

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 45:2-7, KING CYRUS; GOD'S ANOINTED, PART 2

In the last lesson, we discovered that Yahweh identified a Gentile King named Cyrus who was revealed as God's shepherd and as His anointed. At this point in the prophecy, people had no idea concerning the specific identity of this king named Cyrus, no idea what country he ruled over, no idea what nations he was going to conquer, and no idea what he was going to do for the Israelites. All of those things would be revealed in due time.

This revelation continued with God's promise to go before King Cyrus and ensure his success leading up to the events that led to the restoration of the Israelites at the end of the Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah 45:2-3 <sup>2</sup>"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. <sup>3</sup>"I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that [מֵעַן לְמֵעַן] you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls [קָרָא] you by your name.

Yahweh promised to not only be with the king in order to ensure his success, but He promised to precede him wherever he went to ensure that his success was the inevitable outcome once he got there. God has things in store for this king that serve His divine purposes, and this king's appointment with that divine destiny is an appointment that must be kept. There is more to this than the simple fact of some despotic king marauding and pillaging and plundering in the region of his home country; this is a major component of God's plan for history as it involves Israel. The aim, in this particular instance involving King Cyrus of Medo-Persia, is to restore Israel back into their land after the divine disciplinary expulsion at the hands of Babylon to which they were subjected for their rebellion against Yahweh. Restoration is a necessary act to preserve Israel as a nation, an activity in which God is always active, and for national preparation for the appearance of their Messiah King when he comes to offer the Messianic Kingdom to Israel at what we now call the First Advent.

The Scriptures reveal that God went before Cyrus in order to allow the king to learn that he was blessed due to the involvement of God in his reign. However, the kings' knowledge of that fact seems to be something that happened in retrospect rather than while the events of his reign prior to the conquest of Babylon were happening. It wasn't the fact that he was a successful conquering king, he had no way of knowing that Yahweh was facilitating that, it was the Scriptures that revealed that truth to him later. Whether Cyrus, while he was accomplishing everything he did up to the conquest of Babylon, acknowledged Yahweh's leadership or not, whether he knew Yahweh or not, and whether he believed he had divine help from Yahweh during that time make no difference. God's plan was going to be worked out with or without the explicit knowledge of this pagan king concerning God's involvement and direction in his life. During the time when Medo-Persia's ascendance on the world stage was taking place,

Cyrus acknowledged Marduk as the source of his divine assistance in the historical account recorded on what is known as the Cyrus Cylinder. It was only later, after he learned of this prophecy, that he acknowledged Yahweh when he set the Israelites free to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Josephus apparently claims that Cyrus read the book of Isaiah and discovered the prophecy about himself, which probably would not have taken place until Babylon, or some of its outlying areas with a Jewish population, was conquered. Historians lend some credence to this theory because Cyrus is thought to have had an interest in the various religions that he found throughout the region that became a part of his kingdom.

2 Chronicles 36:23 <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 appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!’”

Ezra 1:2 <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 appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Nevertheless, Yahweh did reveal that part of His work in preparing the way for Cyrus was so that this pagan king would know that the God of Israel was the one calling him to do His will. So that, *לְמַעַן* from *מַעַן*, means for the sake of, on account of, so that, or in order to. Cyrus was to know that the things that happened took place in order that he would know that Yahweh, the God of Israel, called him for a purpose. That purpose was to repatriate the Israelites and not only allow their return to Israel, but assist them in rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple. Things were arranged such that Cyrus would end up at the time and in the place that God wanted and needed him to be in order to fulfill His divine will concerning the repatriation of Israel. It seems likely that this revelation could not have taken place until the Scriptures containing the prophecy were made available to him, and that probably had to be either during or right after the conquest of Babylon and the Jewish captives living there. Even though God prepared the way for Cyrus and facilitated his success, the king probably assumed it was his doing, along with the god Marduk who he credited for his success, that brought about his successful reign as a conquering king. It is possible that somewhere, somehow after Cyrus rose to power in Anshan, but before he began to expand his nation, that a Jewish person with knowledge of the book of Isaiah related this Scripture to him, but that seems to be doubtful until he conquered Babylon and the Jewish population that resided there. If it is true that he had this knowledge prior to Babylon's conquest, why then did he credit Marduk with his success for it? Why not God? After all, Cyrus did credit God later after he learned of the prophecy. Perhaps, once he learned of these things, he just added the knowledge of Yahweh to the other gods he worshiped which would not be an uncommon practice for a pagan. Remember, there is no biblical evidence that Cyrus ever became a believer.

