

## 24 The King of Persia as Deliverer

It is natural to expect that the prophecy would give some idea of the human instrument God would use in providing this deliverance. In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 the human deliverer is designated by the name Cyrus. God declares that He will enable Cyrus to overcome all obstacles and to cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt and the foundation of the Temple to be laid.

As a young man, Cyrus ruled Persia. Persia, at that time, designated a small area in the southern portion of the territory dominated by the Medes. While still fairly young, Cyrus gained independence from the Median overlord and then was able to subdue him and to bring all the Medes under his control. Soon he led his armies westward through the territory north of the Babylonian Empire, conquering tribe after tribe. Turning still farther north, he entered Asia Minor. Here he defeated Croesus, king of Lydia, reputed to be the wealthiest man on earth. Following this victory, most of Asia Minor came under his control.

Cyrus's next step was to turn back and attack the empire of the Babylonians from the north. Again he was successful, and the city of Babylon itself fell to his soldiers and was made a part of his empire.

In his relation to the nations that had been held captive by the Assyrian and Babylonian oppressors, Cyrus reversed the policy followed by the previous conquerors. He tried to make the subject people feel that he was their friend, who had rescued them from Assyrian or Babylonian control. Thus he appeared to many nations as a deliverer, though he did not grant them independence or autonomy. Soon after his conquest of Babylon he gave permission to the Israelites and to other conquered peoples to return to their homelands. The first chapter of Ezra contains his decree permitting the Israelites to go back to Jerusalem and ordering that God's Temple be rebuilt.

After bringing the great Babylonian Empire under his control, Cyrus continued his conquests, turning eastward and conquering country after country. His successors rounded out his eastern conquests, including even Afghanistan and the northwestern