

DARIUS THE MEDE IN HIS PERSIAN-BABYLONIAN SETTING

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Introduction

The standard historical-critical view of the book of Daniel makes the book a pseudepigraph composed in Judea in the second century B.C. Cited in support of this view is the idea that the author was not well acquainted with Babylonian and Persian history of the sixth century B.C., the setting in which the book itself was placed. A prominent feature of this theory is that the author supposed that there was a separate Median kingdom between the rule of the Babylonians and the Persians. Evidence for this comes in particular from the figure of Darius the Mede who is taken as ruler over an independent Median kingdom. Since no such kingdom is known—and hence no such ruler, either—the book of Daniel is seen as lacking historicity, a product of a late and geographically-removed author.

Commentaries written on Daniel from this point of view are legion and need not be cited here. I cite only a 1988 journal article bringing this theory up to date in terms of Darius the Mede.¹ As an introduction to proposing his own theory about the unhistorical Darius the Mede, Grabbe has reviewed the various identifications proposed for Darius by various conservative interpreters. In concluding his review of J. C. Whitcomb's theory that Darius the Mede was Gubaru/Gobryas, the governor of Babylonia from the middle of the reign of Cyrus to the middle of the reign of Cambyses, Grabbe affirms there is no evidence for it. In his review of my own work on this subject, Grabbe has also concluded, "Once it is recognized that Gubaru (the general who conquered Babylon for Cyrus) did not reign and that the 'unknown king' is actually Cambyses, Shea's argument simply evaporates."²

¹Lester L. Grabbe, "Another Look at the *Gestalt* of 'Darius the Mede'," *CBQ* 50 (April 1988): 198-213.

Grabbe has reserved the most unkind cut of all for D. J. Wiseman, the distinguished Assyriologist who published the chronicles of the first eleven years of Nebuchadnezzar II.³ Wiseman advanced the theory that Darius the Mede was another name for Cyrus. He based this conclusion on an exegetical or explicative translation of the *waw* in Dan 6:28, "the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian."⁴ Since what follows in this study is, to a considerable extent, a defense of Professor Wiseman and this theory, the conclusion to Grabbe's brief review of Wiseman's thesis is cited in full.

These arguments in no way give any positive data or argumentation for Wiseman's proposed identification. It is difficult to falsify such a theory because the argumentation is consistently about what "could have been," not what can now be demonstrated. Ultimately, such a theory has plausibility only for one who is determined to accept the historicity of the biblical data at all costs without worrying that it also makes the writer of Daniel appear either ignorant or deceptive. Contrary to Wiseman's statement, it is not really a "working hypothesis," but only an exercise in apologetics.⁵

Since Wiseman put this idea forward as a serious working hypothesis, it should be accepted and examined as such, not rejected out of hand. A working hypothesis must be tested to see if the relevant data support it. If they do, the hypothesis should be advanced to the status of a plausible theory. This article examines the evidence supporting Wiseman's hypothesis.

When new primary historical sources appear, the time comes to examine old historical theories. With the publication of additional neo-Babylonian contract tablets in the Cuneiform Text series from the British Museum,⁶ that is now the case with the

²Ibid.; p. 204.

³D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956).

⁴D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), pp. 9-16.

⁵Grabbe, "Another Look," p. 207.

⁶The particular new texts which have appeared are the Neo-Babylonian contract tablets, published in volumes 55, 56, and 57 of the British Museum publication, *Cuneiform Texts from the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum (CT)* (London: British Museum, 1959-).

question of Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel. What those tablets have now demonstrated precisely is where the Babylonian coregency of Cambyses should be located. They have done this by providing tablets whose dates overlap the end of Nabonidus' reign and the beginning of Persian rule dated in terms of the coregent year of Cambyses.⁷ There could be no more convincing demonstration that the one (partial) year of Cambyses' coregency belongs in the first year of Cyrus' rule over Babylonia as "king of lands," beginning in the spring of 538 B.C.

In past studies I have equivocated on this point,⁸ but with this new evidence in hand, there can be no question about it: Cambyses ruled Babylon with Cyrus from I/1, in the spring of 538 B.C., until sometime between IX/25 and X/1 of that same year. At this time the contract tablets drop Cambyses' name and transfer his title, "king of Babylon," to Cyrus.⁹ S. Zawadzki and J. Peat have recently tried to uphold the idea that Cambyses held

⁷Six of these tablets carry titularies with datelines which refer to the coregency between Cyrus and Cambyses which I have discussed previously in connection with the subject of Darius the Mede. The dates and titles in question read as follows:

<i>Text</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Titulary</i>
CT 55:731	XI/-/1	Cambyses (no title), Cyrus, King of Lands
CT 56:142	XI/2/1	Cambyses, King of Lands, Cyrus, King of Lands
CT 56:149	II/7/1	Cambyses, King of Babylon, Cyrus, King [broken]
CT 56:294	[broken]	Cyrus, King of Lands, Cambyses, King of Babylon
CT 57:345	II/18/1	Cyrus, King of Lands, Cambyses, King of Babylon
CT 57:369	[broken]	Cyrus, King [broken], Cambyses, [broken]

Other tablets from these new publications have now dated this coregency more specifically by dating some commercial affairs from the last year of Nabonidus to the following year, which was also the year of the coregency. M. Stolper has called attention to two of these texts: "Note especially CT 56 192:2-7, a document referring to a payment in arrears since the fifteenth year of Nabonidus and settled in the first year of '[Cambyses, King of] Babylon; and CT 57 r. 7-10 referring in a broken passage to the seventeenth year (scil. of Nabonidus) and to the first year of 'Cambyses, King of Babylon, son of Cyrus, King of Lands'" (Entrepreneurs and Empire [Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1985], p. 5, n. 7). The most extensive compilation of these new titularies can be found in J. Peat's study mentioned below in n. 5.

