

How the Cyrus Cylinder and Historians of Antiquity Confirm the Prophecies about Cyrus Found in Isaiah 44 and 45

Rochelle A. Houser
July 8, 2017



Illustration 1: Cyrus Cylinder. Photo by David Holt, [via flickr](#). Copyright: [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic \(CC BY 2.0\)](#)

Abstract: A phrase-by-phrase comparison of Isaiah 44:26-28 and Isaiah 45:1-6, with the Cyrus Cylinder and the histories of Xenophon and Herodotus, shows with amazing accuracy how the prophecies of Isaiah about Cyrus, given nearly 200 years before they happened, were fulfilled.

Part I. Introduction and Background:

A. Introduction:

My husband and I are preparing study guides for the Book of Daniel for a group of Seventh-day Adventist youth, called the Pathfinders, to study for a test which will be in 2018. As part of the study guides, I wanted to include information from archaeology that would support key facts from the book of Daniel, to give them perspective and

background on the Biblical narrative, and also confidence that what is written in the Bible is true.

For the section on Daniel 5 and 6, which describes the end of the Babylonian empire with Belshazzar's death, and the take-over of the Persians by Cyrus and Darius the Mede, I have chosen to discuss the Cyrus Cylinder, and a few other documents from Xenophon and Herodotus, and compare them in detail with the prophecies about Cyrus, as listed in Isaiah 44 and 45. A brief literature search showed this type of comparison has not been written before.

All quotes from the Bible will be from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted. The names of the deities mentioned in the Cyrus Cylinder will not be fully given, because of Exodus 23:13:

“And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.” Ex. 23:13KJV.

B. Background of the Cyrus Cylinder:

The Cyrus Cylinder was found near a large temple in Babylon in 1879, and was acquired by the British Museum in 1880 (museum number 90920), where it has been on display nearly continuously since then.¹

Describing its form and style, Matthew W. Stolper, of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, says,

“ The forms of the cuneiform signs that record the text resemble contemporary Neo-Babylonian forms in current use, not the ornamental, archaizing sign forms that some inscriptions of the Neo- Babylonian kings prefer. The language of the text is a version of the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian called Standard Babylonian. It was the language of literature and learning, scholarship and science, as well as of royal inscriptions, both in Assyria and in Babylonia. By comparison with contemporary letters—that is, with examples of the language in which people actually communicated with each other—it is marked by exalted vocabulary, arch and stilted grammatical forms and archaizing usages. The sound of Cyrus’s message was grand and old.”²

1 “The Cyrus Cylinder.” *British Museum*, www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 . Accessed 4 July 2017.

2 Stolper, Matthew. “The Form, Language and Contents of the Cyrus Cylinder.” *Academia.edu - Share Research*, Oriental Institute/University of Chicago, www.academia.edu/23437554/The_Form_Language_and_Contents_of_the_Cyrus_Cylinder.

C. Background of Isaiah's Prophecy:

Isaiah was a prophet during the reigns of many kings. Isaiah 1:1 says:

“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”

Uzziah reigned for 52 years during the 8th century BCE, and it is likely that Isaiah started prophesying near the end of his reign, or around the 740's BCE. Hezekiah died in 698 BCE. So, Isaiah was prophesying approximately 60 years.³

D. The Fall of Babylon Compared to Isaiah Chapters 44-45:

1. Modern Scholarship: Prophecy Given 160-202 Years Prior

Historians place the date that Cyrus' army invaded the Babylonian palace and took over their kingdom to October 12, 538 BCE.⁴ Therefore, depending on when Isaiah made this prophecy, it could be as much as 740-538 = 202 years prior to the event. The other extreme is 698 BCE – 538 BCE = 160 years prior to the event. So, based on the first verse of Isaiah, and our modern scholarship of the dates for these kings, the range for this prophecy is from 160-202 years before Cyrus took over Babylon.

2. Josephus, Jewish Historian: Prophecy Given 188 Years Prior:

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says Isaiah prophesied about Cyrus 140 years before the Temple was demolished.⁵ The Temple was demolished in Nebuchadnezzar's 17th year, and scholars put that to the summer of 587 BCE.⁶

Accessed 4 July 2017, p. 1

3 “Isaiah.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 June 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah. Accessed 4 July 2017.

4 The Nabonidus Chronicle, ABC 7, dates the fall of Babylon to Nabonidus' 17th year. Jona Lendering, annotates that to be 539/538 BCE. The Chronicle states the invasion was on 16th day of [Tammuz](#). See Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, Livius.org, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/. Accessed 4 July 2017.