Call, *קָרָא*, means, in this context, to appoint or to summon. It refers to officially summoning someone in an official manner. Calling Cyrus by name relates to God's appointment of this specific pagan king to His divine service for the accomplishment of a specific task. That specific task is the freeing of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity at the specified time, which is 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10) after the captivity began, and

facilitating the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. All the success that God provided Cyrus before Babylon was done to ensure that the purpose for which that pagan king was in office would ultimately be fulfilled.

It is a historical fact that Cyrus enjoyed immeasurable success as a conquering king during his reign over Medo-Persia and other nations in the area, and their kings were well aware of it. What the people who observed his work, and particularly the secular historians who followed, can never acknowledge is that God was the active Agent ensuring Cyrus's success. "The unbroken success of Cyrus' career from its early origin in the distant kingdom of Anshan to his replacement of the Babylonian empire by his own Persian empire was a matter of marvel to his contemporaries. They could see him only as 'beloved of the gods'" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 285]. It has been said that Cyrus wasn't all that great as a conqueror because he was just cleaning up after God did all the preparatory work to defeat the enemy before Cyrus even arrived on the scene. Probably so—the Scriptures certainly suggest that fact—but the pagans in the neighborhood didn't know that! They feared Cyrus as a great conqueror king, not Yahweh, and Cyrus himself certainly possessed that self-image. Cyrus considered himself to be a great conquering king, and the nations he desired to conquer feared him as just that.

Many theologians believe these verses relate only to Cyrus's success as it pertains to Babylon, but it was much larger than that. Cyrus did not come to power and immediately march on Babylon; he conquered a number of nations prior to conquering Babylon which allowed him to train his army and give them experience, build his wealth and his political power, and to induce fear in the neighboring nations. In verse 1, God promised to subdue nations (גוֹיִם), plural, before King Cyrus, and not just a single nation. The empowerment of Cyrus to eventually conquer Babylon was a process; it was not a single event. For God's purposes, Babylon was the culmination, not the beginning. For Cyrus, he continued on after Babylon to conquer even more territory before Alexander the Great finally ended the Persian dominance of the region.

Buksbazen is one commentator who seemed to make these verses a specific reference to Babylon. "Herodotus, who in his worldwide travels visited Babylon, declared: 'There are a hundred gates to the circuit of the wall, all of bronze with bronze uprights and lintels.' ... Babylon, the world center of commerce, the mistress of Mesopotamia, was rich beyond all calculation. Her fabulous treasures were hoarded in the secret vaults of her famous temples and palaces" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 362]. This is certainly true of Babylon, at least based on the testimony of Herodotus, but it is likely true of many other cities as well. This does not really support the idea that these verses are specifically pertaining to Babylon.

"It is tempting to find in these lines very specific references to Cyrus's conquests as reported by Herodotus and Xenophon. Babylon was supposedly guarded by hundreds of bronze gates that were thrown open to the conqueror as he came. Both authors make much of the endless fortunes that Cyrus captured from Croesus in Lydia and again in Babylon. But while this kind of specificity may be intended, one must also recognize that this is poetic language that could be generally appropriate to almost any conquest of a city in the ancient world (cf. Ps. 107:15-16)" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International*

*Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 201 n. 21]. All the cities of that time period had city walls and gates; therefore, that is nothing unusual about or specific to Babylon. There were no banks so finding or creating spaces to hoard wealth was not unusual either.

