

Cyrus

- A. The name of Cyrus (ca. 600-530 BC), king of Persia, is mentioned 23 times in 19 verses of Scripture. He is spoken of without being named in many other verses. Historical and secular observations:
1. Primary written record of him is from Herodotus and Xenophon, ancient Greek historians.
 - a. Xenophon, student of Socrates and a military leader, wrote *Cyropaedia*, a semi-historical record of Cyrus' exploits and methods which has been characterized as an early type of Machiavelli's *The Prince*.
 - b. "And those who were subject to him, he treated with esteem and regard, as if they were his own children, while his subjects themselves respected Cyrus as their 'Father' ... What other man but 'Cyrus', after having overturned an empire, ever died with the title of 'The Father' from the people whom he had brought under his power? For it is plain fact that this is a name for one that bestows, rather than for one that takes away!" (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*)
 - c. He is noted as being a reasonable emperor. Xenophon noted that Cyrus himself compared a king to a shepherd, observing a likeness between them. (*Cyropedia* I. 8. sect. 18) This is significant in respect of **ISA 44:28**.
 - d. Cyrus and his wife, Cassandane, were noted for their deep love of one another. She said she found it more bitter to leave Cyrus than to depart her life.
 2. He has been a personal hero to the likes of Alexander the Great, Thomas Jefferson and David Ben-Gurion.
 - a. "Thomas Jefferson, for example, owned two copies of *Cyropaedia*, one with parallel Greek and Latin translations on facing pages showing substantial Jefferson markings that signify the amount of influence the book has had on drafting the United States Declaration of Independence." (Wikipedia)
 - b. He impressed Vernon Wayne Howell enough to change his name to reflect the Judaic royal name of David and Cyrus (Koresh) the Great. David Koresh was the leader of the Branch Davidians.
 3. There is archeological evidence of Cyrus and his exploits (The Cyrus Cylinder, etc.) and what is claimed to be his tomb with his epitaph on it still exists in Iran.
 4. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote of him being impressed with the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him which was written about 150 years before his birth. (Josephus *Antiqu. I. 11. c. 1 sect. 1, 2*)
- B. The Medes and the Persians were related peoples which formed a united kingdom that became a huge empire, particularly after overpowering Babylon. **DAN 5:28-31**.
1. "At this time the empire of the Medo-Persians was very extensive: according to ancient writers, Cyrus, at this time, reigned over the Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, Armenians, Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Bactrians, Indians, Saci, Cilicians, Paphlagonians, Moriandrians, and many others. His empire extended on the East, to the Red Sea; on the North, to the Euxine Sea; on the West, to the island of Cyprus and Egypt; and on the South, to Ethiopia." (Adam Clarke Commentary on **EZR 1:2**)
 2. Humphrey Prideaux (*The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews, Vol. 1., p. 137*) notes that Darius was the uncle of Cyrus the Great and Cyrus gave Darius title to all his conquests as long as he lived, after which Cyrus was sole ruler.
- C. From Scripture, we know:
1. God called him by name in prophecy long before his time, even as he had done for Josiah, king of Judah, over 300 years before his time. **ISA 44:28 – 45:6 c/w 1KI 13:2**.

2. God surnamed him *His shepherd* (ISA 44:28) and *His anointed*. ISA 45:1.
3. He took it to heart that God had so called him and called him to specific purposes of liberating the Jews and ordering the rebuilding of their city and temple. **2CH 36:21-23; EZR 1:1-4, 7-8.**
4. “This prince, so eminent in antiquity, is said to have been the son of Cambyses king of Persia, and Mandane, daughter of Astyages king of the Medes; and was born about six hundred years before Christ. Josephus accounts for his partiality to the Jews from this circumstance; that he was shown the places in Isaiah the prophet where he is mentioned by name, and his exploits and conquests foretold: see [Isa 44:28](#); [Isa 45:1](#), etc. Finding himself thus distinguished by the God of the Jews, he was anxious to give him proofs of his gratitude in return; and so made the decree in favor of the Jews, restored their sacred vessels, gave them liberty to return to their own land, and encouraged them to rebuild the temple of Jehovah, etc. It is very probable that when Cyrus took Babylon he found Daniel there, who had been long famed as one of the wisest ministers of state in all the East; and it is most likely that it was this person who pointed out to him the prophecy of Isaiah, and gave him those farther intimations relative to the Divine will which were revealed to himself.” (Adam Clarke Commentary on **EZR 1:1**)
5. He would take Babylon suddenly, unexpectedly in a most curious manner by changing the course of the Euphrates at a time when Babylon was partying like there was no tomorrow (and history bears this out). **ISA 44:27 – 45:3 c/w DAN 5:30-31; JER 50:38; 51:30-32 c/w 1TH 5:3.**
6. He is described as a *ravenous bird from the east* (ISA 46:11), extremely rapacious.
7. He is described as God’s *righteous man, raised up in righteousness* and not driven by filthy lucre in his appointed duties. **ISA 41:2; 45:13.**
8. God loved him. **ISA 48:14-15.**
 - a. This is language for the elect of God. **ROM 9:13; JOH 13:1.**
 - b. Nothing can separate one from the love of God. **ROM 8:35-39.**
9. He is the only uncircumcised/Gentile ever to bear the title, *messiah* (Heb. *mashiyach*, SRN H4899) = “anointed.” **ISA 45:1.**
 - a. No record is ever given of him being anointed with oil.
 - b. God Himself could anoint him, though. c/w **ACT 10:38.**
 - c. He did not know the Lord but God knew him. c/w **GAL 4:9; 2TI 2:19.**
 - d. The Spirit even has gifts for the rebellious. **PSA 68:18.**
 - e. Some Gentiles were noted for outshining the Jews. **ROM 2:14-15, 26-27.**
10. He would build God’s house and His people’s city. **ISA 44:28; 45:13.**
11. He was an eminent type of Christ in many ways: deliverer, shepherd, builder of God’s house, builder of God’s city, raised up in righteousness, a righteous man, etc., yet an uncircumcised sinner of the Gentiles.
 - a. He stands as an example that righteousness and liberty were never meant to be exclusive to the circumcision, and that taking God’s words as God’s words means much.
 - b. Abraham was a Gentile idolater when God called him in uncircumcision. **JOS 24:2-3 c/w ROM 4:8-12.**
 - c. Odds are that Cyrus was a spiritual son of Abraham.
 - d. God has ever been the God of the Jews and the Gentiles. **ROM 3:28-30.**
12. Sensible Jews to this day recognize that godly Gentile rule isn’t a bad thing.