

Daniel: Introduction

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It has been said that the Book of Daniel is the key to Bible prophecy. Regardless of one's eschatological position, a well-rounded view of Christian eschatology must interact with Daniel at a very serious level. But Daniel is more than a book about God's plan for the end, it teaches us a great deal about how to live for Jesus Christ today, especially living for Christ in an environment hostile to faith in God. At the core of Daniel is the profound theological concept of the sovereignty of God: No matter how chaotic things around us may appear, God is in control.

The ministry of Daniel began in 605BC (Daniel 1:1) and continued through the first year of Cyrus the Great (539BC), meaning that he had a personal ministry of approximately 66 years! Daniel himself was a capable young man of Judah who was taken into captivity in the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon plundered Jerusalem in 605 BC. Daniel, along with three of his friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) was conscripted into service to the king of Babylon.

Liberal theologians and scholars have attacked the veracity of Daniel for almost two centuries. They claim the Book of Daniel was not actually written by Daniel, but was written by someone *pretending* to be Daniel somewhere around 164 BC or later. In contrast, evidence supports the traditional dating and authorship of Daniel: The book was written by the Prophet Daniel himself, perhaps at the end of his life as he compiled the experiences and prophecies God had given him.

I. Date: Second Century B.C. View

Two options are advocated for the date of authorship for Daniel: Conservatives typically date Daniel around the late 6th cent. B.C. while liberals tend to date it in the 2nd cent. B.C. The most controversial issue related to the book of Daniel is the date of its writing. The conclusions at which one arrives concerning the date of the book of Daniel will influence one's conclusions about the authorship of Daniel. Why is there such disparity in the dates? I will begin by discussing why some people believe Daniel was written about 200 years before Christ, somewhere around 164 BC or later.

The 2nd Century B.C. view summarized

Those who argue Daniel was written in the 2nd Century BC (200 – 100 BC) claim Daniel is prophecy after the fact, and is in this way similar to other apocalyptic literature of the period. The theory claims the Aramaic portions of Daniel (chapters 2 – 7) were actually written in 3rd (300 – 200 BC) century and then given a Hebrew intro and the visions during or just after the crisis of Antiochus Epiphanes IV (215 – 164 BC). It was written as an encouragement to the Jews to remain faithful during the Greek crisis. Advocates of the 2nd Century date claim Daniel is a case of *vaticinium ex eventu* or “prediction after the fact.” The idea for a 2nd Century B.C. date for the authorship of Daniel was first suggested by Porphyry (234 – 305), a Neoplatonic philosopher opposed to Christianity.

A. Argument 1: Claimed Historical Inaccuracies

1. Nebuchadnezzar’s 605 Foray into Palestine

People who argue for a second century date claim the Babylonian Chronicle doesn’t mention a Babylonian attack of Jerusalem in 605 B.C.

2. Nebuchadnezzar’s Seven Year Insanity

3. Belshazzar and Nabonidus

4. Darius the Mede

Hill and Walton say, “A final objection concerns [to Daniel’s authenticity] people and occurrences in the book that remain unconfirmed from extrabiblical sources. Darius the Mede (chapters 6, 9, 11) has yet to be identified, and the seven-year insanity of Nebuchadnezzar has been thought to be more easily attributable to the last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabonidus.”¹ More below.

B. Argument 2: Maccabean Background

Hill and Walton say, “The events of the book of Daniel are clearly set against the background of the sixth century B.C. Nevertheless, many present-day

¹ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 569.

scholars attribute the writing of the book to an author from the second century B.C., specifically between 168 and 164 B.C.”²

1. Daniel 9 and the Medo-Persian Empire, Greek Empire, and Seleucids

2. Daniel 11: Ptolemies vs. Seleucids

Arguments for a second century B.C. date focus on Daniel 11. Daniel 11 discusses a number of unnamed kings, but two of them are referred to as “the king of the North” and the “king of the South.” For example:

Daniel 11:11: Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated.

The details in chapter 11 correspond with the history of the Ancient Near East following the death of Alexander the Great. Specifically, Daniel 11 describes the power struggle for Palestine between the Ptolemies (South) and the Seleucids (North).

3. Daniel 11: Antiochus Epiphanes

One particular Seleucid ruler seems to be mentioned in Daniel 11: Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled Syria / Seleucid empire from 175 – 164 B.C.

Daniel 11:31-32: His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

We know from extra-Biblical literature that in 168 B.C. Antiochus IV set up an altar to the pagan god Zeus Olympius in the temple. Because this prophecy here in Daniel 11:31 – 32 is so specific, liberals claim it was written *after the fact*. Liberals also claim that Daniel 11:40 contains an inaccurate prediction about the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. Since we know with some certainty from extra-biblical sources that Antiochus Epiphanes died in 164 BC, liberals then date the authorship of Daniel between 168 and 164 BC.

² Ibid., 568.

4. Daniel 11 and Apocalyptic Literature

Advocates of the Second Century BC date assert that Daniel 11 is a case of both pseudonymity and *vaticinium ex eventu*. Understanding these two terms is central to understanding the liberal argument for the date of the Book of Daniel.

Pseudonymity means attributing a piece of writing to a well-known person in the past to give the writing credibility. Thus, liberals claim Daniel is a *pseudonymous* work written by an unknown author several centuries after the time of Daniel.

Vaticinium ex eventu means “writing after the fact”: it is a term meaning a passage in the prophets or the gospels which has the form of a prediction but is in fact written in the knowledge of the event having occurred.³ Liberals assert the author of Daniel wrote about the events taking place in the second century as if he were living before they took place: They claim this is merely a literary device.

Since both of these are characteristic of extra-Biblical apocalyptic literature, liberals claim Daniel comes from the same genre and uses the same literary devices.

C. Argument 3: Loan Words

1. Greek Loan Words

Daniel 3:5: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, **zither**, lyre, **harp**, **pipes** and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

The words for zither, harp and pipes are all Greek loan words. Thus, advocates of the late date claim this reflects a provenance for Daniel during or after Greek occupation of Palestine.

³ *Oxford Biblical Studies Online*, “vaticinium ex eventu,” accessed October 4, 2018, http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t94/e1988?_hi=0&_pos=7.

2. Persian Loan Words

There are seventeen Persian loan words in Daniel. Again, advocates of the late date say this points to a time after Persian rule for Daniel's date.

3. One Possible Egyptian Loan Word

"Magicians" – Daniel 1:20

D. Argument 4: The Aramaic of Daniel

The central section of Daniel is written in Aramaic – 2:4b – 7:28, the language of diplomacy in the eighth century B.C. and the language of the Medo-Persian Empire. Some scholars have argued that the type of Aramaic we see in Daniel is most consistent with Aramaic from the Second Century.

E. Daniel's Place in the Hebrew Canon

In the Hebrew canon Daniel is not included among the prophets. In the Hebrew canon Daniel is included among the writings with the "historical" books. Advocates of the Second Century date claim this points to feelings of ambiguity about Daniel in Hebrew circles.

F. Ezekiel Not Referring to the Prophet Daniel

Conservatives often point to Ezekiel's references to Daniel as proof that Daniel is the author of Daniel. In fact, Ezekiel references Daniel 3 times:

Ezekiel 14:14: "Even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares the Lord God. (NASB)

Ezekiel 14:20: "Even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord God, "they could not deliver either their son or their daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

Ezekiel 28:3: Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?

Ezekiel's reference to Daniel has traditionally been taken as evidence for Daniel as the author of the Book of Daniel. However, some scholars claim Ezekiel is not

referring to Daniel the prophet, but to “Danil” of Ugaritic mythology. The argument has been persuasive enough that the *NIV* has a note on Ezek. 14:14, 20, and 28:3 to the effect that "the Hebrew spelling {of Daniel} may suggest a person other than the prophet Daniel." For liberals, the prophet Daniel never existed, but instead the unknown author of Daniel writing sometime after Antiochus Epiphanes death in 164 BC borrowed the name “Daniel” from a legendary hero from the past mentioned in passing in Ezekiel.

G. Sensational Events

Events such as the deliverance from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5), and deliverance from the Lion’s Den (Daniel 6) are claimed to be characteristic of much noncanonical literature of the intertestamental period.

II. Date: The Sixth Century BC View

Now that we have summarized the liberal position, we will see evidence that supports the traditional view that the historical Prophet Daniel is the author of the Book of Daniel and that it was written somewhere around 539 BC. The 6th Century B.C. view can be summarized as follows: Daniel is predictive prophecy but different from other literature of the period. If Daniel was written in the 6th century, then this would minimize the possibility of a pseudonym (see characteristics of apocalyptic above), thus the book contains the actual words and visions of Daniel. This view assumes the book is what it claims to be: a book about Daniel, his experiences and visions. Dr. Branch favors the Sixth Century BC date for Daniel.

A. The Pseudepigraphical Approach Wants to “Have Your Cake and Eat it Too.”

Daniel Wallace says the pseudepigraphical approach wants to have its cake and eat it too. The reason for pseudepigraphy, it is claimed, is to employ some famous person's name for the sake of one's own views. But if Daniel is not mentioned in any Jewish literature until the second century BC, then how famous could he be? The liberal view is internally inconsistent at this point. On one hand, they claim there was no historical person named Daniel. On the other hand, they claim Daniel is a pseudonym, meaning a later author used the name of a purportedly famous person to make the work sound legitimate. But one cannot both have his cake and eat it too! If Daniel never existed, then why would a later author choose this name for his work? The argument is internally inconsistent.

B. Ezekiel Referring to the Prophet Daniel

The argument that Ezekiel was referring to a “Danil” of Ugaritic mythology is weak and unsubstantiated. None of the advocates of the “Danil” interpretation of Ezekiel adequately respond to the fact that the Ugaritic “Danil,” as a representative of the Baal cult, was in fact the very sort of idolatry that Ezekiel was condemning!

C. The Babylonian Chronicle Makes the 605 BC Attack Plausible

While it is true that the Babylonian Chronicle does not specifically mention the 605 BC attack on Jerusalem, the Babylonian Chronicle does in fact detail the Babylonian victory at Carchemish and the continued Babylonian march on to Egypt. So, a likely scenario is the battle of Carchemish took place in May / June 605 BC. On their way by the sea to Egypt, the Babylonians made a foray into the Judean hill country and took captive Daniel and other Hebrews. In August, 605 BC the Babylonian army reached Egypt. The 605 attack on Jerusalem is in fact plausible with what the Babylonian Chronicle says.

D. Jesus and Daniel

Matthew 24:15-16: So when you see standing in the holy place the “abomination that causes desolation,” spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Jesus affirmed Daniel as the author.

E. The Book Professes to be Written by Daniel

Daniel 7:1; 12:4. Daniel presents himself as a historical figure who experienced the events described in the book. Hill and Walton say, “The fact that Daniel speaks in first-person narrative from chapter 7 to the end naturally suggests that he is the author, though the use of third person in the first part of the book may indicate that someone else laid out the framework and organized it.”⁴

⁴ Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 571.

F. The Dead Sea Scrolls

One of the eight manuscripts of Daniel discovered in the DSS has been dated to around 125 BC (4QDanc). It is difficult to imagine the book being accepted as Scripture by the Qumran Community if it had only been written 40 years earlier as the liberal theory requires.

G. Loan Words Not Surprising

1. Persian loan words in Daniel do not necessarily argue against an early date for the book since Daniel, who lived under the Persians, could have placed the material in its final form at the latter part of his life.

2. Four of the nineteen Persian words are not translated well by the Greek renderings of Daniel from about 100 B.C., thus implying that the words' meanings were lost or drastically changed; thus, it is very unlikely that Daniel was written in 165 B.C.

3. The Persian words which are cited in Daniel are specifically old Persian words dating from around 300 B.C. This argues against a 165 date.

4. Greek: Three Greek loan words in Daniel need not argue for a late date since there may well have been Greek writing prior to Plato (370 B.C.) where these words could have been used, and since they are the names of musical instruments which often are circulated beyond national boundaries, and since Greek words are found in the Aramaic documents of Elephantine dated to the fifth-century B.C.

H. Aramaic

The word order of the Aramaic in Daniel usually follows the pattern of subject-object-verb. This is in contrast to certain DSS documents from a definitely later period. The word order of the Aramaic in Daniel more closely resembles the Asshur ostrakon of the seventh century BC and the 5th Century Aramaic papyri from Elephantine in Egypt.

An **ostrakon** (Greek: ὄστρακον *ostrakon*, plural ὄστρακα *ostraka*) is a piece of pottery (or stone), usually broken off from a vase or other earthenware vessel. In archaeology, ostraca may contain scratched-in words or other forms of writing which may give clues as to the time when the piece was in use. The word is derived from Greek *ostrakon*, meaning a *shell* or a shard of pottery used as a

voting ballot. It is a common error for the plural form *ostraca* to be used as the singular for *ostrakon*.

Asshur (Assur) was the first capital of ancient Assyria. In fact the name "Assyria" is a derivative of the name "Asshur," and is used in ancient literature as a name for a god, a city, and a territory. The modern name of the site of ancient Asshur is Qala'at Sherqat and it is located on a hill which overlooks the Tigris River about 25 miles south of Tell Hassuna. Any trade that passed north south east or west usually passed through this ancient city.

I. Daniel is in the LXX

According to the Maccabean hypothesis, only 30 years after Daniel is written, it gets included in the LXX! This would be a fascinating development. A better explanation is that Daniel was already considered Scripture and had been so for some time prior to the LXX.

J. Anti-Supernatural Bias of Late Date

Hill and Walton say, "It seems that the presuppositional rejection of supernaturalism is often partly responsible for the rejection of a sixth-century date for the book."⁵

I strongly support the earlier date for Daniel.

Fun Fact: There is a holy site in Iran at the ancient city of Susa which claims to be the tomb of the prophet Daniel. During the Sasanian age, the city had had a large Christian community, who in the seventh century offered resistance against the Arab invaders. Nevertheless, the city was captured. While the Arab invaders were sacking the town, they discovered a mummy that was buried with a seal of a man standing between two lions, which was immediately taken to be a reference to the Biblical prophet Daniel. Although Caliph Umar ordered its destruction - Daniel is not mentioned in the Quran - the conquerors decided to venerate Daniel in Susa. There is no real evidence that this is the actual tomb of Daniel.

⁵ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 570.

III. Daniel: Key Ideas

My good friend and retired MBTS professor Dr. Jim Anderson gives a good summary of the purpose for the Book of Daniel and says, “During those tragic days of Israel’s rebellion, and the consequent Divine retribution through the means of a foreign and wicked power, there was a need to declare the providential power of God for those who would place their trust in Him. At the same time, there was a need for God’s name to be honored among the pagan people who troubled Israel and who sought to belittle and deny the reality of the God of Israel. Thus, God used Daniel to declare the truth of His prophetic plan for human history.”⁶

The prophecy of Daniel extends from the Babylonian period (586BC) to the end of man’s stay on earth! (cf. the 70 sevens)

- Battle of Qarqar, 858BC the Neo-Assyrian Empires rises to power
- Battle at Megiddo, 609BC Necho of Egypt (Josiah of Judah slain in battle)
- Battle at Carchemish, 605BC, Babylon now in control
- Deportations of Israelites
 - 722 BC, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, North falls
 - 701 BC, Senacherib & Hezekiah, Judah spared
 - 609 BC, Josiah slain by Egyptians at Megiddo
 - 605 BC Battle of Carchemish: Babylon defeats Egyptians
 - 605 BC Deportation of Sons of Nobles (Daniel and Friends)
 - 601 BC The Chaldean Chronicles reveal that in 601 BC the Babylonians and Egyptians mauled each other. This may have encouraged King Jehoiakim to rebel against the Babylonians in spite of the warnings of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 27:9 – 11).⁷
 - 597 BC Deportation 2 (Ezekiel). King Jehoiachin taken captive.
 - 586 BC Deportation 3 – The Majority of everyone else goes to Babylon. A small remnant remains in the land. Another smaller group goes to Egypt (Jeremiah)

⁶ Jim Anderson, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Belton, MO: Anderson Evangelistic Enterprises, N.D.), 12.