The biblical reference to doors of bronze coupled with the account the historian Herodotus provided that claims Babylon was militarily compromised by gates left open or otherwise somehow compromised seems to refute a popular story concerning the Medo-Persian entry into the heavily fortified city of Babylon. The story is that the Medo-Persians diverted the Euphrates River into canals which dried up the channel where it ran under the wall and into the city which allowed the enemy army to enter undetected. I've always had a few issues with this story. The fact is the Medo-Persian army did enter Babylon unmolested and took the city without even a fight of any significance. But, did they do it by means of the river channel? My thinking is probably not. The Euphrates River occupies a wide channel, averaging 400 yards, and, at the ancient time period in question, it carried a lot of water downstream. The flow of the river, before the dams that now control it were built, was measured at about 20,000 cubic feet per second although this is highly variable depending on the time of the year and precipitation. I have no idea how deep the channel was at Babylon, but along its length, the depth varies from 150 to 500 meters deep which, if this was an accurate source, is quite deep. It has a very strong current. Given the width, the depth, and the flow, there is no army that could divert such a great river in a short period of time. The point is that the Euphrates River cannot be diverted enough, undetected by the Babylonian defenders at that, in just a few hours to allow an entry point through the city wall into Babylon at the point the city spans the river, nor can the mud dry up enough to allow an army to efficiently traverse the river bed. I've always been skeptical of this story, but it is widely presented as established fact. Could God have miraculously performed the work to divert and dry up the Euphrates River before Cyrus and his army? Of course, but there is no biblical indication that such a miraculous work took place. What we do have is the Scripture that reveals God was going to shatter the gates of bronze which suggests that somehow the gates of the cities that Cyrus was conquering would be ineffective barriers against the Medo-Persian army. Herodotus suggests that a gate or gates in the Babylon wall were unlocked allowing the enemy entrance into the city. That makes much more sense and that is at least consistent with the Scripture before us today.

God promised to do a number of things to facilitate the rise of Cyrus. They were presented in the form of some "I will" statements: make the rough places smooth, shatter bronze doors, cut through iron bars, and give the wealth of other cities and nations to Cyrus. When God promises to do something, it obviously gets done; it can be no other way. History reveals that God's predictions for and promises to King Cyrus all happened just the way they were predicted to happen.

Making the rough places smooth is a metaphor for facilitating the movement of the Medo-Persian army, and probably for facilitating the ability of the army to defeat and conquer any opponent army and nation they faced. Whatever the difficulty facing Cyrus during this period of time, it would be removed. Shattering bronze doors and cutting through iron bars is also a metaphor for facilitating the army's success against any and all barriers. These things picture significant obstacles that have the potential to thwart

Cyrus's plans, which would also then thwart God's plans, and that cannot happen. God will remove these obstacles in the furtherance of His plan for Israel and for history.

The latter part of verse 3, concerning God's calling and appointment of Cyrus to His service sets up the reason for the king's appointment to service that is revealed in verse 4.

Isaiah 45:4 <sup>4</sup>"For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor [כְּנִיָּהּ] Though you have not known Me.

None of the favor God bestowed on this pagan king was for his benefit; it was intended to be for the benefit of Israel, which is ultimately to the glory of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom plan for history. Cyrus was not going to accomplish these things by means of his own ability and power; God was going to accomplish these things by means of His ability and power. Maybe Cyrus would have been a mighty conqueror king in his own right, but that is unimportant in this situation. He had an assignment from God that was so important that God was going to ensure his success whether Cyrus had any talent for secular kingdom building or not. God had covenant promises with Israel that He was honor bound to keep, and Cyrus was part of his long-range plan for keeping them.

Some theologians want to claim that this verse cannot be a part of Isaiah's original manuscript because Cyrus was an unbelieving pagan and not a believer; therefore, the Scriptures as written cannot possibly be correct. However, God can and does use unbelievers at times to further his plan for history, and that is a fact plainly revealed in the Scriptures. God has used pagans to impose His divine disciplinary program on Israel for centuries (Lv. 26: Dt. 28). God used the pagan nation of Egypt to forge Israel into a nation, and He used the pagan nations of Assyrian and Babylon in the execution of His divine disciplinary program with Israel, and so on. It is mind-boggling to realize any so-called biblical scholar could even make this argument. "Duhm and others have questioned the authenticity of all or part of this verse because there is no reason to think that Cyrus ever converted to the Hebrew faith. But the verse does not predict conversion. It speaks of Cyrus's knowing who had called him. Thus, just as the pharaoh came to recognize that the God of Israel is the Lord without ever coming to faith in him, so Cyrus could well acknowledge that he had been commissioned by the God of Israel without surrendering himself to the exclusive worship of the Lord" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 201-202]. Just as God used pagan nations to discipline Israel, He can also use pagan nations to bless Israel. It makes no difference to Him; pagans and their nations can be used any way God chooses to use them.