⁸For a review of this problem, published the same year the new tablets became available, see my study, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 237-40.

⁹For this transition in the titularies of the tablets, see my study, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: III," *AUSS* 10 (1972): 113.

that title and office until the end of that year, but the cuneiform evidence does not support that suggestion.¹⁰

The conclusion that Cambyses ruled Babylon as coregent with his father in 538 B.C. eliminates the possibility that Gubaru (Ugbaru), Cyrus' general who captured Babylon, might have served as king or quasi-king of Babylon at that time. A coregency of Cambyses and Cyrus might be acceptable, but a tri-regency involves too many rulers of Babylon to be historically reasonable. Since dates in Darius the Mede's first year are given twice in Daniel (9:1 and 11:1), Gubaru no longer is a reasonable candidate for that identification. His place in history has shrunk to the point that his identification with Darius in Daniel can no longer be sustained.

This takes us back to the question of when Gubaru died. His death date is given as VIII/11 in the Nabonidus Chronicle. This date comes before the return of the gods to the Babylonian cities from which Nabonidus took them, because their return began in the ninth month and continued until the twelfth month. Since the return of the gods is mentioned in the line of the chronicle before the one that mentions the death of Ugbaru, I previously argued that his death occurred a year and three weeks after the fall of Babylon, not three weeks after the fall of Babylon.¹¹ This position, too, must now be abandoned. What probably occurred in this text is that the major political events were mentioned first, then less important events. As in morning newspapers the obituaries come at the end of the paper for that day, so death notices come at the end of the chronicle for the year. With Gubaru's rule over Babylon as governor lasting only three weeks, the likelihood of his being Darius the Mede has practically disappeared.

This general, who is mentioned at this point in the chronicle, should still be distinguished from the Gubaru who became governor of Babylon in the fourth year of Cyrus and who served

¹⁰S. Zawadzki holds that there are at least two new tablets that date from the last three months of Cyrus' first year, in which Cambyses still holds the title King of Babylon ("Gubaru: A Governor or a Vassal King of Babylonia?" *Eos* 75 (1987): 80). Peat holds the same view ("Cyrus 'King of Lands,' Cambyses, 'King of Babylon'; The Disputed Coregency," *JCS* 41 [1989]: 209). For the sharp and clear addition of the title "King of Babylon" to Cyrus' titulary in the tenth month of his first year, see my study, "An Unrecognized Vassal King: III," p. 113.

¹¹For the older interpretation, that Gubaru lived a year and three weeks after the fall of Babylon, instead of just three weeks after the fall, see my study, "An Unrecognized Vassal King: III," 98-102.

in that post until the fifth year of Cambyses. This Gubaru came on the scene of action too late to be identified as Darius the Mede.¹² It should also be noted that the entry of Cambyses into the temple in Babylon, as mentioned in the broken passage at the end of the Nabonidus Chronicle, should now be dated to I/4 in the spring of 538 B.C.¹³ It should now be interpreted as his official installation as king of Babylon, coregent with his father, from that time forward for much of that year.

With these points firmly established from the cuneiform evidence, we may now return to the question of Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel. Where does this new information leave us? It rules out both of the Gubarus as potential candidates for Darius the Mede. In that case we should examine another candidate who had previously been rejected for reasons which were not altogether sound. I would like to suggest that the one suggested by D. J. Wiseman—Cyrus himself—is the most appropriate identification to propose here as the correct one.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, I would like to suggest that once this proposal is appreciated in the way it should be, the data from the biblical text and ancient Near Eastern historical sources fit together in a manner that is harmonious and consonant to a major degree. The identification of Cyrus as Darius the Mede explains difficulties in the biblical text which had never been previously explained. If convergence of data is the test for a theory, the convergence present here offers strong support for this proposal, first put forward by Wiseman.

Instead of simply proposing and arguing the major and minor points involved in supporting the identification of Cyrus as Darius the Mede of Daniel, I have elected to follow the chronological approach, walking forward in time through the data, explaining each point in terms of the historical hypothesis proposed here, that Cyrus himself was Darius the Mede. Once all those points have been covered, they may be summarized with a backward look over the period covered. We begin here with

¹²This theory was advanced by J. C. Whitcomb in his monograph, *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959). For my critique of this theory see "Darius the Mede," p. 234.

¹³ANET, pp. 306-7.

¹⁴ Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems," pp. 9-16.

developments on the Iranian plateau well before the Medo-Per-sian army approached Babylon to attack it.

1. *A King of the Medes after Astyages*

The Nabonidus Chronicle tells of the defeat of Astyages by Cyrus in the sixth year of Nabonidus, or 550 B.C.¹⁵ Xenophon (see below) indicates that the king who took power in Media later was Cyaxares (II). Since no contemporary cuneiform evidence was found to support the existence of this king, this account has been considered an inaccurate legend.

Cuneiform evidence has now been produced to support the idea that Cyaxares was present on the throne of Media. Such evidence comes from the Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus. There he refers to an unnamed "king of the Medes" in 546 B.C., well after the fall of Astyages.¹⁶ Who was this king of the Medes? In his identification of Darius the Mede, Wiseman proposed that it was Cyrus.¹⁷ While I now agree with his final conclusion in this regard, it appears to me that there is an intermediate step en route to that goal. The Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus tell us that there was a king of Media well after the time of Astyages. The classical sources tell us that king was Cyaxares (II). It seems that the most direct connection between these two sources is seen in that the classical sources name the king in the cuneiform text and the cuneiform text provides evidence for the existence of the king named in the classical sources.

