

IDENTIFICATION  
OF  
DARIUS THE MEDE

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Ready Scribe Press  
Pfafftown, NC

# IDENTIFICATION OF DARIUS THE MEDE

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This book is the published version of the 2010 dissertation written by George R. Law in order to complete his Ph.D. in O.T. Studies at Piedmont Baptist College and Graduate School.

Cover Illustration / by Elizabeth J. Law (© Elizabeth J. Law). The scene suggests a well-known practice among Mesopotamian kings: here a Medo-Persian king is engaged in physical combat with a mature male lion in order to prove his divinely-ordained status and favor.

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Identification of Darius the Mede / by George R. Law.

ISBN 978-0-9827-6310-0 (paper binding)

Printed in the United States of America

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

“Who was Darius the Mede?” Many people read the book of Daniel and have no idea of the controversy which surrounds the identity of the king who put Daniel into the Lions’ Den. In the past, scholars have suggested different kings as a solution, such as Darius Hystaspes, also known as Darius the Great (549–486 BC), who ruled the Persian Empire (r. 522–486 BC) within a decade of the death of Cyrus the Great. But a closer study of the chronology of the book of Daniel shows that Darius the Great could not possibly be this person called Darius the Mede because he was too young when Babylon fell (539 BC). Besides, by the time Darius started his reign (522 BC), Daniel was approximately a hundred years old—probably too old to be thrown into the Lions’ Den and not be killed by the fall alone.

If Darius the Mede was not Darius Hystaspes, then who was he? For more than a century Christian scholars have expended a tremendous amount of effort on the mystery of Darius the Mede. Modern critical scholars view the Bible as just another religious book full of errors, and they assert that the “unhistoric” king called Darius the Mede is evidence that the book of Daniel is a work of fiction. The modern critic, who follows the same path as his minimalist<sup>1</sup> predecessors, will not accept any biblical history not “verified” by secular history. Seemingly, critics have conveniently forgotten that many other historical problems previously on their “list of biblical errors,” such as Daniel’s other so-called “unhistoric” biblical king named Belshazzar, have been resolved in support of the Bible’s account.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Davis explains the “maximalist-minimalist” controversy in the field of biblical archeology: “The wide ranging discussion is conveniently referred to as the maximalist-minimalist controversy. . . . This shorthand refers to the different approaches taken by the protagonists to the text of the historic books in the Hebrew Bible. . . . Although the existence of the states of Israel and Judah are attested in extrabiblical sources, the Hebrew Bible contains extensive records that the maximalists use as a major source for interpreting the beginnings of Israel and the nature of the kingdoms. The minimalists deny the relevance of the Hebrew Bible to the historical kingdoms, considering the texts to be hopelessly flawed documents of the post-Exilic era.” Thomas W. Davis, *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148-149.

## Statement of the Issue

In the book of Daniel, the author seems to present an authentic and purposeful description of the events which occurred during his lifetime. His book portrays more than seventy years of historical events, beginning with his captivity as a political hostage from Judah and concluding soon after the fall of Babylon to Cyrus the Great. The narrative then shifts to prophetic events, specifically to the release of the Jews from captivity and their continued domination by Gentile nations. The book finishes with a final revelation of the end times made known to Daniel during the third year of Cyrus' reign. Throughout the book the details of the narratives show his intimate knowledge of the important Babylonian kings from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until the reign of Cyrus the Great. The author's record includes people otherwise unknown to history (such as Belshazzar was until recently), and it gives firsthand perspectives as witnesses of each event. Rivaling other contemporary records of these kings, Daniel's account provides these historical details with great precision.

The author of Daniel wrote of a ruler called Darius the Mede. This ruler is otherwise unknown<sup>2</sup> in the extant records of history. The purpose of this dissertation is to test the hypothesis that the character called "Darius the Mede" in the book of Daniel was, in fact, Cyrus the Great, king of the Medo-Persian Empire, and conqueror of Babylon. If the author of Daniel portrayed an otherwise accurate historical narrative, and the author employed this unconventional description of a certain ruler of Babylon, he must have done so for good reasons. Besides considering who is the best match for Darius the Mede, this dissertation will also try to understand the author's purpose for employing this literary device.

The theory presented in this dissertation is that Daniel purposefully employed the description "Darius the Mede" when referencing Cyrus the Great because Cyrus signals both the close of God's prophesied exile of Israel and also a momentous new aspect of God's prophetic plan for Israel. Cyrus, as Darius the Mede, marked the fulfillment of some of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the fall of Babylon. On the other hand, Cyrus as "His anointed one" (מָשִׁיחַ *messiah*, Isa 45:1), commanded the release of the Jews, and also marked the commencement of a new age in God's prophetic program concerning Israel. Even though Israel would be dominated by the Gentile nations, Daniel's book encouraged his people to once again anticipate the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises concerning the ultimate Messiah's coming.

## Attempts at Identification

Liberal scholars want to believe that the inability to identify Darius the Mede in history directly impacts the credibility of the book of Daniel and its status as the inerrant Word of God. Donald Wiseman accurately states the point of the controversy: "There is no place in Babylonian or Persian history for any such predecessor of Cyrus, and attempts to identify this 'Darius' have been a source of controversy for years. In fact, the majority of scholars doubt his historicity."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> By "otherwise unknown" it is meant that, other than Daniel's account, no other historical document identifies this person by this exact description, at least not in using the exact Hebrew and Aramaic terms employed by Daniel (except for Josephus who wrote over five hundred years later, and seems to have referenced Daniel's original description when writing his own history).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Wiseman, "Last Days of Babylon," *Christianity Today*, II, No., 4, (Nov. 25, 1957): 10.

