essentially saying the same thing.
 - b) Pause and consider why would Isaiah include this here? Here's Isaiah effectively telling us of the praises of Cyrus who is God's anointed to do His will. That will, was to let His people go back to His land so they could continue to be a witness for Him. Now we get an interruption of that praise fest, to tell us how the world was first made.
 - i) The point is when Cyrus hears about this foreign god, (i.e., "the" God), God wants Cyrus and us to realize He created the world in which we live in. He made both light and darkness, good and bad things and He's above all other things people do worship as God. That's why this verse is here.

- c) That leads me back to the idea of God creating both good and evil. I remember when my daughter was a little girl and she asked me why God created Satan in the first place? Then she pondered if God is God, why doesn't He just destroy him and be done with it? Great questions to ponder. First realize that Satan was created to be an angel that worshipped God. Satan was the "lead angel" until He rebelled. The reason God allows him to exist is to prove to people that we can resist all evil power if we trust in God's power as being a greater force than anything and everything Satan throws at us. In other words, Satan can not take away our salvation, but he does want us to be ineffective witnesses for God so we don't spread the word about Him to others.
- i) The shorter version is God allows him to exist to prove His power is much greater than anything Satan has to offer.
 - ii) As to why God allows evil, if for no other reason it shows the consequences of the effect of a world cursed by sin. Remember that suffering and salvation are not the same issue. God allows many believers and nonbelievers to suffer in this lifetime. The suffering is due to the effects of living in a world cursed by sin. All I'm saying is God allows Satan to exist as it's part of His eternal plan to show He's greater and we should honor Jesus as God.
 - iii) I just reread the verse to make sure I haven't wandered further into "left field" than I think I have done. I stated all of this to explain why He created evil as implied in Verse 7. It explains why God allows horrible things to occur in life.
 - iv) That leads to the other classic question of when did Satan rebel? I don't know. All I know is by the time of the Garden of Eden, that's when he made an effort to rebel against God. As to the specific time point when he rebelled, we'll have to ask God one day. If God wanted us to know that exact date, then it'd be clearly stated for us in the bible.
- d) OK, time to stop getting all "theological" on you and remember that God wanted Isaiah to put this verse here so that Cyrus can think of God as being all encompassing, and not just another "deity" that happened to know Cyrus's history before it ever occurred.
9. Verse 8: "You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the LORD, have created it.
- a) I've always been a big believer that before one can talk to anyone about Jesus, first one has to acknowledge the existence of God Himself. That's why Isaiah's giving this little speech here on evidence for a supreme God that created all things. In context, we're working our way up to a point of describing the coming Messiah. One can't understand their need for a Messiah without understanding that we're sinners to begin with. Even to get the idea of being a sinner, one has to start with the existence of a God who created all things who we are accountable to. That's the picture Isaiah's working on in Verse 8.
 - b) To sum up the chapter to this point, it started with God telling Cyrus, that He knows who Cyrus was before he was born and described his life's story in the first few verses of this chapter centuries before it occurred. That lead to a discussion of "who is this God anyway that I Cyrus (and all of us) must acknowledge exists?"
 - c) One has to remember that false gods always resemble what it is we desire: If we desire to have fame, fortune or power, those gods resembled what we desire. The multi-god places that worshipped those deities did acknowledge that a supreme God must exist. The idea is the "supreme" God is above getting involved in the affairs of man, therefore one must appeal to "lower deities" in order to get what one desires in life.
 - d) Despite all of that theology, God's saying here, "I am that supreme deity who created all that we see, so deal with it." The idea for Cyrus was to get him to think above what it is he personally worshiped to realize "the" God was one talking to Him through Isaiah here in this speech.

10. Verse 9: "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"
- What we have here is effectively God working on Cyrus's ego. Remember that he has just conquered one of the greatest wonders of the world without a battle. He was entering the city without having to destroy the city or kill mass numbers of people. Yes in this chapter, God acknowledges who Cyrus is and what he had accomplished, but the last few verses is the reminder of who God is in comparison to who Cyrus is. It is like saying, "Yes you are my chosen person for this mission, but let's not forget who created you in the first place!"
 - That's why Isaiah uses an illustration of a pile of clay calling out to a pot maker, what are you are making anyway? Yes of course this is impossible, but that's the idea here. Who is Cyrus to question God as to why you're doing this?