2. *Cyrus Installed as Coregent in Media*

Xenophon has the story that Cyrus, upon his return from the conquest of Babylon, was made king of Media by Cyaxares, and Cyaxares gave his daughter in marriage to Cyrus to seal this political union.

As they continued their march and came near to Media, Cyrus turned aside to visit Cyaxares. And when they had exchanged greetings, the first thing Cyrus told Cyaxares was that a palace had been selected for him in Babylon, and official headquarters, so that he might occupy a residence of his own whenever he came there; and then he also gave him many splendid

¹⁵ANET, p. 305.

¹⁶Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems," p. 13, and the text cited in n. 22.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.

presents. Cyaxares accepted them and then introduced to him his daughter, who brought him a golden crown and bracelets and necklace and the most beautiful Median robe that could be found. As the princess placed the crown on Cyrus's head, Cyaxares said, "And the maiden herself, my own daughter, I offer you as well, Cyrus, to be your wife. Your father married my father's daughter, whose son you are. This is she whom you used often to pet when you came to visit us when you were a boy. And whenever anybody asked her whom she was going to marry, she would say 'Cyrus.' And with her I offer you all Media as a dowry, for I have no legitimate male issue."¹⁸

Now that the existence of Cyaxares has more support, we should take this story seriously. In fact, it makes very good sense.

An interesting piece of cuneiform evidence lends support to this idea. Immediately after the reference to the death of Gubaru/Ugbaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle, mention is also made of the death of an unnamed "wife of the king." Cuneiformists have argued over the sign involved here, but have finally settled upon the reading "wife."¹⁹ Additional evidence supports that conclusion. An official mourning was held at the end of the same year, from XII/27 to I/3 in the spring of 538 B.C. This kind of mourning for a queen can be paralleled by the official mourning held for the mother of Nabonidus.²⁰ Thus the official mourning which follows the death of the wife of the king is precisely what is to be expected and supports the idea that a queen had died.

Now the question is, whose wife was this queen? I formerly argued that it was a wife of the general Ugbaru. What has been said above suggests that this idea must be discarded. It cannot be Belshazzar's wife, for he was dead. It cannot be Cambyses' wife, for he was not yet installed as king. It cannot be Nabonidus' wife, for he was no longer king; he had been captured and was soon to be exiled. Babylonian scribes were already dating their tablets to Cyrus. There can be only one answer to this question. She was the wife of Cyrus, the only king of Babylon at this time and the only one with the authority to proclaim such a mourning.

¹⁸*Cyropaedia* 8.5.17.

¹⁹*ANET*, p. 306. See my discussion of this point in "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: IV," *AUSS* 10 (1972): 167-69.

²⁰See the entry for the ninth year of Nabonidus in his chronicle, *ANET*, p. 306.

Now the question can be asked, which wife of Cyrus? Clearly it should be the wife whom he took to Babylon with him. Which wife was this? It should have been the chief royal wife to whom he was married before the fall of Babylon. According to the classical historians, this wife should have been Cassandane, the daughter of Pharnaspes.²¹ Herodotus tells us an interesting detail about her: "Cassandane had died while Cyrus was still alive, and he not only bitterly lamented her loss but issued a proclamation that all his subjects should go into mourning for her" (*Histories* 2.1). Here is a woman who fits all of the specifications of the Nabonidus Chronicle: she died while Cyrus was still alive and Cyrus proclaimed an official mourning. That is precisely what the Nabonidus Chronicle records in relation to the unnamed wife of the king. The specifications fit; thus Cassandane, mother of Cambyses and wife of Cyrus, should be identified as the woman who died in Babylonia shortly after the Persians conquered that land.

Viewed in this light, the account in Xenophon makes excellent sense. As Cyrus returns from his conquest of Babylonia, he stops off in Media and visits Cyaxares II there. In addition to putting him on his throne with him officially, Cyaxares offers his daughter to him in marriage, to seal this political arrangement. The offer of his daughter in marriage at this point makes excellent sense since Cyrus had just recently lost his former chief royal wife, Cassandane. The marriage thus supplied Cyrus with a chief royal wife in place of the one who had recently died in Babylon.

We have here then a series of three events in the royal household of Persia: the death of Cassandane, Cyrus' queen, in Babylon after the fall of that city and country; the mourning proclaimed for her and carried out at the end of the Persian-Babylonian year; and finally, Cyrus' marriage to a Median princess as he returned from Babylonia. The three events make a natural and logical sequence. They also permit the identification

²¹On this wife, M. A. Dandamaev has written in his recently translated Persian history: "This queen could only be Cassandane, the wife of Cyrus II and the mother of Cambyses" (*A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, trans. W. J. Vogelsang [Leiden: Brill, 1989], p. 56). For a parallel, D. J. Wiseman has called to my attention the fact that the sealing of the treaty between Nabopolassar of Babylon and Cyaxares of Media was accomplished by a diplomatic or dynastic marriage between the two royal houses *before* the attack upon Nineveh in 614 B.C.. As Wiseman notes, "If any similarity were proven it might indicate Cyrus' marriage as taking place before the assault on Babylon" (personal communication, Nov. 28, 1990).

of the occasion upon which Cyrus married the Median princess as the time when he also received the crown of Media and became coregent with Cyaxares II.

These circumstances provide an explanation for the name "Darius" in the biblical text. Cyrus was first prince of Anshan and then king of Persia. At the time of his installation as the king of Media, it would have been appropriate for him to take a throne name. The book of Daniel supplies the name Darius for this function. According to this view, Darius should be seen as a Median throne name. Darius is a Persian name, not a Babylonian name, as a foreign monarch might be expected to adopt on his accession to the Babylonian throne.