The liberal scholars who assume that the biblical record is faulty claim to have good reasons to doubt the historicity of Darius: because the words “Darius the Mede” have not been found in the ancient cuneiform texts, and because this name is mentioned by only one of the classical historians.<sup>4</sup> Anthony Bevan asserts, “Darius the Mede is unknown to history.”<sup>5</sup>

Many theories have been offered concerning possible identities of this “mysterious” Darius the Mede. The difficulty in determining which theory is correct comes from the paucity of evidence to be found in the ancient writings concerning the identity of the person called Darius the Mede. Herodotus (484–425 BC), the earliest classical historian with extant writings covering the fall of Babylon (539 BC) to Cyrus the Great, does not mention Darius the Mede. Neither do any other extant portions of the other ancient histories mention Darius the Mede, except for Josephus’ account.

One theory proposes that Cyaxares (II), the son of Astyages (King of the Medes; r. 585–550 BC) can be identified as Darius the Mede. In his history of the Jews, Josephus (37–100 AD) records that this Darius was “king of Media”<sup>6</sup> and was a relative of Cyrus, and the son of Astyages.<sup>7</sup> Four hundred years earlier, the Greek author Xenophon (430–354 BC) did write about a son of Astyages, named Cyaxares (II), who was also described as Cyrus’s uncle and father-in-law,<sup>8</sup> but Xenophon did not identify him as Darius the Mede.

Some in the early church, such as Jerome, following Josephus’ history and maybe Xenophon’s account for support, have proposed that Cyaxares (II) was Darius the Mede. In modern times, this view was reinforced in the nineteenth century by Albert Barnes.<sup>9</sup> But contrary to this theory, Harold Rowley disqualifies Cyaxares (II) explaining that Xenophon’s Cyaxares “can in no way be brought into agreement with the book of Daniel. For Xenophon does not make Cyaxares become the king of Babylon.”<sup>10</sup>

Barnes also lists four other theories contemporary in his day concerning possible identities of Darius the Mede. Two of these theories have been dismissed as highly improbable,<sup>11</sup> but Darius Hystaspes and Astyages, the other two candidates mentioned by Barnes, are also easily rejected because of their age at the fall of Babylon.

Darius Hystaspes is rejected because he was too young—at most only in his twenties when Babylon was conquered by Cyrus. Thus, in 539 BC Darius the Great was too young to be Darius the Mede, who was approximately sixty-two when he took the kingdom (Dan. 5:31).

<sup>4</sup> Josephus mentions him as Darius, the son of Astyages; see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, X.xi.4. in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Cincinnati: E. Morgan and Company, 1847), 217.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Bevan, *A Short Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1892), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, X.xi.2.

<sup>7</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, X.xi.4.

<sup>8</sup> Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, ebook edition of *The Works of Xenophon* by H. G. Dakyns, (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1897), I, C.5, available on the internet at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/x/xenophon/x5cy/book1.html>. (accessed September 22, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1855), 260.

<sup>10</sup> Harold Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories*. (1935. repr., Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964), 40.

<sup>11</sup> Barnes’ preferred view was that Cyaxares was Darius the Mede, but he lists the following other possibilities: Neriglissar, Astyages, Astyages brother, and Darius Hystaspes. See Barnes, 260-262. Neriglissar (r. 560-556 BC) is much too early and therefore his being Darius the Mede is a chronological impossibility. The proposal that Astyages’ brother could be Darius the Mede is only speculation.

And if, having ignored the chronological problems, one sets the story almost twenty years later when Darius Hystaspes takes the throne, then Daniel is too old (~100) when thrown into the Lions' Den.

As far as Astyages (King of the Medes; r. 585–550 BC) is concerned, he is rejected because he is too old to be a candidate. Since Astyages was the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, he was simply too old to be only sixty-two when Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persians.

Three other recent theories, which have some supporting evidence from the ancient cuneiform records, have been offered as possible solutions for the identity of Darius the Mede.

The first theory is that Darius the Mede was Cyrus' son, Cambyses II.<sup>12</sup>

A second theory, suggested by Donald Wiseman, is that Cyrus the Great himself might be identified as Darius the Mede.<sup>13</sup>

The third theory, developed by Robert D. Wilson and John Whitcomb, is that Darius the Mede was a satrap of Babylon, namely, Gubaru the governor.<sup>14</sup>

The first of these three recent theories, the theory that Cambyses II is Darius the Mede, is also easily disqualified. Although at first Cambyses seems to be a great candidate because he reigned as co-regent with his father, Cyrus, during 538 BC, his candidacy becomes impossible when one realizes that both he and his father, Cyrus, could not have been the same age (approximately sixty-two years of age at the fall of Babylon).<sup>15</sup>

The second of these theories is that Cyrus the Great is the one who should be identified as Darius the Mede. In a radio broadcast in 1957, Donald Wiseman, the head of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities of The British Museum, suggested that there was evidence in the cuneiform records that Nabonidus referred to Cyrus as "the king of the Medes."<sup>16</sup> At the end of his article, "The Last Days of Babylon," Wiseman commented that this title, though rarely used, could at that time refer only to Cyrus. Furthermore Wiseman suggested that Daniel's account could be harmonized by a better translation of the conjunction in Daniel 6:28 as a *wāw* explicativum: "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, *even* (namely, or i.e.) in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."<sup>17</sup> This better translation of Daniel 6:28 would indicate that Darius and Cyrus the Persian are references to the same person.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1923), 11.

<sup>13</sup> Wiseman, "Last Days of Babylon," 10.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel; a Discussion of the Historical Questions* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917). John Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959). Whitcomb lists an excellent assembly of other scholars who share his view that Gubaru was Darius the Mede: "Babelon, Trochon, Delitzch, Deane, Pinches, de Moor, Vigouroux, Hommel, Wright, J. D. Wilson, R. D. Wilson, W. F. Albright, Stokmann, Thilo, and Moller" p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Rowley, 55.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase "The kings of Egypt, of the Medes, and of the Arabs" in the Harran Stele of Nabonidus refers to "the king of the Medes." Wiseman points out that in the tenth year of Nabonidus the only "king of the Medes" to which anyone could refer was Cyrus, who had removed Astyages and at that time was reigning from his Median throne in Ecbatana. Also see Wiseman, "The Last Days of Babylon," 10. This article is based on Wiseman's radio address.

<sup>17</sup> Donald J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965), 13. In this work, published eight years after his article appeared in *Christianity Today*, Wiseman gives a fuller explanation of his theory.

<sup>18</sup> Wiseman, "Last Days of Babylon," 10. Also see Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems," 12.

Some reasonable objections to this theory of Wiseman have been raised by Whitcomb. First, Wiseman's suggestion that "in Babylonia Cyrus used the title 'King of the Medes' in addition to the more usual 'King of Persia, King of Babylon, King of the land'"<sup>19</sup> is, according to Whitcomb, "much more than the documents allow."<sup>20</sup> Secondly, according to Whitcomb, "The phrase 'seed of the Medes' in Daniel 9:1 means that the paternal (as opposed to the maternal) ancestry of Darius was Median. Such a phrase could not be an accurate description of Cyrus the Persian."<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, Whitcomb asks, how is it reasonable "to understand these names as referring to the same person?"<sup>22</sup> The last objection mentioned by Whitcomb is that Darius the Mede is "the son of Ahasuerus" (Daniel 9:1), "But *we do know* that Cyrus the Persian was the son of Cambyses."<sup>23</sup> Objections such as these need to be evaluated before one can accept Wiseman's theory that Cyrus and Darius the Mede are the same person.

The third of these recent theories is that Gubaru (Gk. *Gobryas*), Cyrus' governor in Babylon, might have also been known as Darius the Mede. Fifty years ago, John Whitcomb wrote *Darius the Mede* (1959), in which he provided an admirable defense of the theory that Gubaru was installed by Cyrus as a satrap over the region of Babylon and functioned as "the king of Babylon."<sup>24</sup> Whitcomb's book was soon followed by H. Rowley's revision of his book, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires* (1964). Rowley harshly criticized the Gubaru theory, and instead concluded that Darius the Mede was just a fiction.<sup>25</sup>

Rowley's conclusion was that there is no solution for the identity of Darius the Mede, because he was a fictitious character created by the Maccabean author of the book of Daniel. Rowley suggests, "So far as Darius the Mede is concerned, it is generally agreed within the critical school that he has no place in history, and that he is a fictitious creation out of confused traditions."<sup>26</sup> Later Rowley re-asserts his conclusion:

The claim of the book of Daniel to be a work of history, written by a well-informed contemporary, is shattered beyond repair by this fiction of Darius the Mede. But if the work is of a much more recent origin, and if its purpose was not scientific but practical, not the setting forth of history, but the encouragement of men to loyal endurance, its worth is unimpaired. The value of the parable of the Prodigal Son depends not on the historical accuracy of the story, but on the message it enshrines.<sup>27</sup>

The emphasis of modern critical scholars like Rowley is that one should not worry about the facts, but only the messages which can be found in the Bible. These liberal critics want to believe that the admission that some Biblical characters are fictitious, such as this Darius the Mede, and that they never existed but were just the product of imagination or a confused remembrance, does not impact the Bible's integrity. These critics assume that the Bible contains historical errors, but such errors do not harm the messages it delivers.

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<sup>19</sup> Wiseman, "Last Days of Babylon," 10.

<sup>20</sup> Whitcomb, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Whitcomb, 47-48.

<sup>22</sup> Whitcomb, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Whitcomb, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Whitcomb, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Rowley, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Rowley, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Rowley, 59-60.

The liberal critics' conclusion is nurtured by their assumption that the Bible is merely myth and does not require a true historical basis.<sup>28</sup> Critics like Rowley believe that the value of biblical myths is in their explanation of religious ideals, the "true" meanings of which are exemplified by the adventures of cultural heroes such as Daniel. And so, these critics describe the Maccabean writer(s)/redactor(s) of these fictitious stories as religious men with good intentions. As Rowley puts it, "[the author] wished to hearten them [the Jews] for their struggle, and to assure them that the God they had not failed [*sic*] would not fail them. . . . [and that they] rendered the richest service to succeeding generations."<sup>29</sup>

While it is true that myths, including parables and fables, can communicate important values without having a historical basis, the application of this principle to portions of Scripture not categorized as myth is not only unnecessary, it is a mistake. Besides, the degradation of any of the historical narratives of Scripture to the category of myth minimizes the distinctions between these genres; especially, the significant distinction that myth does not necessarily require a historical basis, while on the other hand, the historical narratives of Scripture do have historical bases.

Liberal critics err in the assumption that details of Daniel's narratives can be fictitious and still have cultural and spiritual value despite their non-historicity. The issue is not as the modern scholar believes: that only the message is important, not the method. Integrity begins with the method. If one employs a fable or parable then integrity dictates that such methods of communication be indicated to the audience. Likewise, if an author indicates that a story is historical, then integrity requires that the audience must be able to rely on its historicity.

For the traditional, conservative scholar, the narrative events of Scripture are relied upon as having occurred in the real and historical continuum of space and time. If these purported historical events exist only in the realm of legend or fallacy, or in the imagination of an author, the message they might have conveyed has been undercut by their lack of integrity.

