

Supremacy of God Pt. 4

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, November 1, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY – The Lord reigns supreme over the nations and over the leaders that preside over them (REPEAT)...

Isaiah 40:15, 23–24 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

15 Surely the **nations** are like a drop in a bucket;
 they are regarded as dust on the scales;
 he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

23 He brings **princes** to naught
 and reduces the **rulers** of this world to nothing.

24 No sooner are they planted,
 no sooner are they sown,
 no sooner do they take root in the ground,
 than he blows on them and they wither,
 and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

Daniel 2:19b–20a, 21 (Emphasis Mine)

19 . . . Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said:

21 He changes times and seasons;
 he **deposes kings** and **raises up others**.

NOTE 1 – In recent weeks we have noted the ability of God to humble earthly leaders (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar). In recent weeks we have noted the ability of God to judge and/or remove earthly leaders (e.g., Herod, Jezebel and Belshazzar). If you missed these recent messages, feel free to listen to them online at your leisure at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – This morning I want to bring our series on the supremacy of God to a close by noting His ability to raise up and utilize human leaders to advance His good purpose in the earth. Thus, not only can the Lord humble, judge and/or remove human leaders: He can also elevate leaders to function as agents and/or emissaries of His will...

Daniel 2: 21b (Emphasis Mine)

21 . . . [The Lord] **deposes kings** and **raises up others**.

NOTE 3 – There is perhaps no finer illustration of this reality than that of King Cyrus...

CYRUS PT. 1

Q. Who was King Cyrus (i.e., tragically a little-known character to many Christians)?

A. Cyrus—also identified as Cyrus the Great, Cyrus II and Cyrus the Elder—was an ancient king who ruled over the Persian Empire (c. 550–530 BC). He is mentioned more than thirty times in the Bible (i.e., appearing in the Books of 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Isaiah and Daniel). Though he was a pagan king who presided over a pagan empire, God raised him up to accomplish His good will and purpose—as we shall note!

CYRUS PT. 2

KEY – If we are to understand the historical significance of Cyrus and the supremacy of God demonstrated in and through him, we must understand him against the backdrop of OT prophecy (i.e., the prophecy of Isaiah). Allow me to establish the following points in the most “simple and summary” of ways...

NOTE 1 – Isaiah was a prophet who ministered in Judah from app. 739–686 BC (FYI – dates matter).

NOTE 2 – Isaiah foresaw that judgment would (in time) come upon Judah for her sinfulness (cf. Isa. 1–5).

Isaiah 1:4, 21, 23–25a

4 Woe to the sinful nation,
a people whose guilt is great,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
They have forsaken the Lord;
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned their backs on him.

21 See how the faithful city [i.e., Jerusalem]
has become a prostitute!
She once was full of justice;
righteousness used to dwell in her—
but now murderers!

23 Your rulers are rebels,
partners with thieves;
they all love bribes
and chase after gifts.
They do not defend the cause of the fatherless;
the widow’s case does not come before them.

24 Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty,
the Mighty One of Israel, declares:
“Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes
and avenge myself on my enemies.

25 I will turn my hand against you . . .

NOTE 3 – Isaiah specifically foresaw that Judah would be overrun and taken captive by Babylon (i.e., Exile).

Isaiah 39:5–7

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah [i.e., King of Judah in the latter years of Isaiah’s ministry], “Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: 6 The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. 7 And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

FYI – Everything that Isaiah prophesied came to pass about one-hundred-years later. In 586 BC, the armies of Babylon—under King Nebuchadnezzar—crushed Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. The Temple was ransacked, the city pillaged and laid waste, and the remaining inhabitants taken into exile in Babylon. This was a tragic and needless happening in the history of the ancient Jews.

CYRUS PT. 3

NOTE 4 – However, Isaiah did not just declare judgment and exile. He also declared that a period of deliverance and restoration would follow. In some of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible, God revealed that a figure named Cyrus would come forth in due time to rescue the Jews. **Q. Are you hearing this?**

KEY – God promised to raise up a figure named Cyrus to free His captive people more than a century before they were taken captive and nearly two centuries before they were ultimately freed! In fact, God called Cyrus by name well over a century before he was even born! If this does not reveal the supremacy of God, I do not know what does! Consider these oracles of Isaiah, their specificity, and the display of His supremacy...

Isaiah 44:24–28 (Emphasis Mine)

24 “This is what the Lord says—
your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:

I am the Lord,
the Maker of all things,
who stretches out the heavens,
who spreads out the earth by myself,
25 who foils the signs of false prophets
and makes fools of diviners,
who overthrows the learning of the wise
and turns it into nonsense,

Isaiah 45:1–7, 11–13

1 “This is what the Lord says to his anointed,
to **Cyrus**, whose right hand I take hold of
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their armor,
to open doors before him
so that gates will not be shut:
2 I will go before you
and will level the mountains;
I will break down gates of bronze
and cut through bars of iron.
3 I will give you hidden treasures,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the Lord,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
4 For the sake of Jacob my servant,
of Israel my chosen,
I summon you by name
and bestow on you a title of honor,
though you do not acknowledge me.
5 I am the Lord, and there is no other;
apart from me there is no God.
I will strengthen you,
though you have not acknowledged me,

26 who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of **Jerusalem**, ‘It **shall be inhabited**,’
of the **towns of Judah**, ‘They **shall be rebuilt**,’
and of their **ruins**, ‘**I will restore them**,’
27 who says to the watery deep, ‘Be dry,
and I will dry up your streams,’
28 who says of **Cyrus**, ‘He is **my shepherd**
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, “**Let it be rebuilt**,”
and of the **temple**, “**Let its foundations be laid**.””