If we propose that Darius was a Median throne name for Cyrus, we have a problem with the use of this name in the biblical text, which has Darius functioning in Babylon after its conquest. We should take into account, however, the time and viewpoint from which this narrative was written. The story was not written as a contemporary chronicle, such as that of a war correspondent, at the time of the events recorded in Dan 5:30-6:28. In all likelihood this story was written down some time afterwards as Daniel looked back on those events. If we take the instructions to write down the message and seal up the scroll (Dan 12:4) as pertaining to the time for recording more than the vision and prophecy of Dan 10-12, we might expect that the event narrated in Dan 5:31 could also have been recorded in the third year of Cyrus (Dan 10:1-2), two years after it had happened. Even if that was not the specific time, the general perspective of writing past history would apply.

It is probable that Daniel not only wrote this record after the events of chap. 6, but also after events which took place following those events recorded in Dan 6. One of the events that took place soon after was the coronation of Cyrus as official king of Media. Writing after the events, Daniel chose to designate Cyrus as Darius the Mede. Because of the unusual nature of the kingship in Babylon, officially retained by Cambyses, but with Cyrus as overlord or suzerain, Daniel was faced with a problem of political identification. He identified Cyrus by his Median throne name and title, whereas the Babylonian scribes chose to identify him by the more general title, "king of lands." Both were appropriate; neither was in error, historically or politically.

The interpretation that Darius the Mede was Cyrus does require a prolepsis. In other words, Daniel wrote the story of the events after the fall of Babylon, utilizing a title for Cyrus which

was not bestowed on him until a few months after the events narrated. Writing from a later perspective, Daniel referred to Cyrus by his Median throne name and title. Technically speaking, at the end of Dan 5, Cyrus had not yet taken any names or titles. Knowing that Cyrus did not take up the title to the throne of Babylon until some time later, Daniel chose, in this prolepsis, to identify him by his Median title, which he took soon after the fall of Babylon.

3. Darius the Mede "Received" the Kingdom

We move now to the events surrounding the actual defeat and conquest of Babylon. Cyrus divided his army and personally led the division that met Nabonidus and his forces in the field near the Tigris River. The Persians were victorious, the Babylonians were defeated, and Nabonidus fled, according to the entry in the Nabonidus Chronicle.

In the meantime, Gubaru had led the Median (alias Gutian) contingent in an attack on Babylon. They succeeded in entering the city by stratagem and conquered it without a battle. According to Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 7.5.30-32), an unnamed king was killed in the palace that night. We may take the name of that king to be Belshazzar (Dan 5:30).

According to the chronicle, Babylon fell on the night of VII/16. Cyrus, still busy mopping up in the field, did not arrive in the city until VIII/3. In the two and one-half week interval between the fall of the city and the arrival of Cyrus, the Median troops secured the city, taking special care to protect the main temple area.

Now we come to the interesting verb in Dan 5:31: "Darius the Mede *received* the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old." The verb *qbl*, here translated "received," has been interpreted in two ways. First, those who have denied the historical existence of Darius the Mede reject the translation "received"²² because it suggests that someone gave the kingdom to Darius. Linguistically, the evidence is clear and straightforward that the standard and natural meaning is "received." The other way in which this verb has been treated is to accept the meaning "received" and to

²²For a recent example of a translation which avoids the standard translation of *qbl* as "received," see the Anchor Bible volume by L. F. Hartman and A. A. D. Lella (*Daniel*, Anchor Bible, vol. 23 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978], p. 183), where the word is translated as "succeeded."

say that, since Darius the Mede was a vassal to Cyrus, he received the kingdom from Cyrus. The translation is direct, but if Cyrus is Darius the Mede, as proposed here, some other interpretation of this event should be sought.

The Nabonidus Chronicle provides just such an alternative. Ugbaru the general functioned as military governor of Babylon during this two and one-half week interval, but when Cyrus finally arrived in victorious procession, Ugbaru turned the city, the capital of the kingdom, over to him. In this sense Cyrus, as Darius the Mede, "received" the city of Babylon and its kingdom from Ugbaru, who had temporarily been holding it for him. Putting the matter another way, we may say that the 17-day interval in the Chronicle (VII/16 to VIII/3) fills the historical gap between the events of Dan 5:30 (the death of Belshazzar and the fall of Babylon) and Dan 5:31 (the arrival of Cyrus and his reception of the kingdom).

Note should be made of Cyrus' /Darius' age at this point. It is given in Dan 5:31 (= 6:1MT) as about 62 years. While we cannot give a precise age for Cyrus at this time, 62 years is, as Wiseman has noted,²³ in harmony with what is known of Cyrus.

4. *Installation of Governors, Daniel 6:1-2*

The Nabonidus Chronicle states that after Cyrus arrived in Babylon, "Ugbaru, his [Cyrus'] governor, appointed [sub-]governors in Babylon."²⁴ Is there a conflict here if Darius is Cyrus and not Ugbaru? It may be noted that Ugbaru governed under the authorization of Cyrus and, in the appointment of sub-governors, is referred to as Cyrus' governor. Ugbaru had the advantage of two and one-half weeks' acquaintance with the civil servants of Babylon. He was, at that time, in a better position to make such appointments. Thus, Cyrus delegated the job to him.

Ugbaru died shortly thereafter. Even if he started this work of appointing governors on the very day Cyrus arrived, he still would have had only eight days to do so, from VIII/3 to VIII/11. Thus it is entirely likely that he died leaving this task unfinished. Cyrus himself would have had to complete this task. This is the

²³On Cyrus' age at the conquest of Babylon, see Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems," pp. 14-15.

²⁴ANET, p. 306. On the installation of governors by Gubaru under Cyrus' authority see my previous discussion of this point, "Darius the Mede," p. 246.

most likely course of events. And so we find Darius the Mede/Cyrus making such appointments in Dan 6:1-2.