The literary judgment and ethical values of these liberal critics must be called into question. Rowley is no doubt a credible scholar with much knowledge and good credentials, but his judgment must be questioned when he places such value on the unethical work of a pseudo-author and claims that "its very historical mistakes add to the fullness of its religious message to our hearts."<sup>30</sup> It seems that Rowley, as a liberal critic, believes that historical errors do nothing to decrease the value of religious beliefs.

Willful liars should not be counted as religious men. If the author of Daniel was Maccabean and encouraged his second-century BC brothers to sacrifice their lives based on his fabrication of history, one should not allow his deception and the resulting deaths to be given a pass because of supposed "good intentions." Some people might be willing to die for the truth, but only a fool would willingly die for a lie. When anyone presents a lie to be the truth, that

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<sup>28</sup> "Myth is defined as "an anonymous story that presents supernatural episodes as a means of interpreting natural events. Myth makes concrete and particular a special perception of human beings or a cosmic view. . . . *myth* represents a projection of social patterns upward onto a superhuman level that sanctions and stabilizes the secular ideology. *Myths* differ from legends by comprising less historical background and more of the supernatural." [William C. Harmon, Hugh Holman, and William Flint Thrall, *A Handbook to Literature*, 7th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 334]. Many literary critics contend that a "myth" may be historically true or not. In fact, according to these critics, historicity is moot: the myth's primary value lies in its ability to represent the cultural ideals of a society.

<sup>29</sup> Rowley, 180.

<sup>30</sup> Rowley, 182.

person is committing an immoral act. “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

God is the “God of Truth” (Dt 32:4; Rom 3:4; Rev 19:11), and therefore, has set the standard for His prophets (Dt 13:1-10; 18:18-22; Prv 14:25) and for His Word (1Ki 17:24; Ps 119:160; John 17:17). The consequences for those who speak lies in the name of God is specified by Zechariah: “And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, You shall not live; for you speak lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesies” (Zec 13:3).

### Attacks on Daniel

The ancient Jews who were released from the Babylonian captivity and the Hebrew authors of the inter-testamentary period up to the time of Josephus did not question the authenticity of Daniel’s Book. The traditional Jewish view, evident since the time of the Christ, reported by Josephus, and accepted by the early church, was that Daniel was the author of the Book by his name, his narratives were true, and his prophecies were well-known and accurately fulfilled.<sup>31</sup> But in the third century AD Porphyry wrote *Against the Christians*, a work consisting of 15 volumes attacking the evidences of Christianity. John Walvoord reports that “Porphyry, a pagan neo-Platonist, attacked the book [of Daniel], asserting that it was a second century B.C. forgery.”<sup>32</sup>

Porphyry’s attack on Daniel is built on an assumption against the possibility of predictive prophecy. Jerome, a Christian theologian of the fourth-century church, claims to be the fourth Christian to write a refutation to Porphyry’s argument. He sums up Porphyry’s argument: “that ‘Daniel’ did not foretell the future so much as he related the past, and lastly that whatever he spoke of up till the time of Antiochus contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjectured beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he would not have foreknown the future.”<sup>33</sup> Gleason Archer explains Porphyry’s conclusion concerning the character of the author and the prophecies of Daniel: “the remarkable accurate ‘predictions’ contained in Daniel (esp. ch. 11) were the result of a pious fraud, perpetuated by some zealous

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<sup>31</sup> Josephus reported that Daniel in his writings “did not only prophesy of future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment. . . . He said that the ram signified the kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians. . . [and] that the goat signified that one should come and reign from the Greeks. . . . And indeed so it came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel’s vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had showed them to him.” Josephus, *Antiquities*, X.xi.7.

<sup>32</sup> John Walvoord, *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Jerome, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, trans. Gleason L. Archer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 15. Besides himself, Jerome lists three earlier writers who had already refuted Porphyry’s error: “Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, . . . Appollinarius. . . [and] Methodius.”

propagandist of the Maccabean movement, who wished to encourage a spirit of heroism among the Jewish patriots opposing Antiochus IV.”<sup>34</sup>

Porphyry’s original arguments were not very persuasive until another element of unbelief was added nearly fifteen hundred years later. In the Age of the Enlightenment, human intellectuals decided that the idea that a Deity would interact within the natural world was unreasonable. Therefore, all supernatural activity was deemed impossible, and skepticism began to take over the world of academia. The rationalistic conclusion was and is that since all supernatural activity is impossible, then miracles are impossible, and so predictive prophecy is also impossible.

In the eighteenth century, Antony Collins, in his book *The Schemes of Literal Prophecy Considered*, set forth some critical objections to Daniel which have now been rehearsed by liberal critics for almost three hundred years.<sup>35</sup> Within a century of Collins’ book, other liberal critics<sup>36</sup> wholly embraced the belief that Daniel was a second-century BC product and added their own critical assertions to Anthony Collins’ list. Archer confirms that the same basic arguments against the authenticity of Daniel are offered by liberal scholars today:

They all agreed that every accurate prediction in Daniel was written after it had already been fulfilled (a *vaticinium ex eventu*) and therefore in the period of the Maccabean revolt (168-165 B.C.). Also some of them were inclined to question the unity of the book on the ground of internal evidence and language differences; certain portions of the book—particularly the narratives in chapters 2-6—were thought to come from third century authors or even earlier. Essentially the same position is maintained even to this day by liberal scholars throughout Christendom.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Collins, *The Schemes of Literal Prophecy Considered* (London: n.p, 1727). In his work, Collins sets forth what he believes are seven arguments against the traditional view:

- 1) Against the traditional view that Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel who mentioned Daniel in his book (Eze 14:14, 20), Collins suggests that the author of Daniel is not the one identified by Ezekiel but was another Daniel because the Babylonian Daniel was less than thirty and therefore was too young (440-42).
- 2) Against the traditional view that Daniel was accepted early into the Hebrew canon, Collins says that the book of Daniel was absent early on in the Hebrew Canon (442-45).
- 3) Against the traditional view that Daniel was translated with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, Collins suggests that the book of Daniel was added late to the Septuagint (445-50).
- 4) Against the traditional view that Daniel was written before Ezra and Nehemiah, Collins argues that the book of Daniel imitated other writers like Nehemiah, not they him (450-51).
- 5) Against the traditional view that the Josephus presents a credible account of Jewish history, Collins asserts that the story that Alexander the Great was shown a copy of the book of Daniel is a fiction, based on the fact that there is the clear reference to Alexander in the book of Daniel (451-52).
- 6) Against the traditional view that Josephus presents a credible account of Jewish history, Collins argues that Josephus is not a credible witness and so we cannot rely on his testimony for Daniel (452-54).
- 7) Against the traditional view that Daniel’s book was written by Daniel in the sixth century BC and therefore readily available during the Maccabean rebellion, Collins believes that the miraculous court stories of Daniel and his companions, repeated in the arousing speech by Mattathias in Maccabees, were well-known oral tales and provide no proof of an early date for the book’s writing (454-57).

<sup>36</sup> Archer’s list of other early liberal scholars who followed Collins’ lead includes “J. D. Michaelis (1771), J. G. Eichhorn (1780), L. Berthold (1806), F. Bleek (1822),” see p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Archer, 13.

Roland Harrison explains why liberals have repeated these arguments and ignored the sound critical arguments of conservative scholars: “Objections to the historicity of Daniel were copied uncritically from book to book, and by the second decade of the twentieth century no scholar of general liberal background who wished to preserve his academic reputation either dared or desired to challenge the current critical [anti-supernatural] trend.”<sup>38</sup>

The tenacity of both sides, conservative and liberal, on these issues points to the great importance of this debate: the inerrancy and authority of God’s Word are at stake. But the conclusions reached on both sides of this debate are virtually decided by their initial assumptions. Just as the drops of rain which fall on the west side of the continental divide will flow to one ocean and those on the east side will flow to another, the evidence which falls on liberal “anti-supernatural” assumptions will flow in one direction—toward belief in stark humanism, and the evidence which falls on conservative “pro-supernatural” assumptions will flow in the opposite direction—toward belief in a transcendent God.

### Areas of Criticism

Some issues concerning the book of Daniel are subject to critical investigation and need to be discussed, just as they would be discussed for any literary work. Establishing the date and authorship of any book is important in order to understand the historical context, the probable target audience, and the message of the author.

One who follows the school of liberal critics will likely deny any date of authorship which comes before the fulfilled prophetic events. As previously mentioned, prejudice against the supernatural will logically require a date of authorship that accommodates *vaticinium ex eventu*, and so most liberal critics will see all the evidence of true prophecy as evidence which validates their conclusion of a second-century BC date of authorship. Critical conclusions based on assumptions and opinions, such as whether it is possible for a supernatural being to enter and act in the natural realm, will likely remain unshaken even after great effort.

Regardless of one’s presumptions, a detailed examination of the book of Daniel will show that throughout the book, the author provides a firsthand, contemporary account of sixth-century BC events and their details. Many features, such as the characteristics of its languages and the firsthand accounts of its accurate details, support an early date for its authorship (around the sixth century BC). The overall unity of the book of Daniel is evident in its double chiasmic structure in which each of the two languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) highlight one of the two focal points of the double chiasm.

Aramaic, one of the two languages used by the author, was an appropriate choice for a sixth-century BC author. Aramaic was appropriate because, according to Joan Oates, it was the empire’s *lingua franca*,<sup>39</sup> and according to Matthew Stolper, “it was the premier language of official communication between Achaemenid provinces.”<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the author uses Hebrew in the first chapter, the book’s historical introduction, and in the last five chapters. The author’s use of Hebrew was appropriate because of the prophetic messages which concerned

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<sup>38</sup> Roland Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1969), 1111.

<sup>39</sup> Joan Oates, *Babylon* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc, 1994), 106.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew W. Stolper, "Achaemenid Languages and Inscriptions," in *Forgotten Empire: the World of Ancient Persia*, ed. John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 21.

the future of his people Israel. The characteristics of the languages used in the book of Daniel give every indication that its author was a Jewish man who lived in Babylonia during the sixth century BC and served in the government administration of Babylon from Nebuchadnezzar's reign until Cyrus' reign.

More evidence for the early date and authentic authorship of a sixth century Daniel is found in the accurate details which otherwise have been lost to history but were known and recorded by the author of the book of Daniel. The most famous case is the one-time disputed relationship between Nabonidus and his son and co-regent Belshazzar. The details of the arrangement of Belshazzar's co-regency (necessitating the enigmatic detail of the "third" position offered to Daniel, see Dan 5:7, 16) would only be known by those contemporary with him or those having access to the historical records of his reign. Certainly, one would not expect a Jewish peasant, four hundred years later in the second century BC, and far from Babylon, to know such details.<sup>41</sup> Apparently, these records were no longer available one hundred years later to Herodotus (484–425 BC) or to any other historian after him.