 - Let's be honest, Cyrus could lay in bed at night thinking he's something special, or that his gods allowed him to do all of this, or it was by his power than he conquered all the places I listed near the start of this lesson. God's response to the question, of "why me" is who do we think we are to question God in the first place? That's the dilemma Job suffered when he wanted to question God about why God allowed Job's life to be so hard? God's answer is effectively, "Who are you to question Me? Who created people in the first place? That's the idea behind this verse.
 - OK, I made the mistake of interrupting Isaiah when he's on a roll again.
11. Verse 10: Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?'
- In Verse 9, Isaiah used an illustration as if clay could talk and say, "Hey there Mr. Clay Pot maker, what are you making me into?" If that illustration went over the audience's head, then Verse 10 makes it even more obvious. Verse 10 would be as if a baby coming out of the womb was then asking his or her parents, so why did you bring me into this world? Again the idea behind this verse is who are we to question God?
 - I can't help thinking of the book of Job here. People who don't know that book well think it is an explanation of why bad things are allowed to happen to good people. In the book of Job, he is never told why he was allowed to suffer the way he did. Instead, when God does speak to Job, God gives Job a lecture as if to say, "Where were you when I created all that you see? Who do you think you are daring to ask me questions?" The questions that are asked in Verses 9 and 10 make the same point. It is, "God's in charge, deal with it and stop pondering why it so."
 - Remember to read these verses in context of the bigger picture: The chapter gives us great details of what happens in history centuries before it occurs. When Cyrus hears all of this he has to be pondering, why me? The Babylonians have to be pondering why us? Finally the Jewish people had to be thinking, why do we have to go into captivity and why do we get to come back to the land of Israel?" God's answer to all these questions are essentially that He's in charge, so deal with it and I care about those who I choose to care about!
 - The good news is that if we've accepted Jesus as being both God and in charge of our lives as well as the fact we accept He paid for all our sins, then we're admitted into this club of people that God cares about and wants to eternally bless. Does that mean we get to avoid suffering in this lifetime? Of course not. Just as His chosen people way back then had to go through their own trials, so God allows us to go through trials so that our lives glorify Him in all that we do. That thought leads me to Verse 11:
12. "This is what the LORD says-- the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?"
- Essentially we get one more "who are you to question me" type of verse here. Again it is here for us to ponder, who's in charge here anyway, especially when life gets hard!
 - OK I've now beaten the point to death that God's in charge and we must accept it point.

- c) The classic question of course is "now what?" Since we accept that God's in charge of our life and He allows bad and good things to somehow occur for His glory? What do we do about it? First if we are suffering at the moment, we get help and deal with the best that we can. God never says that we are just to sit there and "take it". God wants us to trust in Him through our trials and realize He's still there to guide us and help us through them. If we're not suffering at this moment, then my "now what" answer, is to make use our life for His glory. Find a way to use some of our time to glorify God. It can mean getting into a project one enjoys that makes a difference for Him. It can mean helping to lead someone closer to Him or just to Him in the first place. The point is simply to "not do nothing" but to use our lives for His glory. That's why God created us in the first place.
 - d) In the meantime, Isaiah's still telling Cyrus who's really in charge around here anyway!
13. Verse 12: It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.
- a) This is the last of the "I'm God, deal with it verses". It might help to realize that in effect we are eavesdropping in a conversation. I view the first part of Chapter 45 as intended to be read by King Cyrus first and then secondary by people interested in what God desires we know about history. I assume that we Christians already believe in a God who created the world. However, God wanted this foreign emperor as well as any nonbeliever that is reading this section can plainly see that whoever God is, He knows history well before it'll ever occur. That's how Isaiah could talk about Cyrus centuries before he ruled the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - b) I have to admit I wondered what Isaiah must have thought of all of this. God somehow is somehow telling Isaiah to write about some man named Cyrus who he would never meet. Isaiah had to write about two empires (Babylon and the Persians) that didn't even exist at the time Isaiah wrote it. I picture Isaiah thinking, he doesn't understand what any of this means, but God if that's what You want me to write, who am I to argue?
 - i) With that thought in mind, I sort of see Isaiah being on familiar ground here as he switches from describing some future emperor to the fact that God created all that we can see or even comprehend.
 - ii) Remember that Isaiah lived in a world where people worshipped all sorts of gods. If Isaiah is writing about a non-Jewish emperor, it would make sense to him that whoever this man is, he must worship something other than the true God. That's why we get this little lecture over the last few verses about the fact that only one true God exist and He's the one who made the world as we know it.