There was at least one more major appointment left for "Darius the Mede" to make: that of chief governor. The reason for this is obvious—his own chief governor had just died and the post needed to be filled. The king seems to have delayed somewhat in that appointment. During this interval, before that appointment came, Daniel made a favorable impression upon Cyrus/Darius. Cyrus was inclined to put Daniel in that post, recently vacated by Ugbaru's death. It was this impending appointment which stirred up the animosity of the civil servants of Babylon against Daniel.

5. Nature of the First Decree, Daniel 6:7

The civil servants of Babylon went to Cyrus/Darius to request a decree from him which would affect Daniel. As a devout servant of Yahweh and a faithful servant of Cyrus/Darius, the only way anyone could accuse Daniel of wrongdoing would be to attack him on matters of his faith. This the enemies endeavored to do by means of a decree that no one could make a petition of any man or any god except the king for thirty days. Knowing that Daniel would continue praying to his God, they were sure that they could convict him of a violation of this statute. The king, walking blindly into the trap they had set for Daniel, acceded to their request and issued the decree.

The unusual nature of the request and decree has not been fully appreciated. This was a decree to restrain people from praying to their gods. What strange kind of request and decree was this? It would have been strange if these were normal and peaceful times, but these were not. Normally the Babylonians could have gone to their temples and seen their gods and prayed to them there. But at this time they could not. Nabonidus spent the first six months of every year bringing the gods to Babylon to defend the capital city. That left the other cities of the land unprotected by their individual gods. Worshipers could not go to see them in their various temples or pray to them there, because the gods were in Babylon. The Chronicle tells us that it took Cyrus four months, from the ninth month to the twelfth month, to get all of these gods back to their places. Meantime, the country was in a religious limbo.

To make such a request of the king at a time like this, when the country was upset religiously, makes much better sense than

if it had happened a year later, when the country was more religiously stable. It seems that the Babylonian civil servants took advantage of this irregular situation to make this unusual request of Cyrus/Darius. The story fits well into the disturbed situation of the time.

In this connection, the Cyrus Cylinder, a propaganda piece from the early Persian period, denigrating Nabonidus and exalting Cyrus, hints of a similar situation. Historical events are referred to, but not necessarily as in a royal chronicle or annal. The Cylinder has Cyrus greeted happily as a deliverer by the inhabitants of Babylon: "Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come (again) to life from death (and) had all been spared damage and disaster, and they worshiped his (very) name."²⁵ The fact that Cyrus took over Babylonia with relatively little bloodshed or destruction is commemorated here. While the statement about his welcome is given in general terms, it certainly fits the picture of the procession which he led on VIII/3, when he entered the city for the first time. There is mention of worship of his name after that. While this is not a specific historical reference to what happened in Daniel 6 as a result of Darius' decree, it could well contain an echo of it.

6. Nature of the Second Decree, Daniel 6:25-27

After Daniel was delivered from the lions' den, Cyrus/Darius put forth a decree acknowledging Daniel and Daniel's God "to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth" (v. 25). This fits a king like Cyrus, who owned so much of the then-known world. If Darius the Mede was a vassal king under Cyrus, it would have been much less likely for him to have made a decree with such a broad scope. On the other hand there was no other king in the world to whom such hyperbole could apply so well as to Cyrus, governing Babylon under his later Median throne name, Darius.

7. Nature of Darius' Kingship in Daniel 6

The fact that the appointment of governors was still under consideration places Darius' rule soon after the fall of Babylon, as Dan 5:30-31 explicitly declares. The decrees noted above belong to the accession year of Cyrus. This was the period between

²⁵ANET, p. 316.

the conquest of Babylon on VII/16, 539 B.C., and the following spring new year on I/1, 538 B.C.

It is reasonably clear from contemporary cuneiform documents that Cyrus did not claim the title "king of Babylon" for himself during this period and that he did not install himself on the throne in Babylon during this period. Cyrus was reserving the throne of Babylon for his son Cambyses, and he, not his father, was officially installed as king in the spring of 538 B.C. During this accession period the scribes regularly dated tablets to Cyrus as "king of lands," not "king of Babylon." While occasional tablets use this title, their exceptional nature indicates that "king of Babylon" was not yet regular, standard, and official. Cyrus only became king of Babylon a year later when he removed Cambyses from this position and took over the kingship for himself.

The Nabonidus Chronicle does not refer to any official taking the throne at this time. As a matter of fact, the description of Cyrus' triumphal entry into the city appears to replace such an official coronation. The first official act is Cambyses' entry into the temple at the time of the new year festival in the spring of 538 B.C. What we have here, then, is a somewhat anomalous period. We have an accession period of a king who had not yet taken the throne of the country. This posed a problem for Babylonian scribes accustomed to date their documents to the official, reigning king. What were they to do when there was no such individual? They solved the problem by utilizing the term "king of lands." By this they undoubtedly referred to the king of the lands of the Persian Empire. Technically speaking, however, Cyrus was only officially king of two lands, for he now served as suzerain over Media and had been king of Persia for some time. Thus this title could also be interpreted as "king of [two] lands," i.e., Media and Persia.

Daniel solved this problem in a different way. Writing prophetically he used Cyrus' throne name, which he received early in the next year. To that throne name he added the designation "Mede." Daniel never refers to Cyrus as king of Babylon; neither did the Babylonian scribes during the same period. Thus, if Cyrus was indeed Darius the Mede, as first proposed by Wiseman and now accepted here, one could say that Daniel was very scrupulous and accurate in his use of this name and these titles. He simply had another solution to this anomalous situation, different from that adopted by the Babylonian scribes.