Scholars have put this date into our modern system of months as October 12, 539 BCE. See “Fall of Babylon.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 8 June 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Babylon. Accessed 4 July 2017.

5 Josephus. “Antiquities of the Jews - Book XI.” *Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI*, penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html. Chapter 1, paragraph 2. Accessed 4 July 2017. <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html>

6 “Siege of Jerusalem (587 BC).” *Wikipedia.org*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 30 June 2017,

Therefore, according to Josephus, the timing of the prophesy compared to its fulfillment is

539 BC (year Cyrus took over Babylon) – 587 BC (year temple destroyed) – 140 years (according to Josephus when prophesy was given) = - 188 years, or 188 years prior to it's fulfillment.

This is within the time frame discussed above (160-202 yrs) for the range of years Isaiah was prophesying.

E. Cyrus' Reaction to the Prophecy:

Josephus also said that when Cyrus read this prophesy written about him so long ago, that he was so impressed with God's divine power of foretelling his name, that he became determined to build the Temple in Jerusalem, as it was written about him. Here is Josephus' account:

“This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his Prophecies. For this Prophet said, that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: “My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be King over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.” This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and an ambition seized upon him, to fulfil what was so written. So he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that “He gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God; for that he would be their assistant; and that he would write to the rulers and governours that were in the neighbourhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver, for the building of the temple; and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.”⁷

Now, we will discuss the prophecies in Isaiah 44 and 45, to show you what Cyrus read, and tell you what Cyrus knew he had just done; and you will see why Cyrus was so impressed with the God of the Hebrews, that he was willing to let the Jews go back home and would finance the building of Jerusalem and the Temple. We will be quoting

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(587_BC\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(587_BC)). Accessed 4 July 2017.

⁷ Josephus. “Antiquities of the Jews - Book XI.” *Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI*, penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html. Paragraph 2. Accessed 4 July 2017.
<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html>

mostly from the Cyrus Cylinder, and a few other documents. To read two different translators' full-text translations of the Cyrus Cylinder, please go to the British Museum's Website:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1

Part II: Isaiah 44:26-28: God Will Change His Mind About Jerusalem, and Work With Cyrus to Rebuild It. God and Cyrus Will Dry Up the River.

First, we will read Isaiah 44:26-28, and make a few general observations about it that cover multiple phrases, and then we will discuss it phrase-by-phrase.

Isaiah 44:26-28:

"26 Who confirms the word of His servant,
And performs the counsel of His messengers;
Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,'
To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,'
And I will raise up her waste places;
27 Who says to the deep, 'Be dry!
And I will dry up your rivers';
28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built."
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."'"

A. General Observations:

1. God Will Work With Cyrus, and Cyrus Will Work With God:
Isaiah 44:26-28

In this passage, it can be a bit challenging to keep track of who is talking, and who is doing what was said should be done. In some of the phrases it seems God is confirming, and will do what His servant wants to do, and in some phrases, it seems that God's servant is carrying out God's plans. Regardless of the exact interpretation of each phrase, we definitely see a partnership between God and His servant. God then identifies by name that Cyrus will be the servant who will perform God's will in rebuilding Jerusalem and establishing the foundation of the temple.

We also see the river will be dried up for Cyrus, or Cyrus will dry up the river because God wants it to be done. We will talk about this in detail later.

Compare with the Cyrus Cylinder: God Working with Cyrus, and Cyrus Working With God:

a. Cyrus Says He Used His Troops to Carry Out his god's Commands:

We will see later that Cyrus definitely thought he was working with God to accomplish God's will. Here is one statement from the Cyrus cylinder that shows he was carrying out God's commands with his army. Cyrus calls God by his own false god's name, but we will see later, that this was also prophesied.

“M* [false god's name], the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds, and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, the son [my] issue, [and over] my all my troops, that we might proceed further at his exalted command.”⁸

b. Cyrus Gave an Offering to the gods When He Entered Babylon:

As an indirect proof that Cyrus thought God was working with him to take over Babylon, consider this passage from Xenophon's account of that night. After Cyrus got full control of the citadels, his first action as king was to have the magi called in to take an offering of the spoils for the gods. I think this shows Cyrus wanted to thank God for being with him and helping him take over the city. Here is the quote:

“33. At dawn, those in possession of the citadels surrender when they learn the king has been slain...
34. Cyrus takes over the citadels...
35. He summons the magi to take spoils for the gods...”⁹

8 From The Cyrus Cylinder, translation on the British Museum Website:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 .
From translation 1.