Cyrus could have come to faith based on the revelation he had, but there is no indication he ever did so. "Through all his [Cyrus] successes, climaxing in this act [the freeing of the Israelites], he is to come to the knowledge that the One who has directed his ways is the God of the Jews. The language does not necessarily suggest a true conversion upon Cyrus's part, but simply that he will be able to identify the One who has used him in his accomplishments" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:197].

I was surprised to note that some commentators attribute pure motives to Cyrus which is why, they claim, that he was selected by God to be His servant, His anointed. Apparently, these theologians believe that God can only use believers in the furtherance of His plan for world history, but that is simply not the case. "The fundamental principle of the politics of the empire of the world was all-absorbing selfishness. But the politics of Cyrus were pervaded by purer motives, and this brought him eternal honour [sic]" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah,* 7:443]. I do not believe for a moment that the Medo-Persian army under Cyrus was any more benevolent than any other army of that time and place. These people did not operate their societies, their armies, and their treatment of their opponents according to a biblical worldview, and trying to sanitize their reputation in order to make them more palatable to our way of thinking is silly. Cyrus was almost certainly a typical example of a despotic king of that time and place. He may have been better than some, but he may have been worse than others as well. In the final analysis, however, all of that is beside the point. The point is he was appointed to God's service, for God's purposes, regardless of his own particular personality and demeanor. The personality and the character of Cyrus seems to me to be an essentially immaterial aspect of this situation. "People do not have to be believers in Him for God to use them and bless them. The choice is His; He is sovereign" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4: 129].

The prophet again uses Jacob and Israel as synonyms for the nation; they are one and the same, of course. The man Jacob became the man Israel (Gen. 32:28) who begat the nation Israel. Israel is God's servant, created by Him to be a nation appointed to His service. "The use of the paired name, *Jacob/Israel*, underlines both the tenderness of God toward the people and also the sense of their being a creation of God. In Egypt and at Sinai God had taken a disparate people whose only commonality was an ancestor and had made them into a nation. They had not become a nation through the long slow processes of history, but had been forged in an instant (comparatively) through the will and activity of God alone, just as he had singled out their father Jacob, and before that, his father Abraham, and had set them on a completely new path" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 137-138]. During the time in question, the Babylonian captivity, the nation will most likely be wondering about whether or not they are still God's nation appointed to His service, but this Scripture should give them hope for restoration in the same way that Daniel read the book of the prophet Jeremiah and knew that restoration was near (Dan. 9:2).

Title of honor, כְּבֹד, means to bestow a title or a name of honor. In this case, God gave Cyrus a title of honor: He calls him "My shepherd" at one point (Is. 44:28) and at another point, "His anointed" (Is. 45:1). Since "title of honor" is singular, it is possible that the reference to being "His anointed" is the sole title that was bestowed on the king. Either way, remember that this is an unbelieving, pagan king, but also remember that it is God's sovereign prerogative to use whoever or whatever anytime or anyplace in any way that He so chooses, in order to advance His Kingdom plan for history. That includes unbelievers despite the fact they do not know Him. The text clearly reveals that Cyrus did not know Him.

“Effortless sovereignty is apparent in the statement that God has given Cyrus his honorific titles of ‘shepherd’ and ‘anointed,’ when Cyrus knew nothing of the Lord. It is not necessary for the Creator to have the permission of someone’s faith before that person can be given a front-rank position in God’s plans. He is the Lord, and we will serve him, either with glad comprehension, or in spite of our sullen rebellion or placid ignorance” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 202].

“Known” is a verb in the perfect tense referring to completed action. Cyrus was declared to be God’s shepherd and His anointed before Cyrus knew Him. This fact suggests that Cyrus knew nothing of God’s direction and leadership in his capacity as king of Medo-Persia until he was shown this Scripture in whatever manner that happened to take place. Some theologians believe this Scripture reveals that Cyrus never knew God, which makes Ezra 1:2 something other than a literal truth. “... [S]ince 45:3-5 says that Cyrus did not know God, one must conclude that Ezra 1:1-4 was either Ezra’s Israelite theological slant on what Cyrus said or that the decree in Ezra was just a routine political document, much like many other documents that were composed by scribes for the numerous exiled peoples that Nebuchadnezzar had earlier settled in Babylon” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 256]. That is an unacceptable position to hold.