 - c) One last thing about this section and then I can move on. Why was it so important Cyrus be convinced that God is God? Because one reason God allowed Cyrus to lead the Medo-Persian Empire to exist and conquer the Babylonians was so Cyrus would allow Israelites to go back to their homeland. Remember that this "scene" takes place in Babylon, which is today part of modern Iraq. Therefore having the God of the Jewish nation say centuries in advance everything that Cyrus did is a way to convince him not to mess with him and to do God's will, which is to let the Jewish people return to their homeland. OK, now that I have gotten that established, time to move on.
14. Verse 13: I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."
- a) If you thought I was wandering out in left field thinking that the last few verses are there primarily for King Cyrus, I present Verse 13. All I'm saying the reason we had a handful of verses describing what I call, "God is God, deal with it", is to show the world that God is the one raising up Cyrus and God announces what this man accomplished centuries before it was written. That's why some "so called" bible scholars won't stand the idea of this text being written centuries before it ever occurred.

- b) All of that leads us to the second sentence of Verse 13. The first sentence essentially says that God will raise up Cyrus and because he is so successful at conquering most nations that were in striking distance of "Iran", it must have been the God who created everything that's behind all of this. I sort of see Cyrus hearing all of this thinking, "OK, I'm impressed because this dusty old scroll mentions my name and all that I've accomplished. So what do I do next? That's the second sentence of Verse 13.
- i) Notice Jerusalem is not mentioned by name in Verse 13, nor is it explained in this section. That's why bible scholars suggest that it was Daniel himself who read all of this to Cyrus. When Cyrus asked "what city do I have to rebuild?" I see Daniel telling Cyrus, that would be Jerusalem. Your highness, you just conquered a city that was considered unconquerable (Babylon) and did it without a battle. All that I (God) am asking you to do know is rebuild Jerusalem with some of your money".
 - ii) If you think I'm out in left field on this one, remember that history and the book of Ezra Chapter 1 both record that Cyrus is the one who let the Jewish people go back to their homeland if they desired to. Cyrus also paid for them to start rebuilding a temple to God in Jerusalem. All I'm saying is we can tell Cyrus was impressed by all of this because he did what Verse 13 told him to do, which is rebuild Jerusalem.
 - iii) The point for you and me of course, is that God effectively tells you and I want He expects of our lives as well. That's why the bible is full of laws. It isn't to earn our way into heaven, but to live our lives in gratitude for what God's done for us, our eternal salvation by believing He already paid the price for our sins. Enough of all of that, back to ancient Middle East politics.
15. Verse 14: This is what the LORD says: "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans-- they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, 'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.' "
- a) All of a sudden the scene switches from discussing Cyrus's career highlights to describing other nations to the south of them. OK, what gives? Near the start of this lesson I gave us a list of all the nations that Cyrus conquered. If you read that list again, you'd notice that Egypt wasn't on that list. Cush is essentially the Ethiopians. The Sabeans were those who lived in what is today Yemen. In other words, "Hey Cyrus, if you're not happy with all of the places you've conquered, the empire will continue to grow and conquer these other 3 groups that I've just listed here. In other words, "Hey Cyrus old buddy, look at what I've allowed you to do by conquering all those nations, and here's what I'm going to do in the future by allowing more nations to be conquered by your empire, so what do you say you get busy and let my people return to their homeland?" That's the flavor behind all of this.
 - b) The text then tells us these conquered nations will respect whatever God Cyrus believes in because whoever Cyrus worships allowed him all of these victories. Cyrus was famous as he carried into battles idols representing his gods. I sort of see that as doing the politically correct thing as Cyrus needed his army to follow his orders. Remember that we still have to this day what was written on Cyrus's grave and he honored the Jewish God then. All I am saying is whether or not Cyrus is saved, he understand that the God who made all of the world is the one who allowed him to conquer everything in site.
 - c) OK John, this is all neat ancient history and now that we understand the back-story, we all see how impressive this is. The big question of course is why should we care? I'd argue it is a model of how "The" Messiah will act. Remember that early in this chapter, the text is calling Cyrus "A" Messiah as he allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland. I also see "The" Messiah (Jesus in His Second Coming) as ruling the world from Jerusalem, as other conquered nations will be like the Egyptians, Ethiopians and those in Yemen as they're effectively say, "Jesus is God and we bet on the wrong horse!" He must be God as there is no other explanation of how He could win the battles that He'll win.

16. Verse 15: Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.
- a) Why Verse 15? We just had God effectively telling Cyrus all that he did all that he'll do in the future (conquer more nation, although it was his son that defeated Egypt, who was a great power at that time). Yet we get Verse 15 tucked in here effectively saying that God's hiding himself. What does that mean?