9 From Xenophon's Cyrus' Paradise: <http://www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/>

2. God Will Change His Mind About Jerusalem and the Cities of Judah: Isaiah 44:26:

“Who says to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be inhabited,’
To the cities of Judah, ‘You shall be built,’
And I will raise up her waste places;”

It is not immediately obvious when reading Isaiah 44:26-28 that God is prophesying that He will change his mind about Jerusalem in the future, by saying that Jerusalem will be inhabited, and the cities of Judah will be built, and that He will raise up the waste places, and the foundation to the Temple will be established again.

However, if by comparison, we see some passages from Lamentations, showing that it was God that destroyed Jerusalem because of their wickedness; then when we read that He will allow it to be rebuilt, we can understand that God relented from His judgment on Jerusalem. The entire book of Lamentations expresses the idea that it was God who destroyed Jerusalem, and declared it to be a wasteland. Here is an example to illustrate the point.¹⁰

God Has Not Pitied the Dwelling Places of Jacob: Lamentations 2:2

“The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied
All the dwelling places of Jacob.
He has thrown down in His wrath
The strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
He has brought *them* down to the ground;
He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.” Lam. 2:2

Now, compare what Cyrus says on the Cyrus Cylinder, where he says that the Chief of the Gods was so upset at what Belshazzar was doing,¹¹ and how he was

¹⁰ This verse shows that the other cities of Judah were affected, as well as the kingdom and the princes would be gone. The phrase in Isaiah 44:26 that shows God will change His mind is: “To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built.'”.

See [Lamentations 2:7](#) and [Lamentations 4:1](#) to see God had destroyed and abandoned His Temple. The phrase in Isaiah 44:28 that shows God will change His mind about the Temple is: “ And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'”.

See [Lamentations 2:8-9](#) to see God had destroyed the walls of Jerusalem and scattered its princes to other nations. The phrases in Isaiah 44:26-28 that show God will change His mind about the walls of Jerusalem and repopulate the city are: (vs. 26) “Who Says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,’” and (vs. 28) “Saying to Jerusalem, ' You shall be built.’”.

¹¹ The Cyrus Cylinder says a low person was put in charge of Babylon. It was not Nabonidius, who is mentioned later in the text. This low person offended the gods by impure food and drink offerings. Therefore, he was talking about Belshazzar, Nabonidus' son, who was put in charge of Babylon while his father, Nabonidus was living someplace else.

mistreating the people of Babylon that were entrusted to his care; that The Chief of the Gods relented, and changed his mind about the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins.

“[When ...] ... [... wor]ld quarters [...] ... a low person was put in charge of his country, but he set [a (...) counter]feit over them. He ma[de] a counterfeit of E* [false god's name] [and ...] ... for Ur and the rest of the cult-cities. Rites inappropriate to them, [impure] fo[od- offerings ...] disrespectful [...] were daily gabbled, and, intolerably, he brought the daily offerings to a halt; he inter[fered with the rites and] instituted [...] within

In the Cyrus Cylinder, Cyrus says Nabonidus was in Shushan when he got there. In the Nabonidus Chronicle (ABC 7) it is unclear exactly in which city Nabonidus was. He definitely had moved the images to Shushan, but it also sounds like he may have been in Sippar when Cyrus got there. Either place, Nabonidus was not in Babylon at the time of the invasion that night.

See The Nabonidus Cylinder from Ur (first inscription listed in article) to see that Nabonidus' eldest son was named Belshazzar. Link is here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus

See the Verse Account of Nabonidus (later in the same article), which says that in the third year of his reign, Nabonidus gave the army and entrusted the kingship to his oldest son. Link is here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus

See the Nabonidus Chronicle, to see the official record of Babylon for Nabonidus' years 7-11. It specifically states that the Crown Prince was in charge of Babylon while his father was away.