8. *First Year of Darius the Mede, Daniel 9:1; 11:1*

The succeeding events, dated in the first year of Darius the Mede, should have followed the next new year's day, i.e., I/1 in the spring of 538 B.C., if Daniel utilized a Persian-Babylonian spring-to-spring calendar year. (If he used a Hebrew fall calendar they would have started with VII/1.) With the beginning of that first full regnal year, a change of throne name or title might be expected, but according to the way these date formulae are given, no such change occurred.

At the spring new year of 538 B.C., Cambyses was installed as king of Babylon. His installation ceremony is reflected in the passage at the end of the Nabonidus Chronicle. As suzerain over his son, the status of Cyrus did not change at this time.

This new relationship offered the Babylonian scribes more alternatives for the date formulae for their documents. Some of them dated their tablets to "Cambyses, king of Babylon," alone. Some of them still dated their documents to "Cyrus, king of lands," alone, as they had before new year's day. Some of them incorporated both kings and their titles into their date formulae, dating them to "Cambyses, king of Babylon [and] Cyrus, king of lands," or the reverse.²⁶

When Daniel dated the two events of this period that are mentioned in his book, he continued to date events after that new year's day the way he had dated them before it, to Cyrus as monarch of Media. He did not make any accommodation in his date formulae to include Cambyses' new status as local king, perhaps because of antipathy toward him. Cambyses is not mentioned either in the book of Daniel or in the book of Ezra.

²⁶For these dual titularies see my "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: II," *AUSS* 9 (1971): 100-104. For the recently added tablets in this category see n. 2 above. In a recent study, L. Grabbe has held that the reversal of this titulary in which Cyrus, king of lands, appears before Cambyses, king of Babylon, proves that the tablets must be dated to 538 B.C. because they are dated in this way to a specific regnal year of Cyrus. In this he misunderstands the fact that the scribes have simply reversed the coregency titulary as a matter of alternate practice. The year 1 of the tablets is dated to the coregency, not to either of these two kings individually (L. L. Grabbe, "Another Look at the *Gestalt* of 'Darius the Mede,'" *CBQ* 50 [1988]: 203).

9. Darius "Made/Became King"
Over the Realm of The Chaldeans, Daniel 9:1

The translation of the verb *hmlk* in Dan 9:1 has been a matter of some dispute. Those who see no historicity in the references to Darius the Mede have suggested this verb should be pointed as a *hophal*, translated as "became king," and taken merely as a statement indicating that he was thought to have succeeded to kingship. Those who have supported the historicity of Darius the Mede have suggested that this verb should be pointed as a *hiphil*, translated as "was made king," and taken as a reference to the installation of Darius by Cyrus.

As can be seen from the thesis advanced in this study, neither of these points of view is completely satisfactory. In the past I have argued for the *hiphil* pointing, but I now accept the *hophal* pointing and the translation, "became king." However, I put it in a different historical context than others have done.

The unusual syntax and the nature of this statement have not been fully appreciated. The text (Dan 9:3-19) says that Daniel's prayer and the prophetic answer to that prayer (Dan 9:24-27), occurred in the first year of Darius. This means that these events occurred after new year's day in the spring of 538 B.C., in contrast to the events of Dan 6, which occurred before that day.

Having dated the events of Dan 9 in the first year of Darius, Daniel now refers to him as the one who "became king over the realm of the Chaldeans." The real significance of this statement is that at the time these events occurred, Darius/Cyrus was not yet king over the realm of the Chaldeans, even though he was in his first regnal year. In other words, the dating in the first year refers to regnal years as counted at the time of writing, but the reference to Darius' becoming king refers to a circumstance yet future when the story took place. By the time Daniel wrote this narrative, he knew that event had transpired; at the time it occurred, the kingship was yet future. During this same calendar year Cyrus acquired titles to the kingships of two more countries: Media, shortly after the beginning of the year, and Babylon, later, in the tenth month of the same year. This dateline in Daniel acknowledges both of those events, each in its own way.

By the end of the ninth month of 538 B.C., Cyrus removed Cambyses from being king of Babylon and installed himself in the post for the rest of that year and the rest of his reign. At that time Cyrus, i.e., Darius the Mede, became the local king of Babylon, i.e., he "became king over the realm of the Chaldeans." The way in which Daniel wrote this date formula takes full cognizance of those

circumstances. In fact, it provides the best explanation for the unusual nature and syntax of this statement. Once again the book of Daniel shows a close and intimate knowledge of the details of neo-Babylonian and Persian history in 538 B.C.

*10. Gabriel Stands up to Strengthen
and Confirm Darius the Mede, Daniel 11:1*

The language of this passage is also unusual; its difficulty has not been fully appreciated. The notion of strengthening and confirming is that of royal succession. In other words, when Darius became king, Gabriel stood beside him to strengthen him for the tasks of kingship and to confirm him in that office.

The problem here arises from the date for these events. They are dated "in [Hebrew preposition *b*] the first year of Darius." These events should not have occurred *in* his first regnal year, but at its *beginning*. His accession to the throne should have begun that first regnal year.

Once again these events are narrated from a point of view later in time than the actual event itself. Both Daniel and Gabriel, who is talking here, are looking backwards from the third year of Cyrus (Dan 10:1). As they do so, Gabriel says that there was a time during that first year when he, Gabriel, stood up to strengthen and confirm Darius. When would that have occurred during that first year? An intimate knowledge of the history of Babylon in 538 B.C. provides the answer. By the end of the ninth month of that year, Cyrus, alias Darius the Mede, removed Cambyses from the kingship of Babylon and took over that office himself. At that point Gabriel stood up to strengthen and confirm Cyrus in his new, local office as king of Babylon, in addition to being king of the Persian Empire. As was the case with Dan 9:1, a knowledge of local events provides an explanation for statements in Daniel which otherwise appear quite unusual.