 - i) Picture being an Israelite either in Isaiah's time or at the time all of this takes place. I can see those Israelites living in the Babylonian Empire thinking, God abandoned us here, as we are not living in Israel with no temple to God standing.
 - ii) That's why Isaiah wrote here that "God hides Himself". It's not that God didn't do anything for the timeframe the Israelites were in captivity. All this means is there wasn't any "grand scale" miracles benefiting God's chosen people for a long period of time until this new emperor came along and is allowing us to go home.
 - b) This verse is a good one to remember when life seems hopeless. If you've ever hit a point in life where you think, "This is it, my life is ruined and I messed it up beyond repair, all I am saying is there is a God who's in charge who can change things at a moment's notice to change the world as He sees fit." Yes of course we still have to make the best decisions we can as if no miracle will occur, but we also have to accept the fact that God's in charge and He has the right to interfere with the affairs of man whenever and wherever He wants to.
17. Verse 16: All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together. ¹⁷ But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.
- a) It helps to read these two verses together. It's a reminder what are the eternal benefits as well as punishments for trusting in the true God as opposed to idols. I could easily write another sermon on idolatry here, but I know I'm preaching to the choir here, so I won't.
 - b) I'd like you to pause and consider Verse 17 as it stands alone. Stop and consider all of the millions of people who want Israel to no longer exist as a nation. Consider all those who will argue that God is done with Israel as a nation. I admit I wonder how such people can explain Verse 17?
 - c) Let me discuss that verse another way: Let's be honest, when the Israelites returned to the land, they were still part of the Persian Empire. Then they were part of the Greek Empire and then the Romans and then they were kicked out of that land for centuries. How can it be that the Israelites were never "put to shame or disgraced" with all that tough history?
 - i) The point is that God isn't through with that nation. That's why Romans Chapter 11 Verse 26 tells is that a future day is coming when all of Israel will be saved. All that means is there is a future day when God's "finished" collecting believers from all over the world to make up the Christian church, that God will once again focus on Israel as His primary way in which God will work through the world.
 - ii) It doesn't mean every Israelite automatically goes to heaven. It just means He isn't done with Israel as a separate entity, and that's why they still exist as an entity to this day and why God will still work through them again one future day. Also we should realize that today we're not living in "Romans Chapter 11", but Chapter 10 in that today one is saved through one's trust in Jesus. Until that day comes when Jesus returns and it'll be obvious when it occurs, "Romans 11" isn't here yet.
18. Verse 18: For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.
- a) We get another "God's in charge, deal with it" verse here near the end of the chapter. Why is it here? If for no other reason, it's here to remind those Israelites living at the time when Cyrus is conquering Babylon that "God's still in charge, and He still expects us to obey all of His laws even though His chosen people were in captivity at that time.
 - b) The verse is also a reminder that God didn't create the earth because say He was bored.

- c) My point is God created our world for the purposes of being inhabited, and controlled by humans. To put all of this another way, "God's into relationships! He simply loves people just because He does and desires to see the world He created be full of people who desire to have a relationship with Him as well. For the Jewish people living in Babylon back then this is "old news" just as Christians also accept it as fact. However, I think Isaiah's writing this section for the nonbeliever to get them to accept who God is and what He desires of people. That is, to acknowledge God exists, "be fruitful and multiply" as to fill the world with people who can honor Him. That's what this verse is essentially saying.
 - d) It's also saying there is no competition for God. It's another reminder against the danger of idolatry or worshipping anything that isn't the true and living God. That's why Isaiah is giving us this little speech here about who's really in charge here anyway. What I also realize is that Isaiah hasn't mentioned himself by name since the book's introduction. It is as if to say Isaiah wanted to give God all the credit and what Isaiah's doing is essentially taking dictation and writing what it is God wanted him to write.
 - e) Speaking of "Speaking on God's behalf", let's look at Verse 19:
19. Verse 19: I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.' I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right.
- a) My loose translation, "I (God) didn't create the Israelites to seek Me however they feel like it, but to follow Me based on the rules I've laid out for them!" It's the same for us: we are not allowed to worship God "any old way we feel like it", as that's creating our own little religions and our own little gods. It's the reminder to the reader that God gave us a bible so we can understand how it is the God who created us in the first place wants us to live and be a witness for Him.
