

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 319

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a famous king named Cyrus the Great. He reigned in Persia from 559 B.C. until his death in 530 B.C. He is of special interest for several reasons. First, he is the only Gentile who is called the Lord's anointed (Is. 45:1). Second, Isaiah predicted that he would rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple over 120 years before he was even born (Is. 44:28). He did precisely what Isaiah predicted. In the third place God used him to conquer Babylon at the very height of their power.

The fact that Isaiah announced the birth and destiny of Cyrus over a century before he was born gave the devil an opportunity to plan for his death and thus prevent the prophecy from coming true. Let us begin our story with Astyages, the last king of the Median Empire. He reigned from 580 – 550 B.C. He was the grandfather of Cyrus the Great. This wicked king had a dream that his daughter, Mandane, gave birth to a child that would rule all of Asia. Herod the Great, as you recall, killed his own sons to keep them from occupying his throne. As you know, he also tried to kill the baby Jesus! In the same paranoid way Astyages did not want anyone to succeed him. In an attempt to dilute his daughter's royal blood, he had her marry a Persian whom he deemed to be racially inferior. When she gave birth to a son he immediately ordered that the baby be killed. This little baby was not killed and would grow up to be Cyrus the Great.

We immediately see that nothing in this story was happening by "accident". God was determined to keep the baby alive that the prophecy might be fulfilled. The devil was determined to kill the baby that the Scriptures might be broken. As you can guess, God won!

The task of killing baby Cyrus was delegated to Harpagus, the king's most trusted servant. Harpagus, however, had second thoughts about killing the king's grandson. Since the king had no sons, Harpagus reasoned that his daughter Mandane would become the queen upon the death of her father. She would therefore be in a position to seek vengeance on the man who had killed her son. At last Harpagus determined that the baby had to die, but not by his hand. He delegated that cruel responsibility to a herdsman of the king named Mitrdates. The herdsman was ordered to abandon the new born baby in the mountains and leave it to die.

The plot thickens! Mitrdates was married to a female slave named "Spaca" which incidentally means "Bitch". This name, as we will later see, is significant. Providentially, Spaca had just given birth to a still born baby boy. She had her husband immediately conspired to switch the babies. She would nurse baby Cyrus and her own son would receive a royal burial. The deception was not discovered for ten years. The truth became known from an innocent children's game. Young Cyrus played the part of the king and ordered one of his playmates to be whipped. A ten year old suspicion was aroused as the victim was from a prominent family. When Mitrdates was tortured on the rack he broke down and revealed the truth about his deceit and the identity of young Cyrus.

Harpagus was destined to pay a horrible price for his disobedience. The wicked Astyages invited him to a sumptuous banquet of boiled and roasted meat. After which Harpagus was presented a basket with the hands and head of his own 13 year old son. It was only then that he realized he had just dined upon the flesh of his own son. Cyrus was again providentially spared from death because the king's magi said the king's prophetic dream had been fulfilled in the child's game. Cyrus was then sent to be with his parents in Persia who for the last 10 years thought he was dead.

Now these ancient peoples were much given to mythology. Rome, for example, was said to have been founded by Romulus and Remus who had been abandoned in the wilderness and suckled by a she-wolf. Since the foster mother of Cyrus was named “Spaca” which means “Bitch”, the story was circulated that he too had been abandoned in the wilderness and raised by a “Bitch”.

As Cyrus grew to manhood, his fame increased and Harpagus saw him as a vehicle by which he could gain vengeance over the wicked king for the brutal murder of his son. He skillfully planted seeds of rebellion and discord among influential Medians. He even sent a secret message to Cyrus concealed in the body of a dead rabbit with details of the coup he was planning against his grandfather. When the wicked king became aware of this rebellion, as if deprived of his senses, he appointed Harpagus to be in command of his army, not realizing that he was, in fact, the principle conspirator against him.

When the war was over Astyages was defeated and was kept in prison until the day of his death. Cyrus then became the supreme monarch of the Medes and the Persians. The remarkable predictions of Isaiah were in the process of being fulfilled. Ezra 6:3-12 confirms that in the first year of King Cyrus he issued a decree to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem and even ordered that the expenses be paid out of the royal treasury.

God willing, in our next letter we will tell you how Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in a single night!

Never doubt the Bible! God will be true even though every man is found a liar (Rom. 3:4).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce