

- <sup>1</sup> “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:  
<sup>2</sup> I will go before you  
and will level the mountains;  
I will break down gates of bronze  
and cut through bars of iron.  
<sup>3</sup> I will give you the treasures of darkness,  
riches stored in secret places,  
so that you may know that I am the LORD,  
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.  
<sup>4</sup> 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.  
<sup>5</sup> 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,  
<sup>6</sup> so that from the rising of the sun  
to the place of its setting  
men may know there is none besides me.  
I am the LORD, and there is no other.  
<sup>7</sup> I form the light and create darkness,  
I bring prosperity and create disaster;  
I, the LORD, do all these things.  
  
<sup>8</sup> “You heavens above, rain down righteousness;  
let the clouds shower it down.  
Let the earth open wide,  
let salvation spring up,  
let righteousness grow with it;  
I, the LORD, have created it. (NIV84)**
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## BREAKING DOWN THE GATES

August 5, 2010 started like any other day in the small town of Copiapó (co-p-ah-PO), Chile. The sun rose over the mountains, the people of the village made their way to work. But it was the fact that not all of them made their way home that night that made this a day to remember, or maybe a day they'd rather forget. It was that day that the town's gold and copper mine had a freak accident – a collapse – one that trapped 33 miners deep inside the heart of the earth. It wasn't long before the world's eyes were on Copiapó and their hearts were with those men trapped inside.

Plans began on the surface on how to get to the men who were trapped beneath 2300 feet of solid rock. How would they get through, how would they find out if the men were dead or alive? They began to drill boreholes to allow air into the mine and to try to make contact with the trapped men. After 17 days of drilling, one of the drill bits came back up to the surface with a note attached - *Estamos bien en el refugio, los 33.* In English - "We are well in the refuge, the 33 of us."

Maybe you remember that event. Maybe you remember hearing about it, getting daily updates on the nightly news, feeling hopeless, unable to imagine what it must have been like for their family on the surface waiting, not knowing. Maybe you remember your heart breaking for those men who were trapped in what was very likely to be their tomb. Locked behind those walls of rubble and powerless to do anything about it. How awful it must have been for them!

That's not all that different from the situation that God's people found themselves in. They were trapped in captivity at the hands of the Babylonians. They were stuck behind walls and there was really nothing they could do about it! But praise the Lord that he could do something, and he did! Praise the Lord that in their lives and in ours, God was and is hard at work - **Breaking Down the Walls.**

Babylonia was the strongest empire in the world at the time and as such, the city of Babylon was the most important city. And because it was the most important city it was the most heavily fortified. There were two walls that completely surrounded the city. The inside of those two was 21 feet thick. The outside one was dug 11 feet into the ground. There was a moat that surrounded the outer wall. Every sixty feet there was a watch tower – 360 total around the walls. If you were coming toward the city, they'd know. And if you were coming toward the city, it wouldn't matter, because there was absolutely no way you were getting in. It was like Mission Impossible. There was a corridor within those walls that was called "Aibur-Shabu" which means "the enemy shall never pass." The enemies could never get into the city and the hostages could never get out. The Israelites could not escape from inside those wall either. They were on the wrong side of the walls and they weren't getting themselves out. They may have been buried in a mine a half a mile below the earth's surface. They were trapped.

But you know, those walls weren't even the biggest threat to them. They were trapped by a wall far taller and thicker and more imposing. It wasn't a wall of brick and stone, but a wall made of sin and unbelief. The Israelites had gotten themselves locked up in Babylon because they had turned their back on God. They had begun to chase after the false gods that their neighbors worshipped. They relied on their own strength and the strength of the pagan nations around them. They followed worldly ways instead of the ways that their God had placed before them. They worshipped the fertility gods and fornicated themselves in supposed worship. They were becoming less and less like the people God had chosen and more and more like the rest of the people of world.

## Isaiah 45:1-8

The walls of sin and unbelief were closing in around them, and because of it a gate called death was about to be slammed shut. Their sins had caused a life sentence in the prison called Babylon, and an even worse jail cell awaited them – one called hell! Death really means separation. Death really means that we are separated from God. Stuck behind a wall, locked in a cell that could not be broken.

Does that sound familiar to you? Do you ever feel trapped in life? Trapped in a sin like addiction? Trapped beneath a pile of guilt that is far too heavy to bear? Do you feel the weight of God's demands heavy upon you? Perfection is a tall task, one that not one of us is up to. And the consequences for failure couldn't be worse. No second chances, no do-overs. One and done ***Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that he will not hear*** (Isaiah 59:2). Because of our sins, there's a wall between us and God, and because of that wall, we cannot see or hear or be with God. We are separated from God and that's exactly what we deserve. Remember that death is separation. ***The wages of sin is death*** (Romans 6:23). We deserve that impenetrable wall to divide us from God forever.