We can get an idea of when Nabonidus fully gave the kingship to Belshazzar (or when Belshazzar declared himself to be the king of Babylon), because by year seventeen, the king did the New Year's festival, but we see that Nabonidus was either in Shushan or in Sippar when Cyrus came there to defeat it: He was not in Babylon. Only the king could celebrate the New Year Festival. So, either Nabonidus came home after not being there for many years, and then left again by October; or else he had totally given the kingship to Belshazzar by that time, and it was Belshazzar who led out in the New Year's Festival that year. This seems very reasonable, because the Verse Account certainly depicts Nabonidus as incompetent concerning religious rites and festivals. There is also a record of Nabonidus saying he would not celebrate a New Year's Festival until he had the temple built for a god he had just made. Although it seems as if that task was possibly finished in the third year of his reign, we see that there was no New Year's Festival for years seven through eleven, and possibly longer, because there is a section of the tablet missing after the 11th year until the seventeenth year. This suggests Nabonidus was still building the temple to his god he had made during those years, in agreement with his vow that he would not celebrate the New Year Festival until it was finished.

Therefore, by saying there was a New Year's Festival in the seventeenth year, we can surmise that Belshazzar was the king by this time. Since his dad was still alive, they continued to number the years by his reign. See the ABC 5 Jerusalem Chronicle to show that Nebuchadnezzar's first partial year of actually reigning was considered his dad's twenty-first year, because that was the year in which Nabopolassar died.

The link to the Nabonidus Chronicle (ABC 7) is here: http://www.livius.org/cg/cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus3.html See entries for years 7-11, and 17.

The link to the ABC 5 Jerusalem Chronicle. See year 21. <http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-5-jerusalem-chronicle/>

The link to the Verse Account, which says Nabonidus would not hold a New Year's Festival until he had the temple built is here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus

the sanctuaries. In his mind, reverential fear of M* [false god's name], king of the gods, came to an end. He did yet more evil to his city every day; ... his [people...], he brought ruin on them all by a yoke without relief. Enlil-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their complaints, and [...] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines, angry that he had made them enter into Babylon (Shuanna). Ex[alted M* [false god's name], Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them.”

3. God Chose Cyrus by Name to Remedy the Situation in Babylon: Isaiah 44:28:

So, continuing on in verse 28, Isaiah says that after God will change His mind about Jerusalem, and let it be rebuilt, He will choose Cyrus to be the leader to actually give the command to rebuild the city and start the work on the Temple.

“28 Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built.’
And to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

Compare that with the Cyrus Cylinder, in which the very next statement after the one quoted above where he says that the Chief of the Gods relented, and changed his mind about the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins, that he sought out Cyrus and chose him to be the king. Here is the quote from the Cyrus Cylinder. I will re-quote a little from the passage above so you can see the continuity.

“Ex[alted M* [false god's name] Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.

B. How Cyrus Took Over Babylon, and How He Did God's Will in Restoring Jerusalem

We will now take each of the lines from Isaiah 44:26-28 above, and show where this

came to pass. Some of the information comes from the Cyrus Cylinder,¹² and some of the information comes from Xenophon's "Cyrus' Paradise."¹³

1. Cyrus will Repopulate Jerusalem:

Isaiah 44:26: "Who says to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited." Isaiah 44:26

Compare to the Cyrus Cylinder, which says that when Cyrus took over Babylon, he let the people who were captives go back to their own lands.

"By his lofty command, all enthroned kings, the whole world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, inhabitants of distant regions, all the kings of the West, tent dwellers, brought their heavy tribute to me in Babylon and kissed my feet. From [Babylon] to Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the cities of Zamban, Meturnu, Der as far as the borders of the Gutians – I returned to these sanctuaries on the other side of the Tigris, sanctuaries founded in ancient times, the images that had been in them there and I made their dwellings permanent. I also gathered all their people and returned to them their habitations."

Compare with 2 Chronicles 36:22, which says Cyrus included Jerusalem in this general decree, and let anyone who wanted to go back to Jerusalem go back.

“23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:
All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!” II Chronicles 36:23

2. Cyrus will Rebuild the Cities of Judah.

Isaiah 44:26: "To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built.'" Isaiah 44:26

¹² Translation of the Cyrus Cylinder from the British Museum is here:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1

¹³ Translation of Xenophon's "Cyrus' Paradise" can be found here: <http://www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/>

Compare to the Cyrus Cylinder, who says he let the people who prayed for him be settled in a peaceful place. It would have had to be rebuilt to be peaceful, and Jeremiah had told the captives to pray for the peace of Babylon while they were there. See Jeremiah 29:7

"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Jeremiah 29:7

From the Cyrus Cylinder:

"I settled all the people of Babylon who prayed for my kingship and all their lands in a peaceful place."¹⁴

3. Cyrus will Renovate the Waste Places.

Isaiah 44:26: "And I will raise up her waste places;" Isaiah 44:26

a. Cyrus Repaired Foreign Sanctuaries' Ruins:

Compare to the Cyrus Cylinder, where Cyrus says he repaired the captives' homelands' sanctuaries that had long been in ruins. This quote comes from the second translation on the page, because it says it more closely to the Bible text.