Neither, apparently, were these records available fifty years after Herodotus when Ctesias wrote his *Persica*, a history of Persia down to the year 398 BC. According to Pierre Briant, Ctesias "boasted of having access to 'the royal records'"<sup>42</sup> of the Persian Empire. But, Ctesias' history makes no mention of Belshazzar. If such intimate details were no longer known by these early historians, how is it possible that a simple Jew in the second century BC would record such exacting details so far removed from Belshazzar's life?<sup>43</sup> This specific knowledge by the author of Daniel, information concerning people otherwise unknown by other historical writers, is significant evidence that he had more accurate information than Herodotus, Ctesias, or any later historian. Since the author of the book of Daniel presents a historical record which is more accurate than historians writing in the fifth century BC, it is more reasonable to conclude that he wrote his book as a contemporary of sixth-century BC Babylonia than to conclude that he wrote as a pseudonymous author hundreds of years after Herodotus and Ctesias.

Furthermore, the author of the book of Daniel exhibits a vast knowledge of a great variety of historical details related to Babylonian life in the sixth century BC. He knew the proper Babylonian customs and the expectations of the royal court of Babylonian rulers. He understood how Babylonians counted the years of a king's reign and that the Babylonian method (Dan 1:1) was different from the Hebrew method (Jer 25:1). Specifically, he knew that in Babylonia the beginning of the new king's reign up until the first New Year was counted as his accession year; and that the following year commencing on the next New Year's festival

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<sup>41</sup> Robert H. Pfeiffer, a proponent of a second-century BC author, admits that this detailed information (concerning Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar) could not be known by a second-century BC author. Specifically, a second-century author could not know that Belshazzar was "functioning as king when Cyrus took Babylon in 538," and neither could he know the details of Nebuchadnezzar's construction of the "new Babylon" since it is only preserved in the Babylonian records. Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (New York: Harper, 1941), 758-59. Furthermore, Archer adds another item: "we now know from cuneiform records that Shushan was part of the territory of Elam back in Chaldean times and before. It is very striking that Daniel 8:2 refers to 'Susa in the province of Elam'—an item of information scarcely accessible to a second-century author"; see Archer, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: a History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 6.

<sup>43</sup> No doubt the critic would allow this miracle as long as the historicity and prophecies of Daniel are still undermined.

was counted as the first official year (Year One) of the king's reign. On the other hand, the Hebrews counted a king's accession year as his first.

Also, the author of Daniel shows knowledge of the educational system of court personnel, of the conduct, customs and manners expected in the presence of the king, and of the titles of the officials and ministers who served the king. Not only did the author know the titles of the public officials, but he also knew their hierarchal order based on authority and responsibility. Additionally, the author knew the distinguishing characteristics of royal decrees from Babylonian kings and how they were different from the written decrees of the Medo-Persian kings (spoken decrees: Dan 2:5, 12-13; 3:19-20, 28-29; 4:6; 5:7; written decree: 6:7-10; 12-13, 15, 17).

The author of Daniel provides all sorts of detailed information which was mostly inaccessible after a few hundred years and which a second-century BC author would have had little chance of knowing. All of the author's lists (e.g. officials,<sup>44</sup> wisemen, musical instruments, articles of Babylonian clothing, precious metals) in the book of Daniel exhibit a high degree of familiarity with the details of sixth-century BC Babylonian life. His lists of official titles (some of Akkadian and Persian origins), of officers serving the king would not all be remembered during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in a Greek Hellenizing culture. The specialty list of counselors and wise men advising the king is too specific for someone without intimate knowledge of the sixth-century BC Neo-Babylonian political system. Similarly, the list of musical instruments played at the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's idol exhibits a familiarity with the high culture of Babylonia. Daniel's testimony concerning the rulers of Babylon (though incomplete because he ignored those kings unimportant to his message) shows a great familiarity with the actual history. Furthermore, Daniel's knowledge of Belshazzar's arrangement as co-regent with his father Nabonidus was more exact and reliable than that of any other modern scholar until the publication of the "Verse Account of Nabonidus" in 1925.<sup>45</sup>

The book of Daniel shows a purposeful unity. This unity is apparent even though the book of Daniel contains different genres (historical, narrative, prayer, and prophecy) and the book's two languages suggest multiple audiences (both the Hebrew reader and the Aramaic reader). The book's unity is apparent because of its highly-detailed chiasmic structure (see Table 1.1 below) revealing a well-ordered and sophisticated organization which is destroyed if any part of the book is removed.

The use of two languages is not a mark of disunity but is, as Zdravko Stefanovic informs us, a common ancient practice employed as "an alternative means of communication . . . to a wider audience."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Daniel's use of the Hebrew language is directed toward the nation of Judah, and his use of the Aramaic language is a thoughtful appeal to a larger audience in order to reveal God's universal plan culminating in His final kingdom.

In fact, the chiasmic structure, building upon the double emphasis of the two key messages of the book of Daniel, reveals the book's overall unity. Table 1.1 shows the book's double chiasmic structure in which the two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, each highlight one

<sup>44</sup> When the LXX was translated around 200 BC, the translators did not know the meaning of all of these words and had to guess at some of their meanings. See List of officials in Table 5.3 Ranking of Officials in Daniel 3 and 6 (p. 165).

<sup>45</sup> Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts: Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (1925; repr., New York: G. Olms, 1975), 83-86.

<sup>46</sup> Zdravko Stefanovic, *The Aramaic of Daniel in Light of Old Aramaic* (Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1992), 33.

of the two focal points of the double chiasm. The central focus and message of the structure in the book's Aramaic section emphasizes that "the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will" (4:25). The central focus and message of the structure in the book's Hebrew sections emphasizes that "after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself" (9:26). Therefore, the unity of the book of Daniel is evident by the author's purposeful use of a very sophisticated literary device (its chiasmic structure) which is supported by its two languages and delivers the author's messages to two specific audiences.