6 so that from the rising of the sun
to the place of its setting
people may know there is none besides me.
I am the Lord, and there is no other.
7 I form the light and create darkness,
I bring prosperity and create disaster;
I, the Lord, do all these things.

11 “This is what the Lord says—
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come,
do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
12 It is I who made the earth
and created mankind on it.
My own hands stretched out the heavens;
I marshaled their starry hosts.
13 **I will raise up Cyrus** in my righteousness:
I will make all his ways straight.
He will rebuild my city
and set my exiles free,
but not for a price or reward,
says the Lord Almighty.”

CYRUS PT. 4

FYI – Everything Isaiah prophesied herein (c. 700 BC) came to pass one-to-two centuries later...

NOTE 1 – Cyrus was born between 590–580 BC.

NOTE 2 – Cyrus came to lead the Persian Empire c. 550 B.C.

NOTE 3 – In time, Cyrus conquered the Babylonian Empire c. 539 B.C.

NOTE 4 – The ancient historian Josephus records that Cyrus came to be informed about the biblical prophecies written about him through Isaiah. How? It is possible that Cyrus was exposed to the writings of Isaiah through the prophet Daniel, who served as an official under Cyrus in the Persian Empire for several years (cf. Dan. 6:28; 10:1)?

NOTE 5 – Moved by these prophetic utterances, King Cyrus released the Jews after seventy-years in exile...

2 Chronicles 36:22–23

22 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

23 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the Lord their God be with them.”

Ezra 1:1–3

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: 2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. 4 And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”

QUOTE 1 – After freeing the people of God, “King Cyrus actively assisted the Jews in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Cyrus restored the temple treasures to Jerusalem and allowed building expenses to be paid from the royal treasury (Ezra 1:4–11; 6:4–5). Cyrus’s beneficence helped to restart the temple worship practices that had languished during the 70 years of the Jews’ captivity. Some commentators point to Cyrus’s decree to rebuild Jerusalem as the official beginning of Judaism.”

QUOTE 2 – “Besides his dealings with the Jews, Cyrus is known for his advancement of human rights, his brilliant military strategy, and his bridging of Eastern and Western cultures. He was a king of tremendous influence and a person God used to help fulfill important Old Testament prophecy. God’s use of Cyrus as a ‘shepherd’ for His people illustrates the truth of Proverbs 21:1, ‘The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.’”

APPLICATION(S)

KEY – We see in Cyrus an illustration of God’s ability to raise up rulers (v. simply humbling and judging rulers)...

- 1) He Proclaimed the Coming of a Great Deliverer – Cyrus
- 2) He Called the Coming Deliverer by Name – Cyrus (Signals Specificity)
- 3) He Outlined the Work and the Role of this Savior – Deliverance and Restoration
- 4) God Fulfilled His Good Purpose through Cyrus – Complete Fulfillment

NOTE 1 – There is a lesson in this for us! In the season of turbulence due to the Election, let it be known that God is still on His throne: **a)** He is still able to humble; **b)** He is still able to judge/remove; **c)** He is still able to raise up/utilize. As I have stated, our hope is not in a President but in the King. It is to Him that we must look!

NOTE 2 – As I close, I believe that a figure like Cyrus should cause us to look to Christ. Ultimately, Jesus is the One that God has chosen to advance His purpose(s) in the earth (i.e., for time and eternity). Remember that...

1) God Proclaimed the Coming of His Deliverer – i.e., Christ

Hebrews 9:26–28

26 . . . he [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2) God has Called His Chosen Deliverer by Name – i.e., Jesus

Luke 1:26–33

28 The angel went to her [Mary] and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

3) God has Outlined the Work and Role of this Savior – i.e., Deliverance and Restoration

Colossians 1:13–14

13 For [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

4) God Will Yet Fulfill His Good Purpose through Christ – i.e., Complete Fulfillment

Daniel 7:13–14

13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

CONCLUSION PT. 1

FYI – Throughout this series we have noted the supremacy of God over many things...

- 1) His Supremacy Over the Spiritual Realm
- 2) His Supremacy Over the Natural Realm
- 3) His Supremacy Over Disease/Sickness
- 4) His Supremacy Over Death and Life
- 5) His Supremacy Over Nations/Kings

Q. But have you properly responded His supremacy and lordship?

Q. Have you taken a knee to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Romans 10:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Q. If not, why not today?

PRAYER/CLOSING...

CONCLUSION PT. 2

- 1) **Operation Christmas Child** – Boxes are Available for those Who Wish to Participate (i.e., Ruth)
- 2) **Membership** – I am Open to Hosting a Membership Class for Interested Parties (See Me)
- 3) **Guest Speakers** – Very Special Guest Missionaries to Join on Sunday, November 15

CONCLUSION PT. 3

KEY – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church WEBSITE (www.NewLifeBarre.org). For those who are present, you may place your donation in the OFFERING BOXES in this Sanctuary.

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.