

News & Notes

Sunday, September 16, 2007

Remember in Prayer: Daryl Alberson; Steve Alberson; Tommy Alberson; Mike Carter; Vikie Cobb; Melba Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Charles Johnson; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; Sherry Lawrence; James Luna; John and Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Forrest Phelps; Ann Ray; Chris Spence; Jamie Spence; Ruby Tapp; Rural Tapp; Ron Tega; Calvin Ursery; Nancy Griffin Wamack; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of September is spaghetti sauce.

The newest edition of **House to House/Heart to Heart** has been mailed. For those not on the mailing route, copies are available in the foyer.

Ashland Events: Today: Prayer meeting at 4:00 PM.

Area events: Beginning today: Gospel meeting at the Union church of Christ; September 27-October 3: *Gospel Extravaganza* at the Terry Street church of Christ in Ripley;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Guest Speaker: Todd Sanderson

PM: Guest Speaker: Kerry Redd

For the Record (September 9, 2007):

Attendance: 78 Contribution: \$1636.00 Budget: \$1326.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King

Carrol Street

spreading the Good News
Ashland Announcer

"GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS..." (MATTHEW 28:19)

JOSIAH, CYRUS, AND JESUS

Roger D. Campbell

What do these three have in common? For one thing, each of them is identified in the Bible as a "king." It is also true that each of them was quite unique, and in the process of their work on earth, had a great influence on the people of God. However, it is one other aspect of their lives which the three of them had in common that we want to address in this study. In the case of Josiah, Cyrus, and Jesus, special prophecies were given from the Lord about their births and the special roles that they would play. The prophecies were amazing!

JOSIAH – Who was he? Let us pause to consider the historical background to God's announcement about Josiah and what he would do. After Solomon died, the people of Israel divided into two nations: the Northern Kingdom was known as "Israel," while the Southern Kingdom was known as "Judah." Josiah was the 15th king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, beginning his reign at the age of eight (2 Chronicles 34:1). He was the best king in Judah's history, making him the best ruler among God's people throughout the entire period of time from the death of Solomon until the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of the Babylonians. Josiah was special.

But, long before Josiah came into this world, a prophet of Jehovah made a prediction about him. An unnamed messenger of God, simply described in the Bible as "*a man of God out of Judah*" (1 Kings 13:1), came to where King Jeroboam of Israel was. Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom following the division of the kingdom. As soon as he took the throne, he deliberately corrupted the worship of the Lord. He set up golden calves for the people to worship in Dan and Bethel, allowed anyone that wanted to to serve as a priest, and changed other aspects of God's pattern for worship (1 Kings 12:25-33).

What exactly did that prophet of God out of Judah say in the presence of King Jeroboam? "*And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee*" (1 Kings 13:1,2).

The prophet of the Lord thus predicted that something special was going to happen in the future on the altar that Jeroboam had built. What was it? Someone was going to offer priests and burn men's bones on it. Who was to do that? A descendant of David by the name of "Josiah."

Stay with me right here, because these historical dates are significant. This prediction about Josiah (1 Kings 13:2) was made in about the year B.C. 931. Josiah did not become king of Judah until about B.C. 627. Thus, the prediction was made long before Josiah was even born, and over 300 years before he carried out the predicted action! Is that not amazing, that the God of heaven pronounced the man's name hundreds of years before he was born, and at the same time foretold with precision what he would do?! Only the God of heaven possesses complete, 100% accurate information about the future. Therefore, this prophecy about Josiah must have come from the Almighty.

One question still needs to be answered: Did Josiah really do what the prophet predicted 300 years in advance? The prophecy's fulfillment is recorded in 2 Kings 23:15,16: *"Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words."*

CYRUS – Who was he? He was the most well known king/ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire. He came into power after the Medes and Persians combined to conquer the Babylonian Empire in about B.C. 538. However, the Bible records a prediction that was made about Cyrus long before he entered this world.

Isaiah the prophet spoke of Cyrus in these terms: *"That (God, rdc) saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built: and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him . . ."* (Isaiah 44:28-45:1). As we shall see, Cyrus carried out the action which Jehovah said that he would.

We must not overlook the chronology of the events about which Isaiah prophesied. Isaiah began his prophetic work about B.C. 740 and continued past the year B.C. 700. As we noted above, Cyrus did not begin his rule in the Medo-Persian Empire until around B.C. 538. Thus, Isaiah's prediction of Cyrus' activities was made well over 150 years before he came into power, and way before he was even born. Amazing, would you not agree?!

Go back and look again at what Isaiah foretold about Cyrus. He said that Cyrus would be involved in the building of Jerusalem and laying the foundation of the temple. Hold on a minute. When Isaiah was alive, both the city of Jerusalem and

the temple of God that was in that city were in fine shape. Thus, what Isaiah was predicting was Cyrus' role in the reconstruction of the city and temple. That means, of course, that Isaiah's prophecy has the built-in implication that the city and temple would be destroyed, and thus would stand in need for someone to rebuild them. History records, in fact, that the Babylonians did, indeed, destroy Jerusalem and its temple in B.C. 586.

Where can we read in the Bible about Cyrus actually being a key figure in the reconstruction of the temple? Ezra 1:1-3 states, *"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which his in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods . . ."* Yes, Cyrus said, *"Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place"* (Ezra 5:15).

Just as the Lord said that Cyrus would be instrumental in building the temple, it came to pass. No surprise there! Just as in the case of King Josiah, King Cyrus' name was foretold by God's prophet long before Cyrus, a Gentile king, was even born. Only God can have and reveal such specific knowledge about the unborn of the distant future.

JESUS – Like Josiah and Cyrus, Jesus' activities on earth were predicted long before He came into the world as a man. Most notably, Isaiah foretold of His birth, saying, *"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). From Matthew 1:18-25, we learn that the "virgin" was Mary, the "son" was Jesus, and the name "Immanuel" means "God with us." Again, Isaiah made that prediction about Jesus some 700 years before His birth. Isaiah's message was not a hunch, not a guess, and certainly not simply a possibility or "maybe so." What Isaiah said could not be anything but 100% true, since it came from the God of heaven!

There are, of course, an abundance of other Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Those would include prophecies about the place of His birth (Micah 5:2), His being called *"mighty God"* (Isaiah 9:6), and the fact of His being wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5).

In the three instances that we have noticed – the cases of Josiah, Cyrus, and Jesus, we marvel at the knowledge of Jehovah. We marvel at the specific details that He foretold long before the actual events transpired. We can only conclude that the Bible's record of prophecies and their fulfillment came from God. I guess that would make God the Source of the Bible, would it not?