11. Paternity of Darius the Mede, Daniel 9:1

Dan 9:1 not only tells us that Darius the Mede received the Chaldean kingdom and ruled over it; it also tells us about his background. It says that he was of the "seed of the Medes," and it says that he was a "son of Ahasuerus" (Heb. "ašwrôš"). Saying that Cyrus (as Darius) was of the seed of the Medes is not much of a problem if one allows for his maternal line to be figured into this equation. Cyrus had a Median mother, Mandane, and a Persian father, Cambyses I. What makes this text more difficult

is that it names as "father" of Cyrus, one who was not his immediate biological father. It is reasonable to estimate here that Ahasuerus is the name of a Median ancestor, to reinforce the idea that Cyrus was of the seed of the Medes. Cyrus' family tree must be studied to solve this problem.

Persians

Cyrus I
|
Cambyses I
(father)

Medes

Cyaxares
|
Astayages
|
Mandane
(mother)

Cyrus II
(son)

When Cyrus defeated Astyages of the Medes, he actually overthrew his own grandfather. By permitting Cyaxares II to continue this line of rulers in Media, Cyrus left his uncle (of the same generation as his mother, Mandane) on that throne. From his uncle, he finally received the kingdom when he returned from conquering Babylon.

The names of Cyrus' Persian father and grandfather do not provide any satisfactory phonetic parallels to Achashwerosh, the ancestor according to Daniel. Nor does Astyages in the Median line help either. The individual whose name provides the best phonetic potential here is Cyaxares (Cyaxerxes). His name is attested in five languages: Old Persian, Elamite, Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek. The list may be compared as follows:²⁷

Old Persian	uvaxštra
Elamite	ma-ak-iš-tar-ra
Babylonian	ú-ma-ku-iš-tar
Hebrew	ʾāḥašwerōš
Greek	kyaxares

If one assumes that the Old Persian form represents the nearest approximation to the way in which this name was pro-

²⁷For the variations in the forms of the name of Cyaxares, see Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings* (London: British Museum, 1961), additional note on B.M. 21901, line 29, p. 81.

nounced, one sees that two of the languages (Elamite and Babylonian) shifted the first syllable to another labial letter (plus vowels), while the other two languages (Hebrew and Greek) dropped it. The Old Persian X is treated by all of the other languages except Hebrew as a K. This may simply represent the different way in which the Hebrew writer heard the original Iranian phoneme present here. Three of these languages took over the Š directly while Greek treated it as an X. The Hebrew follows the *shin* with a *waw*, whereas the two other languages follow it with a *T*. This would raise a question of whether this letter might not have been damaged in the course of the transmission from a *taw*. The *R* is constant in all languages. Hebrew and Greek add a consonantal ending to the final vowel.

While the correspondence is not perfect in any of the languages, there are enough resemblances so that the words can be recognized as related to one another, allowing for individual scribal differences in the treatment of the original phonemes. At least there are enough correspondences here to propose that this is the name of the ancestor whose name lies behind Ahasuerus in Dan 9:1. Certainly Cyaxares makes a much better phonetic candidate than Cyrus I, Cambyses I, or Astyages.²⁸

The question may be asked why Daniel would have gone so far back in Cyrus' Median ancestry to pick out this particular individual as his ancestor. The politics involved may have had something to do with it. Cyaxares joined Nabopolassar to defeat and conquer the Assyrians at Nineveh. By citing a Mede of that generation, Daniel puts Cyrus in the direct line of one who was on a par with, or superior to, the ruler of Babylon before Babylon became a full-fledged empire under Nebuchadnezzar. The time of Cyaxares was also a time when the Medes were in the ascendancy over the Persians, before that situation was reversed by Cyrus. To cite this esteemed individual as the ancestor of Cyrus was thus quite appropriate. The similarity of the name to that of the later Xerxes, a name which I have treated on another occasion,²⁹ should also be noted.

²⁸In this connection the comment of J. G. Goldingay should be noted; he cites Auchincloss and Torrey to the effect that Achashwerosh is "as close a transliteration of Uvakhshtra . . . as is of Khshayarsha" (*Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 30 [Dallas: Word, 1989], p. 239).

²⁹For my discussion of the different forms of the name of Xerxes, see my study, "Esther and History," *AUSS* 14 (1976): 228, n. 4.

In summary, it is proposed that Cyrus' claim, as Darius, to Median ancestry was satisfied by his maternal line and that the particular ruler selected here probably is best identified as Cyaxares, who ruled Media in the late seventh century. The use of the word "son" referring to a descendant of any generation is in keeping with good Semitic usage.

12. Reason for the Removal of Cambyses

According to the evidence of the contract tablet datelines, Cambyses was removed from being king of Babylon sometime between IX/25 and X/1. Before that time in year 1, Cambyses bore the title "king of Babylon"; after that time in year 1, Cyrus carried that title. This change must have taken place by the action of Cyrus, for no other person would have had the authority to do such a thing. The question then is, Why did Cyrus remove Cambyses?

My former suggestion was that it was not a removal of Cambyses but the death of Ugbaru which required this change. With our new understanding of events of the period, this death has been moved to the preceding year, 539 B.C. Thus it cannot be an explanation for this change.

Another suggestion is that this dethronement occurred because Nabonidus finally died in exile.³⁰ There is little merit to this suggestion either. Nabonidus was an imprisoned exile and no longer a factor in Babylonian politics. If he had still been significant, Cyrus would not have put his son Cambyses in office as king of Babylon. The way in which the scribes immediately took up Persian dating and dropped Nabonidus completely shows how complete this transition was. Nabonidus' death, wherever it occurred, cannot have been a factor here.