A	Historical Prologue -Ch 1	Hebrew
a	Prophecy of Four Kingdoms (Image) -Ch 2	Aramaic
b	Trial of God's Faithful (Fiery Furnace) -Ch 3	"
c	Prophecy to Pagan King (repentant) -Ch 4	"
d	As God wishes, He gives and rules in the kingdoms of men - 4:25	"
c'	Prophecy to Pagan King (unrepentant) -Ch 5	"
b'	Trial of God's Faithful (Lions' Den) -Ch 6	"
a'	Prophecy of Four Kingdoms (Beasts) -Ch 7	Aramaic
B	Prophecy of Kingdoms (king of fierce countenance) -Ch 8	Hebrew
C	Daniel's Prayers for Deliverance of God's People - 9:1-24	"
D	Prophecy of Decree to Build Jerusalem & Temple - 9:25	"
E	Messiah's ministry and death (cut off) - 9:26a	"
D'	Prophecy of Destruction of Jerusalem & Temple - 9:26b	"
C'	Daniel's Prayers and Fasting for God's People -Ch 10	"
B'	Prophecies of Kingdoms (vile person obtains kingdom) -Ch 11	"
A'	Historical Epilogue (prophetic) -Ch 12	Hebrew

Table 1.1 Chiasmic Structure Revealing the Unity and Emphases of Daniel<sup>47</sup>

Finally, the personal perspective throughout the book of Daniel is also used to reveal its author. In the first six chapters, Daniel is only identified as a participant in the action of the narratives; but in the final six chapters, Daniel identifies himself as the author and main character. In these last six chapters of Daniel, the author uses the first person in order to indicate that he had intimate knowledge of the details of the prophetic messages because they were given to him. In these final chapters, the narratives revolve around Daniel and include his thoughts, his prayers, and the prophetic visions given to him alone. These details, their circumstances, and the content of the visions would not naturally be known to anyone other than Daniel. All of these facts point to Daniel, the sixth-century BC Babylonian cosmopolitan civil servant, as the most likely author of the book bearing his name.

<sup>47</sup> This chiasmic outline for the book of Daniel is built on Shea's original idea which can be found in William H. Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. by Frank B Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, v. 3. (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 113.

## Direction of the Research

The research will start with the extant contemporary sources which identify the rulers of Babylon at the time immediately after its fall to Cyrus the Great (539 BC). The relevant data from these sources will be gathered and organized. Other ancient historical sources will be searched for firsthand knowledge of these historical people and events, but the data retrieved from these later sources will be assigned a lesser weight than the contemporary sources. After the history of Josephus, all later historical sources will be assigned a low value, since they are commentaries on the earlier histories of others rather than being primary sources for these sixth century BC events.

Besides histories and ancient records, other sources will be researched concerning such things as the languages of these original sources and their proper interpretation. Sixth-century BC artifacts and the reference works which can help to explain their significance will also be important.

## Outline of the Dissertation

The outline of this study is as follows. The first chapter is the introduction to the problem and the statement of the issue. In this chapter, the background to the discussion of Darius the Mede is presented, and the historical controversy over the historicity of Daniel is quickly described. (This material has already been surveyed). Next, the direction of the research is described, including an outline of each chapter's content, a survey of questions which will be answered, a review of the author's assumptions, and the definitions of various terms essential to this study. The first chapter concludes with some suggestions concerning the significance of this study.

The second chapter is a survey of the literature which is significant to this research. These include the ancient cuneiform texts, the biblical account, and the classical histories. Also included are modern works which have been helpful, especially those which detail and translate the ancient texts. The final works included in this chapter are the works which bear directly on the subject of Darius the Mede.

The third chapter endeavors to create a method for evaluating possible candidates who might be identified as Darius the Mede. Appropriate methods from other fields which deal with the science of identification have been integrated to create the proposed method.

The fourth chapter details the evidence as it is gathered into the categories specified by the proposed method. The first phase of data collection concentrates on the first tier categories which are intended to qualify (or disqualify) the candidates who might be identified as Darius the Mede. More evidence will continue to be collected in the second phase of data collection to determine the strength of the remaining qualified candidates.

The fifth chapter explores history and the Scriptures based on the conclusions concerning this hypothesis. The discussion of the hypothesis is expanded to include evidence not previously covered by the categories of the dissertation's method. This discussion also explores the questions posed by others. Some recommendations and questions for further study will be suggested.

## Questions for Inquiry

Many questions have been asked concerning the identity of Darius the Mede. Of the many questions which could be asked, the initial question probably needs to be: “Who in ancient history had the name ‘Darius the Mede?’” The point that the name of Darius the Mede is not found in secular historical documents has already been made. Against this argument that no other historical document identifies a person by this exact description, one might suggest that Josephus did in his account of history. But what weakens Josephus’ witness is that his account was written over five hundred years later, and he seems to have used Daniel’s account as his original source.

Liberal critics anxious to discredit biblical history are quick to agree with Anthony Bevan’s claim, “Darius the Mede is unknown to history.”<sup>48</sup> The same idea is more fairly stated by Richard N. Frye, “These references [to Darius the Mede], which do not conform to what is known of the history of the period, have caused problems for scholars.”<sup>49</sup> Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman dealing with this same problem offer this reminder:

The Bible, while set in history, is not a history textbook, concerned to answer all our modern questions. This reticence on the part of the biblical narrative along with a lack of extrabiblical documentation means that we are dealing with historical probabilities and not certainties. There is, accordingly, more than one way to harmonize Darius the Mede with known history.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, instead of quickly discrediting the biblical account, the fair question is whether or not harmonization of the biblical account with other historical records is possible.