 - b) The idea of "seek me in vain" is we don't seek God to satisfy our ego or to satisfy His ego, but because it's the best to live. We make the time to honor God as that's why He created us in the first place with a need to worship Him. The rest of the verse is the reminder that He was "behind" the bible and taught us how He expects us to live.
20. Verse 20: "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. ²¹ Declare what is to be, present it-- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. ²² "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.
- a) Visualize these verses from God's perspective. He looks upon people around the world as they worship things they have created. It is about making little statues and keeping them around as to remind people what it is they worship. It never dawns on people that there's a God greater than all those things who is really in charge and made the world. In effect it is worse today, because a lot of people worship "nothing" (atheism) or just deny that He is involved in the world He created in the first place. That's why a large percentage of what we read in the bible is predictions about the future so we can trust in this book as coming from outside of time as we know it.
 - b) Since Isaiah's on a role here describing "big picture" stuff, notice that the appeal is written to non-Israelites (notice the "all you ends of the earth" reference) to honor the true God of the bible. With that said, what does one say about Muslims? Don't they honor the same God of the bible? Partially yes and partially no. They acknowledge a lot of the bible as having been God ordained, but then they argue the bible has been corrupted over all of the millenniums by Jewish and Christian scholars. If you study the history of the bible manuscripts, you would know how painstakingly accurate the text. Think about it this way, if you believed something was the word of God, and you wanted to copy it, would you not make the copy as close to the original as you can? All I'm saying is the bible is a great argument all to itself to support the existence of God Himself.

- c) Think of these verses as God pleading with all people the idea that He didn't create all of us so we can then ignore Him all of our life". He made each of us with a purpose, and it's to glorify Him with our lives. The reward for that service is we'll continue to be with Him for all of eternity. That's the essence of these verses.
 - d) There's a bit of trivia I need to add here before I move on. One of the most famous pastors of all time (Charles Spurgeon) who preached before multitudes in the 1800's from a large church England before microphones were invented. Anyway, he was saved as a teenager based on stumbling into a church and hearing a short sermon on Verse 22. With that little statement out of my system, let's focus on finishing the chapter.
21. Verse 23: By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.
- a) Paul quotes this verse in Romans Chapter 14 Verse 11. He understood what Isaiah meant here in that he understand that all people are going to have to acknowledge God and even acknowledge Jesus is God at the same time. As the old expression goes, all people will be forced to kneel before Jesus or volunteer to do so. Hopefully, I'm preaching to those of us who are volunteering for that role!
 - b) OK other than this is another "God's in charge, deal with it" verse, why is it here? Think of it as Isaiah pleading with nonbelievers to change their lives to honor God because if they don't they'll be forced to acknowledge His existence on judgment day. Remember that the verses leading up to this one focused on non-believers.
 - c) What about us believers? Other than knowing what it is Paul quoted in Romans, we get a reminder of why we're bothering to live this way in the first place. It's a reminder that it's all worth the time and trouble because we're accountable to the true God who made us in the first place.
22. Verse 24: They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' "All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. ²⁵ But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.
- a) Remember that we are discussing the fact that all people will have to be on bended knees to acknowledge God's existence. (For those who cant walk in this life, I suspect God will make it possible for those people to be on bended knees when this event occurs.) So will that be it? People just have to grovel and acknowledge how they've blown it? I suspect at the same time, those who do acknowledge God will praise Him at that point which is why the first part of Verse 24 says what it says.
 - b) So does that mean when we face God there will be a giant screen with the words printed we are supposed to say? No. If we live for God now, it should just come natural to us to want to praise Him when we face Him. At the same time, all people who have wasted all of their lives on frivolous things that won't matter for eternity, they are the one's who will be put to shame as stated in Verse 24.
23. In closing, the key point is to realize that like Cyrus, God is aware of us before we were born. He knows all that we'll do in life and how long we'll live on earth. After we die, all people are going to have to acknowledge Him as God and then He'll decide whether or not we'll live with Him in heaven forever or away from His presence. We may conquer worlds like Cyrus or we may live a simple life only making a difference for a few people around us. Remember we're not rewarded based on the size of our ministry but on our loyalty to Him and whether or not we used our lives to make a difference for Him. Cyrus is one of multitudes of stories of people who God used in an amazing way to make a difference for Him. Hopefully we too can use what remains of the time we have left to be used for God. That in effect is my closing prayer for all of you, that each of you make good use of the time God's given us so that when we face Him in judgment, we'll be among those who praise Him as opposed to those who are forced to bend their knee to Jesus. With all of that said, that's it for this lesson.