⁷ Edwin Yamauchi, “Political Background of the Old Testament,” *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, Dockery, Matthews, Sloan, eds. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 320.

A. How to Outline Daniel

The <i>traditional</i> approach:	chapters 1-6: historical chapters 7-12: prophetic
The <i>linguistic</i> approach:	chapter 1-2:4a: introduction (in Hebrew) chapters 2:4b-7: Aramaic (referring to Gentiles) chapters 8-12: Hebrew (referring to Jews)

B. Daniel and Ezekiel

<i>Ezekiel</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
A priest who spoke of matters of spirit	A statesman who spoke of matters of state
Emphasizes times of Israel's glory	Emphasizes times of Gentile's glory
Residence as a prisoner	Residence in a palace
Focus on Israel and the Jews	Focus on Gentiles and the world

C. Daniel and Apocalyptic Literature

1. Characteristics

Revelation is the NT example and the oldest lit to actually claim the title “apocalypse.” This is a type of literature was widespread in Judaism during the period of Christ and had a strong influence on Christianity. Characteristics of intertestamental apocalyptic literature:

- a. Contains some type of vision which is usually symbolic and mysterious so that it requires interpretation by a heavenly or heavenly inspired mediator.
- b. The name of the author, when given, is usually a pseudonym or pen name. (Enoch, Abraham, Ezra, etc.)
- c. Concerned with the future and eschatological judgment that is divided into kingdoms and ages/periods (eg. Four kingdoms, 70 weeks). History culminates with the final judgment in which the good are rewarded and wicked are punished in the afterlife.

d. It shows a sensitivity and awareness of the physical world and spiritual world. Angels and demons play a prominent role and the visionary is sometimes carried into the heavenly/spiritual realm.

e. Sometimes well-known past events are taken and cast in predictive language so that the prophet speaks of the event as though it is yet to come: “prediction after the fact” (*vaticinium ex eventu*) This would lend credence to the whole so that it seems like real prophecy. Some scholars view Daniel this way.

2. Biblical Apocalyptic

a. Isaiah 24-27, parts of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Revelation and Daniel

b. Demonstrate some but not all of the above characteristics

c. Daniel is unique from other biblical books in that it focuses more on secular kingdoms, empires, and the final kingdom of God in light of God’s purposes instead of the more traditional focus on the covenant promises (and curses) with respect to Israel.

d. Conclusion: Daniel is Biblical apocalyptic and what it claims to be. It is a forerunner of the apocalyptic “imitators” that followed it four centuries later.

D. Major Themes In Daniel

1. Sovereignty of God

God raises up kings and kingdoms and God casts them down: this is a major theme of the book of Daniel. Regardless of how chaotic things appear, God is in control. Hill and Walton say, “God’s sovereignty is seen in his ability to prosper or deliver those who are true to their faith convictions.”⁸

2. The Kingdom of God

This theme is closely related to the sovereignty of God. The kingdom of God is the climax of God’s agenda for Israel and the world. It is communicated very clearly in the book of Daniel.

⁸ Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 572.

Daniel 2:34: You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

3. Eschatology

In Daniel, we see God's plan for the future of the world.

4. The Messiah

Jesus' favorite term of self-designation was "Son of Man," a title drawn from Daniel 7.

IV. Darius the Mede

"Darius the Mede" is mentioned in Daniel 5:31, Daniel 6, Daniel 9:1, and Daniel 11:1. If the Prophet Daniel died sometime soon after 539 BC when the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon, many people point out that no one named "Darius the Mede" can be found in extra-Biblical sources. Thus, the claim is that the author of the book of Daniel was confused and the book is historically inaccurate.