My conclusion concerning this issue is that Cyrus eventually became aware of the book of Isaiah and the prophecy it contained that pertained to him either during or after the conquest of Babylon. He simply acknowledged the existence of Yahweh, added Him to his stable of pagan gods, and followed the prophecy in terms of allowing the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple. That means that up until the time came to repatriate the Israelites by releasing them from captivity in Babylon, Cyrus did not know God. Once he learned that he was the subject of a prophecy in Isaiah, he believed it and he followed it. He acknowledged God and credited Him for the success he had in expanding his Medo-Persian kingdom. That upholds the biblical truth that Cyrus did not know God at the time he was marching through the Middle East conquering it, even though he had already been declared by God to be His “shepherd” and His “anointed,” but it also affirms the literal truth of Ezra 1:2 that proves Cyrus’s ultimate knowledge of the God of Israel and the role God played in leading Cyrus to success.

Next, Yahweh declares His sovereignty and exclusivity. He also continues to proclaim His guidance for this pagan king even though the king does not know Him.

Isaiah 45:5 <sup>5</sup>“I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird [אָזַר] you, though you have not known Me;

He identifies Himself as Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. Cyrus did not know this name, but the Israelites certainly knew it. This Scripture is not directly preached to Cyrus; he was going to do these things whether he knew Yahweh or not. He wasn’t alive yet and didn’t know God until he was well into his reign, but this revelation is particularly directed at the Israelites. They didn’t understand this at the time themselves, but when the predicted events began to unfold before the eyes of a future generation of Israelites, they would, or at least they should, recognize them from this Scripture.

Yahweh is exclusive; there is no other god in existence. "There were many other pretenders who claimed to be gods and many people who falsely believed that there were deities with other names [including Cyrus], but none of the other angels, seraphim, demons, or other supernatural beings were Yahweh and they could not do what God could do" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66, 256-257*]. He alone is the true Creator God of the universe. That is the real point to all of this. God has determined the point where world history will culminate in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and He will ensure that His program comes to pass. At this point, Cyrus is part of that plan, but he has no control over it; God is in complete control of history.

I believe there is an application in all of this for us in terms of understanding God's sovereignty and our role in His Kingdom program. Man has some significant degree of free will to make decisions, and God is using those decisions to direct history to the end God wills must come to pass. God does not predestine every detail of life and history. There are times when certain individuals are doing God's will without knowing it; Cyrus being an obvious example. He was doing what he would do anyway as a despotic Middle East king, but because God was using Him to accomplish His specific ends, Cyrus was going to fulfill his destiny in the exact way God was directing him to do so. Whether God was acting on the objects of Cyrus's desire to conquer and subjugate, directly superintending the decisions and movements of the king, or a combination of both, God's will was going to be accomplished. The application I'm getting at here, is that we make free will decisions and God uses and coordinates those actions to fulfill His Kingdom plan for history. Sometimes the things we do matter in God's grand scheme of things; sometimes they do not. Sometimes, He uses a specific individual or group or nation in a more direct way than He uses other people at other times in other places. He is sovereign and He can do, or not do, whatever He desires with whoever or whatever He decides whenever and wherever He decides He needs to do it. In this case, Cyrus was going to be a successful conquering king so that he could do God's will in freeing the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple, all of which was in preparation for the First Advent of the Messiah. By the way, the Babylonian captivity was also a component of God's Kingdom program for history as part of His divine disciplinary program for the rebellious nation of Israel.

In previous verses, we know that God prepared the way for Cyrus to conquer the nations by loosing the loins of the opposition kings, that is by weakening them, He softened the defenses of those kings and their fortifications so that Cyrus and his army could easily defeat them, and He removed obstacles that would hinder Cyrus's success. However, God not only worked on the king's enemies, but He also empowered the king himself. He girded the king's loins, that is, he strengthened the king for success.

Gird, אָזַר, means to bind around, to gird, to put on the loincloth, to arm. In this context, it refers to preparing for difficulty in terms of preparing for effort, inconvenience, or trouble. The metaphor relates to binding up one's garments so that movement is unrestricted and armaments are properly worn and ready to be accessed. It also relates to strengthening someone, just as loosing the loins referred to weakening someone. Did Cyrus realize this was going on? Of course not. He was an arrogant king; he would have thought that he



was the one doing all these things as the result of his own strength and cunning, but the Bible says otherwise. God specifically empowered Cyrus for success without his knowledge or cooperation. He did not even know who Yahweh was at that point.