In an investigation (such as this present one) to see if the biblical account can be harmonized with other historical records, the next question might be, “Who could potentially be identified as Darius the Mede?” A list of candidates should be assembled from all the possibilities theorized by scholars during the last century or so. Concerning the potential candidates on this list, questions should be asked which will qualify or disqualify them.

Concerning candidates who might be identified as Darius the Mede, three qualifying questions need to be asked regarding their gender, age, and proximity to Babylon in 539 BC. If negative information is found concerning a potential candidate for any one of the qualifying questions, that candidate should not receive further consideration.

These initial three questions (# 1, 2, and 3) will be referred to as “qualifying questions” (Table 1.2, p. 15). The first, rather obvious qualifying question, which should be asked if only to be thorough, is (1.) “Was the candidate male?” Of course, Darius the Mede is represented to be of the male gender and any candidate not male must be disqualified.

The second question which must be asked in order to qualify a potential candidate is (2.) “Was the candidate involved with the conquest of Babylon in 539 BC?” The purpose of this question is to place them “at the scene of the crime.” This question considers what might be called a socio-political classification, a concept which is wider than the terms “ethnicity” or

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<sup>48</sup> Bevan, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Richard N. Frye, “Darius the Mede” (The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (CAIS)) [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/darius\\_mede.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/darius_mede.htm) (accessed Oct. 9, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 335.

“nationality.”<sup>51</sup> The object of this classification is to allow people with foreign names and of different ethnic groups not to be too quickly removed from consideration, when there is evidence that they were in fact present when Babylon fell in 539 BC.

The third question to be asked is (3.) “Was the candidate approximately sixty-two years old when Babylon fell in 539 BC?” Evidence will be sought to establish the possibility that the approximate age was “about sixty-two years of age” (Dan. 5:31). If sound evidence to the contrary is found, the candidate must be disqualified.

<p>1. Gender: -Was this person male?</p> <p>2. Socio-political classification: -Was this person involved in the conquest of Babylon in 539 BC?</p> <p>3. Age at fall of Babylon: -Was this person approximately 62 years old when Babylon fell in 539 BC?</p>
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Table 1.2 Qualifying Categories and Questions

Therefore, this third question concerning one’s age, along with the first two questions concerning gender and socio-political classification, would establish minimum standards for a test of qualification. This test of qualification, based on this first tier of qualifying questions will determine if it is possible that a potential candidate might be identified as Darius the Mede. If the candidate passes this qualifying test, then his candidacy should undergo further consideration.

After these initial qualifying questions, three more specific questions will help to determine the strength or weakness of the candidate’s possible identification as Darius the Mede. These final three questions (# 4, 5, and 6) will be referred to as “distinguishing questions” (Table 1.3, below). If specific answers to these distinguishing questions are found, then this information will increase the reliability of the potential candidate’s identification as Darius the Mede. Since the qualifying questions only determine that the candidate’s

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<sup>51</sup> This concept of socio-political classification has been taken from Lawrence Mykytiuk, who has done extensive research concerning the identities of people whose names are found on ancient Semitic inscriptions and artifacts. In his book, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.*, Mykytiuk reviewed some misidentifications of persons from ancient inscriptions which were made in the past and then offered a detailed method to make correct identifications from ancient inscriptions. Mykytiuk considered the concept of socio-political classification important because he recognized that an ethnic epithet, a national label, or a geographic reference might lead to the misidentification of a person. Mykytiuk explained that his reason for using the term “socio-political” was to develop a broad enough category which would allow a citizen of an ethnically diverse society, such as the capital of an empire, not to be unduly disqualified because of too narrow of a view of his nationality or ethnicity. Such a broad category is necessary because these individuals might “be named in inscriptions of other states and societies other than their own.” Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 47.

identification is “possible,” the distinguishing questions are intended to establish whether the candidate’s proposed identification can be upgraded from “possible” to “plausible,” “probable,” or “reliable” (see Table 1.4, page 24).

<p>4. Heritage: -Could this person be described as a Mede?</p> <p>5. Relations: -Was this person a descendant of Ahasuerus?</p> <p>6. Titles: -Did this person rule as king of the Chaldeans?</p>
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Table 1.3 Distinguishing Categories and Questions

These three distinguishing questions will establish the strength of the candidate’s identification as Darius the Mede. The first distinguishing question is (4.) “Could this person be described as a Mede?” This question concerns the heritage of Darius the Mede and would include data concerning his nationality, race or ethnicity (which could become more complicated than it might seem). This question of heritage will address why Darius is not only described as a “Median” (Dan. 5:31), but why he is also said to be “of the seed of the Medes” (Dan. 9:1).

The second distinguishing question is (5.) “Was this person a descendant of Ahasuerus?” This question concerns the kin relationships of Darius the Mede. A description of one of Darius’ relationships, which apparently refers to his father, is found in the phrase “the son of Ahasuerus,” (Dan. 9:1). This description is very specific and will be given close consideration.

The third distinguishing question is (6.) “Did this person rule as king of the Chaldeans (in 538 BC)?” This question concerns the office of Darius the Mede. In the biblical record no titles, other than “king” are applied to Darius (Dan. 6:2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25). Even so, the title “king” might not be the only signification of his office; consequently, other questions concerning his office will need to be considered.

### Assumptions of Author

The assumption that “everyone has assumptions which form the basis of their philosophical viewpoints” is itself an assumption, but one which is widely held to be true. The following assumptions, some basic and some directly related to this research, are held by the author of this present work. Understanding the author’s assumptions might be helpful for the one reading this dissertation.