A. References in Daniel

Daniel 5:31: So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

Daniel 6:1 – 2: It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

Daniel 6:28 (NASB): So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel 9:1 - 2: In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as* the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.

Daniel 11:1: In the first year of Darius the Mede, I [the angel of chapter 10] arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

B. Arguments that Daniel is Wrong About Darius the Mede

I will summarize why some people think the Book of Daniel is wrong in its references to Darius the Mede.

1. The King of the Medo-Persian Empire at the time of Babylon's defeat in 539 BC was Cyrus the Great (lived circa 590(?) – 529 BC).
2. No archeological evidence has been found which refers to Cyrus the Great by the name "Darius the Mede." Nor has anyone named "Darius the Mede" been found in archeological discoveries to date. The name "Darius the Mede" is unknown outside the Bible.
3. There was a king of the Medo-Persian Empire known as Darius I (aka as "Darius the Great" or "Darius Hystaspes") who ruled from 521 – 486 BC and was the third successor after Cyrus the Great. But again, this Darius comes several years after the events recorded in the Book of Daniel. *This Darius* is mentioned in Haggai 1:1.
4. Daniel 9:1 refers to "Darius the son of Ahasuerus." But Ahasuerus was the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire from 486 – 465/4 BC. Thus the author of Daniel was terribly confused about the timeline of rulers in this era.
5. Thus, references to Darius the Mede demonstrate that the Book of Daniel is factually incorrect and is historically confused. The most likely reason for this historical confusion is that the Book of Daniel was written at a much later date than suggested by the text itself. The author was not Daniel, but was an unknown person using Daniel's name and writing several centuries after the purported events, most likely after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164/163 BC. Some suggest Darius the Mede was a fictitious figure invented to fulfill prophecies of Median conquest over Babylon (See Isaiah 13:17 – 18; 21:2; Jeremiah 51:1, 27 – 28.⁹ Being far removed from the events in question, the unknown author of Daniel confused Cyrus the Great with the later Darius I.

⁹ T.J. Betts, "Darius," in *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England, eds. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 389.

C. Arguments Regarding the Plausibility of Darius the Mede

The critical arguments against the accuracy of Daniel regarding the existence of “Darius the Mede” seem intimidating. How do we respond? First, we acknowledge three points with which even the most skeptical person would agree:

1. We concur with the obvious evidence that the historical figure known as Cyrus the Great was the conqueror of Babylon in 539 BC.
2. We acknowledge that no extra-Biblical evidence for the name “Darius the Mede” has yet been found.
3. Sources outside the Bible refer to a man named “Gobryas” (AKA “Gubaru”)¹⁰ who was Cyrus’ chief general when Babylon was conquered.

Many suggest the existence of Darius the Mede can be explained as either A) a reference to Cyrus the Great under another name or B) a reference to Gobryas the general under another name. Neither position is without its weaknesses.

1. Darius the Mede is another name for Gobryas (aka “Gubaru”).

Around 370 BC, Xenophon of Athens wrote a biography of Cyrus the Great and in this book he mentioned a man named *Gobryas* who was Cyrus the Great’s chief general when Babylon was conquered in 539 BC. Many suggest “Darius the Mede” is another name for Gobryas the General.

First, Daniel 9:1 asserts Darius the Mede was *made* king over the realm of the Chaldeans. The verb *made* indicates Darius the Mede was invested with the kingship by some other authority greater than himself, which well agrees with the suggestion that he was installed as viceroy in Babylonia by Cyrus the Great.¹¹

¹⁰ It is important to note that *Gubaru* should not be confused with another general from Cyrus the Great’s era named *Ugbaru*. In 1959, J.C. Whitcomb published his important work *Darius the Mede* demonstrates that the former assumption that *Ugbaru* and *Gubaru* were variant spellings of the same name is quite erroneous.

¹¹ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 427.

Second, Daniel 5:31 says Darius the Mede *received* the kingdom about age of sixty-two. This terminology could also reflect the idea that Darius the Mede was a subordinate king who *received* his authority from Cyrus the Great.