"I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries."¹⁵

This is basically the same quote as one above, but with the emphasis on the ruins being re-established. The other quote focuses on the people being returned. Although there were no images to return to the Temple in Jerusalem, Cyrus did let the vessels for God's temple be brought back to Jerusalem.¹⁶

14 From the Cyrus Cylinder: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

15 From the Cyrus Cylinder: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 Second translation.

16 See [Ezra 1:7-11](#), [Ezra 5:11-16](#), [Ezra 6:3-5](#).

b. Cyrus Renovated Homes for Those in Babylon, Too.

Here is another quote from the Cyrus Cylinder that says Cyrus renovated the houses for the people in Babylon, too, because they had become dilapidated. He was raising up the waste places there, too, and he said that his god was pleased with him for doing that.

From the Cyrus Cylinder:

“As to the inhabitants of Babylon (DIN.TIR), [they saw their] hearts con[tent] (because) [I abolished] the corvée which was against their (social) standing. I brought relief to their dilapidated housing, putting (thus) an end to their (main) complaints. M* [false god's name], the great lord, was well pleased with my deeds and sent friendly blessings to myself, Cyrus, the king who worships him, to Cambyses, my son, the offspring of [my] lions [sic—loins?], as well as to all my troops, and we all [praised] his great [godhead] joyously, standing before him in peace.”¹⁷

4. Cyrus' Strategy Revealed: Dry Up the Rivers.

Isaiah 44:26-27: "Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers!'" Isaiah 44:26-27

Here is the verse that tells the exact military strategy Cyrus would use to take Babylon. He would dry up a river, and God would help him get it done.

a. Xenophon's Account of Cyrus Diverting the Euphrates

Compare that to Xenophon's account of how Cyrus took over Babylon, by diverting the Euphrates River, drying up the riverbed, and then entering the city through the dried up river bed.¹⁸

17 From The Cyrus Cylinder: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 , second translation.

18 From Xenophon. “Chapter 7.5: Cyrus Takes Babylon by Rerouting the Euphrates and Entering by Night While the Babylonians Are in Celebration; He Transitions from a General into a King by Worrying about How to Maintain His Vast Empire.” *Cyrus' Paradise*, www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/. Accessed 4 July 2017.

"7. Cyrus calls the officers together and explains that he does not think the city may be taken by force..."

"8. Chrysantas raises the question of the river that runs through Babylon..."

"9. Cyrus proposes then that they divert the Euphrates..."

[break]

"15. After the trenches are completed Cyrus has them opened up on the night of a festival..."

"16. Doing so makes the riverbed into the city passable..."

"17. Cyrus summons the infantry and cavalry..."

"18. He has them test to see if it is possible to march into the riverbed..."

"19. They determine that it is..."

"20. He exhorts his men to take heart that they have defeated this army before..."

"21. Now he says they are asleep and drunk and not in battle array..."

"26. They make an easy path to the palace with Gobryas and his men pretending to be fellow-revelers..."

b. Compare also Herodotus' Account of Cyrus Diverting the River to Enter Babylon:

Here is a quote from Herodotus' account: This one also says that the gates to the river were not shut, like Isaiah 45:1 says they will be open when Cyrus would take over. We will quote that later.

"[1.191] Cyrus was now reduced to great perplexity, as time went on and he made no progress against the place. In this distress either some one made the suggestion to him, or he bethought himself of a plan, which he proceeded to put in execution. He placed a portion of his army at the point where the river enters the city, and another body at the back of the place where it issues forth, with orders to march into the town by the bed of the stream, as soon as the water became shallow enough: he then himself drew off with the unwarlike portion of his host, and made for the place where Nitocrisnote dug the basin for the river, where he did exactly what she had done

formerly: he turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable.

Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the, river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street gates which gave access to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare) long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt about the capture. Such, then, were the circumstances of the first taking of Babylon."¹⁹

5. Cyrus is God's Shepherd, and Does What God Wants:

Isaiah 44:28: 28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure," Isaiah 44:28

Compare with Cyrus' account of how he said his god felt about him.