One purpose for all this has already been revealed and that was all for the sake of Israel. A second purpose is now being revealed, and that is so that the world may know that Yahweh is the Creator God, the only true God. There is a progression in these verses concerning man's knowledge of God and of His plans for history. Cyrus was to know (v. 3), Israel was to know (v. 4), and the world was to know (v. 6). The entire world will only, finally acknowledge this truth when the Kingdom begins; therefore, this prophecy has yet to be completely fulfilled.

Isaiah 45:6–8 <sup>6</sup>That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, <sup>7</sup>The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being [שְׁלוֹם] and creating [בְּרָא] calamity [רָעָה]; I am the LORD who does all these. <sup>8</sup>“Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it.

From the rising to the setting of the sun, literally, “from the rise of the sun and from the west,” encompasses the entire earth. The HCSB uses the word “all” to indicate the applicability of this revelation to everyone. God's work as the Creator God enlightens everyone in the world (Rom. 1:18-20) to the fact that He is the only God who has the power to create everything that exists. This knowledge is important; knowing God is one thing, but accepting Him rather than rejecting Him as the only God who could possibly create the universe and all that is in it, is vital in terms of avoiding idol worship. People who reject the God knowledge they have placed within them are given over to their own desires to make an idol of the creation in place of worshiping the Creator. We have seen this proclamation in Isaiah a number of times; the Creator God is the only true God and there is no other God in existence.

We tend to overlook the importance of the creation in terms of knowing God, not the least of the various reasons for that being the universal acceptance of evolution, but Isaiah makes it very clear that mankind should know God because of the creation. God expects man to know it. Paul affirmed this truth in very strong terms in Romans 1:18-32. The creation and the knowledge of Himself that God put in the hearts of men is sufficient that all may know, and it is sufficient that all will be held accountable for rejecting it. Note that I said accountable for rejecting it—I did not say accountable for not knowing it because everyone does, in fact, know it. That doctrine is reinforced here in Isaiah. God is the one who creates light and darkness, and there is a moral component to light and darkness. The Bible frequently contrasts the two; we can walk in the light or we can walk in the darkness, but one is good and one is bad.

2 Corinthians 6:14 <sup>14</sup>Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

In addition to the creation, God's relationship with Israel and His preservation of the nation, combined with the biblical revelation of His purpose for Israel that the world

should know at this time because the Word of God has revealed it, should be a call to the nations to believe and be saved.

God not only created the universe and all it contains, but He controls world events. He causes well-being and calamity. People tie themselves into knots trying to explain this truth.

Well-being, שְׁלוֹם, means completeness, soundness, peace, prosperity, safety, and health referring to harmonious relations and freedom from disputes.

Calamity, רָע, means evil, bad, misery, calamity, and much more depending on context. The word may be used to attribute a negative aspect to anything and everything.

The question is, does God cause things that the Bible says are evil, and the answer has to be "yes." Most people want to deny that, but the Creator God can do with His creation whatsoever He will just as the potter does with the clay (cf. Is. 29:16, 45:9; Jer. 18:4). This is not just the consequence of a fallen world with God simply allowing sinful man to do what sinful man does, although that is part of it, and God does use what sinful man does to further His plan for the future of the world. God does have a plan for Kingdom history, and part of that plan involves what the world considers to be evil. When the Creator does it, there is nothing evil about it in the end; He is not evil and He has no evil in Him. The Day of the Lord will certainly look to the world as a day of evil, but it serves a very good purpose in bringing about the salvation of the Jews and the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. "The good times that bring peace, prosperity, and well-being are controlled by God and so are the terrible times when war, calamity, natural disasters, and death come upon people. God claims that he is the power and the director who 'does, makes' all these things happen" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 258].

We cannot ignore the fact that this Scripture reveals to us that Yahweh does all these things. Just as He created, בָּרָא, the world (Gen. 1:1), He creates calamity. Job had a profound view of this issue.

Job 2:10 <sup>10</sup>But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity [רָע]?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.