The Israelites were trapped behind the walls of Babylon and they were trapped behind the walls of sin and death, but God saw their need and provided a way out.

***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:***

Did you notice what Cyrus was called there in verse one? ***His anointed***. God called Cyrus "messiah" "Christ". God had appointed anointed, chosen Cyrus for his purposes. And that's amazing in and of itself! God used a pagan king to carry out his will. Maybe we should cull it a bit with the fear that so easily seizes us when an election cycle comes around, huh? God called Cyrus by name 150 years before his birth. He not only predicted his birth, his rise to power, his defeat of the Babylonians, but also his first decree, to open the walls of Babylon and set free those who were held in slavery there.

It was 539BC. Cyrus led an army of Persians toward the gates of Babylon. You might remember this story from the book of Daniel. The king had gathered the city together for a party. They pulled out of storage the golden goblets and drinkware from the temple in Jerusalem and had a feast. It was that night that King Balshazaar saw the writing on the wall. ***Mene, Mene Tekel Parsin*** – *Parsin* was Persia and that prophecy was coming true right outside the party. While they partied, Cyrus attacked. He diverted the Euphrates River and was able to have his troops enter the city under the gates on dry ground. They went from inside the gates, unlocked them and allowed the rest of the raiding party to enter. That night Babylon's ruler, its city and its empire fell to Cyrus the Persian. But really it fell to God and God's anointed. ***Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him***. Cyrus was the toddler that God was leading around by the hand. He was the one who directed this attack, so that Cyrus would let his people go!! No walls, no matter how thick can stop the Lord!!

## Isaiah 45:1-8

I want to say that again – because it’s true for you. No walls, no matter how thick, can stop the Lord!! He is the One Who **Breaks Down the Gates for Us**. No matter how thick the wall of trial is in our lives. No matter how heavy the burden, no matter how wide the separation between us and God, nothing is impossible for the God who said.

***I will go before you  
and will level the mountains;  
I will break down gates of bronze  
and cut through bars of iron.***

God has delivered us in just as miraculous a way. It was an inside job as well. God sent Jesus, His Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah, to cross the divide between us and him. He got behind the wall, so to speak, in order to throw it open for us. God’s timing was perfect when he saved Israel from Babylon and his timing just as perfect in sending Jesus. ***But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons*** (Galatians 4:4). When God was just ready, he sent Jesus behind the wall to live with us. He lived in human flesh and he lived under human laws, because that was the way that we’d be set free from the law and from the wall that our failures had built. He lived a perfect life to set us free from imperfections. He lived a perfect life to redeem us. He made his life the ransom price. He shed his precious blood on the cross, because that was the only way to set us free from the walls of sin and gates of death on Good Friday. He went inside the city of death, so that he could throw open its gate and announce the victory he won over death on Easter morn. And with his first decree, he set us free from death, he extends us peace and everlasting life. Because the door of death is now open, because the grave can’t keep us in, now heaven’s gates are open too. No longer captive by sin, we can walk with God on earth and to God in heaven forever.

God makes us sons – heirs – those that receive gifts and riches because of the love that another had for us. That’s what Isaiah says too.

***3 I will give you the treasures of darkness,  
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...***

***5 I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
apart from me there is no God.***

Jesus was the real Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God. He was chosen to be our Savior, our conquering King, to release us from the chains and wall that held us back. Now in freedom we can live for him. Now we can celebrate our freedom and thank God for our freedom, by using our free lives to serve God and one another. We are now able to do what we couldn’t before – please God with our lives.

## Isaiah 45:1-8

So let's do it! Let's freely rejoice, freely worship him, and freely serve our fellow man. There are so many still in captivity, let's use the message of freedom to set them free from sin and death.

*He is the Lord, and there is no other. Apart from him there is no God.* Let's remember that every day. Let's live each day, speak each word, carry out each action with that thought in mind and with a desire to begin glory to the one and only true and living God. Before we were trapped, but Jesus has **Brought Down the Gates**

After nearly 70 days, those Chilean miners, all 33 of them, found freedom again. You and I have been rescued in a much more amazing fashion. God left Heaven to rescue you. He didn't use a drill to bore holes through thousands of feet of rock. He sent Jesus to rescue you from the prison of hell. The Son has set you free. And if the Son has set you free, then you are free indeed! Amen!