Here is what Cyrus says, in how he worked with God, to do what God wanted done, and that God wanted him to take care of the people and treat them well, (like a shepherd would do).

From the Cyrus Cylinder:

"Ex[alted M* [false god's name], Enlil-of-the-Go]ds,.....[break] He made the land of the Qutu and all the Medean troops prostrate themselves at his feet, while he looked out in justice and righteousness for the black-headed

¹⁹ From: Lendering, Jona. "Cyrus Takes Babylon." *Cyrus Takes Babylon - Livius*, 25 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/herodotus/cyrus-takes-babylon/. Accessed 4 July 2017.

people whom he had put under his care. M* [false god's name], the great lord, who nurtures his people, saw with pleasure his fine deeds and true heart and ordered that he should go to Babylon. " ²⁰

Cyrus also says he kept order in Babylon, and stopped the nobles from doing servile work, which Nabonidus had made them do.

“I sought the welfare of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon [..., w]ho as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them, I soothed their weariness, I freed them from their bonds(?)” ²¹

Finally, Cyrus says he treated the people of Babylon very well, and they had nothing to fear from his soldiers, as the conquering military power. This shows he was treating them more like a shepherd would do, and not a harsh military dictator.

“When I went as harbinger of peace i[nt]o Babylon I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe. My vast troops marched peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear.”²²

6. Cyrus Would Rebuild Jerusalem:

Isaiah 44:28 "Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,”
And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.””

Compare to the Cyrus Cylinder in the above passage for point A.2. in Part II, on page 7- 8. It says that God changed his mind about the sanctuaries that were in ruins, and the population of the land who had become like corpses. Therefore, part of the reason Cyrus says his god chose him out of all the countries, was because his god wanted him to rebuild these sanctuaries that were in ruins. I will re-quote the pertinent part here, but the full, in context quote is in Part II, A. 2.

²⁰ From the Cyrus Cylinder: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1

²¹ From the Cyrus Cylinder: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 Translation 1.

²² Cyrus Cylinder quote from http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1, first translation.

“Ex[alted M* [false god's name], Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.”²³

Now compare to the Cyrus Cylinder, in this passage, which says Cyrus sent back all the gods of a large area, and rebuilt all their sanctuaries. This would include the Temple in Jerusalem, because Judah is across the river Tigris from Babylon.

" All kings who sit on thrones, from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote distric]ts (and) the kings of the land of Amurru who live in tents, all of them, brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my feet. From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa, Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Qutu - the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them." ²⁴

Although there would have been no idols to send back to the Temple in Jerusalem, we have a record in Ezra 1:7-11 that Cyrus let all the vessels that were from the Temple that Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon be taken back. This is equivalent to letting the statues go back to their own sanctuaries in the quote above.

“7 King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; 8 and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. 9 This is the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-nine knives, 10 thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles. 11 All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. All these

23 Cyrus Cylinder quote from: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1, first translation.

24 Cyrus Cylinder quote from: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1, first translation.

Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.”
Ezra 1:7-11

Part II Prophecy About How Cyrus Would Take Over Babylon in Isaiah 45:1-6

A. Isaiah 45:1-6

Isaiah continues his prophesy about Cyrus in chapter 45:1-6. Here is the prophesy given 188 years (according to Josephus²⁵) before it happened. We will then discuss each phrase, as we did in Part I, for Isaiah 44:26-28.

Isaiah 45:1-6 (KJV:)

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:1-6 (KJV)

B. Archaeological Evidence From the Cyrus Cylinder:

Now we will continue to compare this prophesy with Cyrus' own account of what happened when he took over Babylon. The numbering will continue from Part I, to help show how many ways the the Cylinder agrees with these prophecies in Isaiah.

²⁵ See Part I, section B for more details on how this was derived.

7. Isaiah 45:1: God will Hold Cyrus' hand.

"Thus says the Lord to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—" Isaiah 45:1

Compare that to the Cyrus Cylinder, when he describes that God took him by the hand and walked with him into Babylon. The "He" at the beginning of this quote is his false god's name.

"He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything." (first translation)²⁶

The second translation makes this even more clear, that God held Cyrus' hand.

"He sought and looked through all the lands, searching for a righteous king whose hand he could grasp. He called to rule Cyrus, king of Anshan, and announced his name as the king of the universe." ²⁷

Cyrus not only says that God took him by the hand, but listen to this beautiful account of how Cyrus says that God and His Army walked with him down to Babylon, like a friend, and was there with him when he took over Babylon. This quote also shows that Cyrus and God were working together to take over Babylon, as is depicted in the Isaiah 44:26-28 passage.

