

25 The King of Persia as Deliverer

part of India. This vast region remained under Persian control for more than two centuries, until the Persian Empire was in turn conquered by Alexander the Great.

A number of passages in this section of Isaiah refer to Cyrus, although only two mention him by name. The first of these passages, 41:2-3, pictures the coming of a great conqueror from the east, whose appearance fills the nations with terror. The fact that Cyrus is not named until chapter 44, but is briefly described in earlier passages, is illustrative of a method of revelation that frequently occurs in the prophetic books, where a suggestion is first made or a situation briefly presented, and it is only later that the idea is enlarged and clarified, with further detail added. Practically all interpreters agree that these passages refer to Cyrus. The only important dissent is related to Isaiah 41:2-3, which is discussed in detail when chapter 41 is examined as a unit.

The second reference to Cyrus is in verse 25 of the same chapter, which reads:

I have raised up one from the north, and he has come; from the rising of the sun he will call on my name; and he will come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treads clay.

Here God specifically claims that He Himself raised up a great conqueror. Although Cyrus came originally from the east, he conquered the regions north of Babylon before attacking that empire, so it is correct to say of him that he came from the north as well as "from the rising of the sun." The first chapter in the book of Ezra quotes the edict issued by Cyrus, in which he attributes his victories to the LORD and says that God has appointed him to build Him a house at Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2). By making this edict, he certainly called upon the name of the true God, even if he never abandoned belief in other gods.

The latter part of the verse aptly describes the overwhelming power with which Cyrus conquered the nations.

The next reference to Cyrus is in the latter part of chapter 44, where he is specifically named in a long poetic sentence composed of a series of participial clauses describing God's activities