Third, if this Darius the Mede was only the ruler of a part of the Medo-Persian Empire (specifically, Babylon), then how could he send a decree addressed to “all the inhabitants of the earth” in Daniel 6:25? Gleason Archer says this is no objection to identifying Darius the Mede with Gobryas since the Aramaic word *earth* used in Daniel 6:25 may signify only “land or country” and need not imply the entire Medo-Persian Empire.¹²

Fourth, the name “Darius” (*Darayavahush* in Persian) was a title of honor, just as “Caesar” or “Augustus” become in the Roman Empire. Possibly, *Darius* then meant something like “royal one” and was merely a title used by Gobryas.

Fifth, Daniel 6:28 (NASB) says, “So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” This indicates two different kings, the major ruler Cyrus and his subordinate, Darius the Mede.

Finally, and perhaps most persuasively for this view, the Nabonidus Chronicle relates that Cyrus appointed Gubaru [Gobryas] as the governor immediately after the city was conquered.

2. Darius the Mede is another name for Cyrus the Great.

1. Dual titles were not uncommon in antiquity. “Cyrus” and “Darius” are both to be understood as titles for one person. Since he was king of both Media and Persian territories, it might be expected that Cyrus the Persian would have another title, such as Darius the Mede, that pertained particularly to the Medes. This practice would have satisfied peoples in both parts of his kingdom.¹³ Further evidence of this practice is seen in that Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria was also called “*Pul*” in 2 Kings 15:19.

2. An inscription from Harran dated to 546 BC refers to Cyrus as the “king of the Medes.”

¹² Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 428.

¹³ Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 18, *Daniel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 175.

3. Much as is mentioned above in the argument for Darius the Mede as Gobryas, the name *Darius* may be an ancient title for royalty. In this way, it could just as easily be a reference to Cyrus the Great under another title.

4. When Daniel 9:1 refers to Ahasuerus, the name “Ahasuerus” is not referring to the king who ruled from 486 – 465/4 BC, but it may be an ancient Achaemenid royal title. Thus, it was a title for Darius the Mede’s father as well as the name of the later king.¹⁴

5. Daniel 9:1 also says Darius was of “Median decent.” Cyrus the Great’s father was Persian, but his mother was the daughter of Astyages, the kind of media, thus Cyrus was half Median. Ezra 10:3 as well as other extra-Biblical Jewish literature indicates a child of mixed ethnic heritage was reckoned according to the mother’s lineage. Thus, Daniel may have followed Jewish custom in emphasizing the king’s maternal (Median) ancestry.¹⁵

6. Daniel 5:31 says Darius the Mede was sixty-two when he took over the kingdom. This would conform to known historical data about Cyrus the Great. Cicero reported Cyrus’s age as seventy when he died and extra-Biblical cuneiform texts tell us Cyrus reigned nine years after he conquered Babylon. Thus, Cyrus the Great would have been about 62 years when he conquered Babylon, the age give for Darius the Mede in Daniel 5:31.

7. Daniel 6:28 can be translated, “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”¹⁶ The Aramaic conjunction *waw* (“even”) may be rendered in this manner and would explain to the reader that Darius the Great and Cyrus were the same individual.¹⁷

8. Finally, I would add that an earlier generation of critics ridiculed Daniel’s reference to Belshazzar in Daniel 5, but we now have extensive extra-Biblical information confirming Daniel’s reference to Belshazzar and the critics are silenced. This leads me to have trust in Daniel’s description of Cyrus under the name *Darius the Mede*. It is difficult to believe that an ancient book, the Book of

¹⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, vol. 21, *Daniel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 163.

¹⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, 175.

¹⁶ D.J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1970), 12.

¹⁷ Stephen r. Miller, *Daniel*, 176.

Daniel, which could be so precise about an obscure figure such as Belshazzar would then simultaneously be so terribly confused as suggested by the critics.

My Conclusion

Though all suggestions must be offered with humility, I find the evidence quite strong that Darius the Mede is simply another name for Cyrus the Great. I have suggested some reasons why Daniel may have chosen to do this above, but I confess the speculative nature of these motives.

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