" And M*[false god's name], great lord, leader of his people, looked happily at the good deeds and steadfast mind of Cyrus and ordered him to march to his own city Babylon, set him on the road to Babylon, and went alongside him like a friend and companion. His teeming army, uncounted like water (flowing) in a river, marched with him fully armed. (M*)[false god's name] allowed him to enter Babylon without battle or fight, sparing his own city of Babylon from hardship, and delivered Nabonidus, who had not worshipped him, into his hands." ²⁸

26 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

27 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 , second translation.

28 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 first translation.

8. God will Subdue Nations before him, and Loose the Loins of Kings;

"to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings,"
Is. 45:1 (KJV)

a. Belshazzar's Loins were Loosed, and He was Subdued Before Cyrus:

1. Daniel's Account:

Compare to Daniel 5:6 saying that Belshazzar was so scared when he saw the hand writing on the wall, his loins were loosed, and his knees knocked together.

"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Daniel 5:6

2. Xenophon's Account:

Compare to Xenophon's account of what happened that night. They found the king already on the verge of suicide, (Belshazzar was subdued before him), and then they killed him.(Cyrus totally subdued this king.)

“28. When the king asks what the disturbance is, some of the gates are opened and a few men run out...

29. Gadatas and his men rush in and find the king on the verge of suicide...”²⁹

b. The Guti-Land and the Medes were Subdued Before Cyrus:

The prophesy said "nations" and "kings", not just one king. Compare with an early statement on the Cyrus Cylinder, which says that God had already given him the victory over the Medes before he took over Babylon. A few paragraphs before this quote, Cyrus says it is his god, M*, who is doing this. M* is the "He" talked about at the beginning of this quote.

29 From <http://www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/>

" He made the Guti-land and all the Medes (Ummanmanda) bow in submission at his feet and so (Cyrus) assiduously looked after the justice and well-being of the Black-Headed People over whom he had been made victorious (by [M*])."³⁰

c. The Land of Qutu and Medean Troups Subdued Before Cyrus:

In another part of the passage, Cyrus says M* made the Medes and all the and of the Qutu bow before him.

"He made the land of the Qutu and all the Medean troops prostrate themselves at his feet,"³¹

d. Nabonidus and the Governors and Nobles of Babylon Subdued Before Cyrus:

Cyrus mentions Nabonidus was given into his hand by God, and all the governors and nobles were glad to see the regime change, so much that he says they "kissed his feet." The "He" at the beginning of the quote is M*, the god Cyrus worshipped.

"He handed over to him Nabonidus, the king who did not fear him. All the people of Tintir, of all Sumer and Akkad, nobles and governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet, rejoicing over his kingship and their faces shone."³²

9. Isaiah 45:1-2 God will have the gates opened for him, so he can enter.

"1 to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;
2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:"

30 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 Second translation.

31 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

32 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

a. Gates to the River Open: Herodotus:

Compare that with Herodotus' account of the night Cyrus took over. He says the Babylonians could have shut the gates that gave access to the river, but they didn't. The gates were open, like God prophesied they would be.

" Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street gates which gave access to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap." ³³

b. Gates to the Palace Opened: Xenophon:

Also compare Xenophon's account of the gate being opened for Gobyrus, when he got to the palace.

"26. They make an easy path to the palace with Gobryas and his men pretending to be fellow-revelers..."
27. Gobryas and Gadatas find the palace doors locked...
28. When the king asks what the disturbance is, some of the gates are opened and a few men run out...
29. Gadatas and his men rush in and find the king on the verge of suicide..."³⁴

10. Isaiah 45:3 God will give him riches.

Isaiah 45:3 "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel."

Compare that with Cyrus' testimony that the great lord (He calls him M*) made all the kings of the whole world bring Cyrus their treasure and tribute money. We have seen some of this quote before, but this time focus on the riches the kings brought. Last time the quote was focusing on the fact that God would subdue

³³ From <http://www.livius.org/sources/content/herodotus/cyrus-takes-babylon/>

³⁴ From <http://www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/>

kings before him.

