

Cyrus and the Gospel of John

		John
2 Chron. 36:23	“to build him an house” “this temple ... I will raise it up”	2:19
Isa. 44:28	“He is my shepherd” “I am the good shepherd”	10:11,14
Isa. 45:1	“His anointed” “Jesus is the Christ”	20:31
Isa. 45:1	“to open before him” “going through the midst of them, and so passed by”	8:59
Isa. 45:2	“I will go before thee” “I am sent before him”	3:28
Isa. 45:2	“make the crooked places straight” “Make straight the way of the Lord”	1:23
Isa. 45:13	“and he shall let go my captives” “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”	8:36
Isa. 46:10	“Declaring the end from the beginning” “In the beginning was the word”	1:1
Isa. 46:11	“from the east” “Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple”	8:1,2
Dan. 5:5	“fingers of a man’s hand and wrote” “and with his finger wrote”	8:6

One of the reasons why John’s gospel was written was to show “that Jesus is the Christ” (Jno. 20:31), that is, the anointed, and in John 10 Christ twice declares that he is the “good shepherd” (vv. 11, 14). Both of these things were foreshadowed by Cyrus, of whom God said: “He is My shepherd” (Isa. 44:28) and “His anointed” (Isa. 45:1). As the table shows, there are several other links between John’s Gospel and Cyrus.

That Cyrus foreshadows Christ is well recognized, but the link with John’s gospel seems fundamental. Notice in particular the link with Isaiah 46:10. The context is Cyrus; he is the man from the east in verse 11. What has “Declaring the end from the beginning” (v. 10) to do with him? Isaiah was writing over 150 years before Cyrus, yet the Spirit through Isaiah had named him. First there was the word, the prophecy, then Cyrus was born. It’s exactly the same principle in John 1 - “In the beginning was the word” (v.1), i.e. “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) followed by the rest of the Old Testament, all pointing forward to Christ. And when he was born, “the word was made flesh” (Jno. 1:14). That the very beginning of

John links with Cyrus shows his importance for the gospel. It is apparent that a purpose of John's gospel is to show that Christ is the greater 'Cyrus'.

Beyond the specific links noted above, there are other tantalizing allusions when John's gospel is read through the 'lens' of Cyrus. For example, Cyrus was known for his tolerant attitude to different religions - contrast this with Christ's discussion with the woman from Samaria and his statement that "salvation is of the Jews" (4:22). To a certain extent Cyrus unified the peoples of his empire, and of Christ it was said: "... he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (11:52). And where does Christ as 'Cyrus' fit with the Greeks wishing to speak to him (12:20, 21)? And does the reference to the insufficiency of a world full of "books" (21:25) link with the Persian "book of records of the chronicles" (Est. 6:1)? Nigel.