The only reasonable explanation is that there must have been a difference of opinion over policy between Cyrus and Cambyses. Over what matter might they have disagreed? The book of Ezra provides one possibility: the return of the Jews and possibly other captive peoples. As captives in Babylon, the Jews were under the jurisdiction of the king of Babylon. For most of 538, this king was Cambyses, more antagonistic to foreign cults and peoples than Cyrus. While the classical authors may have exaggerated this matter, there still seems to be some truth to it.

³⁰For this view of the reason for Cyrus' change in his titulary, see p. 83 of the study of S. Zawadzki cited in n. 5.

For example, the Jews did not touch their temple building project throughout the reign of Cambyses. Only when Darius I came to the throne did they take it up anew. When Cyrus gave his decree for the return of the Jews, he specifically gave the authorization to rebuild the temple. If Cambyses had been in control, it is doubtful that this authorization would have been given. It is not even certain that he would have let them go at all.

One possibility is, therefore, that Cyrus and Cambyses had a difference of opinion over the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple. The decree of Cyrus, given in 2 Chr 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4, is dated in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia. It is not dated to the month, so we do not know what time of the year 538/37 this decree was given. On the basis of potential correlations with historical developments in Babylon, I would like to suggest that it was given late during that year, in the last three months. After the new year of 537 B.C., the exiles, led by Zerubbabel, traveled towards Jerusalem. This would have put them in Judah in the summer of 537, giving them some time to settle down before celebrating the fall new year and the Feast of Tabernacles at the rebuilt altar on the temple site in Jerusalem (Ezra 3). The pattern of decree, travel, and arrival would be chronologically similar to that recorded in Ezra 7 and 8.

One possible explanation for the removal of Cambyses as local king of Babylon—perhaps the best explanation currently available—is that the dethronement occurred as a result of a dispute between Cambyses and Cyrus over the return of the Jews, and possibly other captive peoples. There is no explicit proof for this, but the suggestion arises out of the chronological correlations involved.

Summary

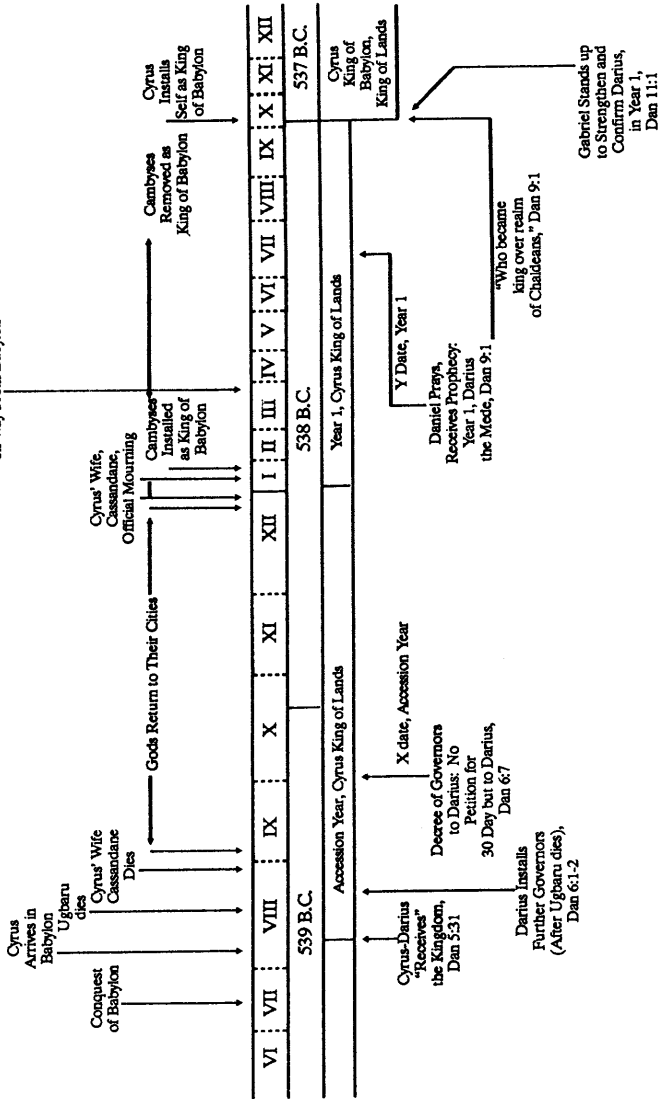
At this point the data examined above in relative chronological order should be reviewed in an overall survey. The ultimate argument for Cyrus as Darius the Mede must stem from the issue of how well this hypothesis explains *all* of the data involved. I would suggest that the use of D. J. Wiseman's theory that Cyrus was Darius the Mede affords better explanations for more biblical references than any other hypothesis. In fact, some of these very intimate details of history have gone unexplained until this hypothesis has been applied to them. Thus, the identification of Cyrus as Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel brings to these

unexplained details of that book the very best explanation yet available.

One more text remains to be mentioned in this connection and that is Dan 6:28: "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Wiseman has suggested that the *waw* conjunction in the middle of this verse should be taken as an explicative *waw*, "during the reign of Darius, *even* the reign of Cyrus the Persian." That interpretation is possible and may even be correct, but it is not completely necessary to the hypothesis that Darius was Cyrus. The verse could also be referring to successive stages of his reign under the names by which that authority was exercised.

I would like to conclude this study with the summary chart and by stating that we are in Professor Wiseman's debt for bringing this proposed identification to light. After this review of the evidence, I could not concur with him more strongly, and it—along with the new cuneiform evidence—has led me to abandon my older view which identified Darius the Mede with Ugbaru, the general.

Babylonian Events



Biblical Events

Figure 1. Events in the years 539 B.C.-537 B.C.