"The great lord M* [false god's name] rejoiced in my deeds. Kindly he blessed me, Cyrus, the king, his worshipper, Cambyses, the offspring of my loins, and all of my troops, so that we could go about in peace and well-being. By his lofty command, all enthroned kings, the whole world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, inhabitants of distant regions, all the kings of the West, tent dwellers, brought their heavy tribute to me in Babylon and kissed my feet." ³⁵

11. God knows Cyrus, and calls him by his name, but Cyrus does not know God.

The most wonderful part of all this, to me, is that God knew and had recorded Cyrus' name nearly 200 years before he was born. It is a testimony also to God's love and care, that He takes care of us, even when we don't know about Him. In this amazing prophesy, we also see that when Cyrus credits his false god, M*, in doing all this with him and for him, that he is unknowingly fulfilling this prophesy written about him! Here is the prophesy from Isaiah 45:4-5.

"4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:" Isaiah 45:4-5:

a. Cyrus says M* Called Him By Name:

Compare with the Cyrus Cylinder, where Cyrus says that M* [false god's name] called Cyrus by his name, and made him the ruler of the world. We have quoted this above, but now with the emphasis on that God knew Cyrus, but that Cyrus didn't know it was I AM that was doing this with him.

"Ex[alted M* [false god's name], Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented..... He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the

³⁵ From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

kingship over all of everything."³⁶

b. Cyrus Credits M* As Making It His Destiny to Take Over Babylon.

Compare, also that Cyrus recognized that it was his destiny by his false god, that he had taken Babylon, and so desired to worship him every day. But, what is so sad, is that he didn't know God by His name.

"After entering Babylon in peace, amidst joy and jubilation I made the royal palace the centre of my rule. The great lord M* [false god's name], who loves Babylon, with great magnanimity, established (it) as (my) destiny, and I sought to worship him each day."³⁷

Part IV: Conclusion:

We have seen through discussing eleven separate points, how Cyrus' own testimony about how he took over Babylon, is close to a phrase-by-phrase fulfillment of the prophecies about him given in Isaiah 44:26-45:1-6, which was given approximately 200 years before it happened. What a mighty God He is! Because we can see this amazing fulfillment of prophecy about Cyrus, we can be sure that the rest of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation that are still in the future for us, will be fulfilled exactly as God has proclaimed they will be done.

Rochelle A. Houser,
Chemist
Sabbath School Superintendent,
Newburgh Seventh-day Adventist Church
Newburgh, IN 47630
houser@readyanswers.org

Works Cited:

“Fall of Babylon.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 8 June 2017,
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Babylon. Accessed 4 July 2017.

36 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 First translation.

37 From http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 Second translation.

“The Cyrus Cylinder.” *British Museum*,
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1 Accessed 4 July 2017.

“Isaiah.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 June 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah.
Accessed 4 July 2017.

Lendering, Jona. “ABC 5 (Jerusalem Chronicle).” *ABC 5 (Jerusalem Chronicle) - Livius*,
22 Aug. 2015, <http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-5-jerusalem-chronicle/> Accessed 5 July 2017.

Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, Livius.org, 12 Jan. 2017, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus1.html . Accessed 4 July 2017.

Lendering, Jona. “Cyrus Takes Babylon.” *Cyrus Takes Babylon - Livius*, 25 Jan. 2017,
www.livius.org/sources/content/herodotus/cyrus-takes-babylon/. Accessed 4 July 2017.

“Siege of Jerusalem (587 BC).” *Wikipedia.org*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 30 June 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_\(587_BC\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(587_BC)). Accessed 4 July 2017.

Stolper, Matthew. “The Form, Language and Contents of the Cyrus Cylinder.”
Academia.edu - Share Research, Oriental Institute/University of Chicago,
[www.academia.edu/23437554/
The_Form_Language_and_Contents_of_the_Cyrus_Cylinder](http://www.academia.edu/23437554/The_Form_Language_and_Contents_of_the_Cyrus_Cylinder). Accessed 4 July 2017.

Xenophon. “Chapter 7.5: Cyrus Takes Babylon by Rerouting the Euphrates and Entering by Night While the Babylonians Are in Celebration; He Transitions from a General into a King by Worrying about How to Maintain His Vast Empire.” *Cyrus' Paradise*, www.cyropaedia.org/book-7/chapter-7-5-cyrus-takes-babylon-by-rerouting-the-euphrates-and-entering-by-night-while-the-babylonians-are-in-celebration-he-transitions-from-a-general-into-a-king-by-worrying-about-how-to-maintain/ Accessed 4 July 2017.