

BIBLICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE MEDO-PERSIAN KINGS - DARIUS AND CYRUS

JASON HILBURN

INTRODUCTION¹

As one studies the history of God's people recorded in the Bible, he must remember that the world of Bible times was filled with many other peoples and nations besides Israel. Changes were constantly occurring in the world in which God's people lived—nations were forming and nations were falling as God was working out His will. Secular scholars have marveled at the achievements of men like Cyrus the Great, wondering how such a person could conquer so quickly and dominantly:

The violent collapse of the mighty Assyrian Empire after the fall of Nineveh in 612 to a coalition of the Medes and Babylonians has sometimes been called a "scandal of history." The sudden appearance of the Persians in Near Eastern history and the lightning campaigns of Cyrus II, the Great, pose questions for the historian that are urgent both in their breadth and in their complexity. In two decades (550-530), the Persian armies led by Cyrus II conquered the Median, Lydian, and Neo-Babylonian kingdoms in succession and prepared the ground for Persian domination of the Iranian Plateau and Central Asia. How can we explain this sudden outburst into history by a people and a state hitherto practically unknown? How can we explain not only that this people could forge military forces sufficient to achieve conquests as impressive as they were rapid but also that, as early as the reign of Cyrus, it had available the technological and intellectual equipment that made the planning and building of Pasargadae possible? (Briant 13).

How does one explain how a man like Cyrus the Great could so quickly rise to such great power? Men like Cyrus were instruments of God to bring about His will: "...Cyrus...is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure..." (Isa. 44:28). It has always been the case that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:17; cf. 4:25, 32). The Medo-Persian Empire was the dominant world empire from Daniel's latter days until after the time of Malachi (539-331 B.C.), and during this period God raised up rulers whose actions would help fulfill His precious promises (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 44:28; Eze. 37, et al.).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MEDES AND PERSIANS

Near the time of Moses' leading God's people out of Egypt, significant changes were also occurring in other parts of the world. In about 1500 B.C., many tribes of Indo-European people called the Aryans were moving into the area east of the Tigris River and south of the Caucasus Mountains and Caspian Sea (Whitcomb, *Darius* 68). They had apparently come from the shores

of the Caspian Sea, and the two main tribes of the Aryans were the Medes and the Persians (Durant 350). The Medes lived to the east and south of Lake Urmia, and the Persians lived in Parsua, a region to the west of that large lake. This high plateau region "constitutes the northwestern part of a large country known since 1935 as Iran (from 'Airyana' or 'land of the Aryans')" (Whitcomb, *Darius* 68). Josephus wrote that the Medes were descendents of Madai, the son of Japheth, son of Noah (I.VI.1; cf. Gen. 10:2).

The first instance of Medes and Persians in extra-Biblical historical records was in the written annals of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. In 836 B.C. the Assyrian king recorded that he had received tribute from kings of "Parsua" and "Mada" (Whitcomb, *Darius* 68). Barnes commented, "For 520 years, the Medes were subject to the Assyrians; but, in the time of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser, they revolted, and, by the destruction of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem...they were enabled to achieve their independence" (cf. 2 Kin. 19). The Greek historian Herodotus (ca. 484 – 425 B.C.) recorded the following about the tribes who would later become the Medo-Persian Empire:

The Medes were the first to begin a revolt from the Assyrians, who had ruled over the upper part of Asia for five hundred and twenty years. Somehow, in their struggle for independence from the Assyrians, the Medes were transformed into a people noble enough to cast off slavery and be free. Later other nations did the same thing as the Medes, but after they all became self-governing throughout the mainland, they reverted to tyrannies in the following way. There was a cunning man named Deioces among the Medes, and he was the son of Phraortes. Now, this Deioces was in love with power... (36).

The power hungry Deioces (Daiauukku; Deiokes) was the first to unite the nomadic Median tribes into one nation (Olmstead 23). It was by Deioces' command that their capital, Ecbatana (meaning "a meeting-place of many ways") was built. The capital was "in a picturesque valley made fertile by the melting snows of the highlands" with "a royal palace spread over an area two-thirds of a mile square" (Durant 350). Deioces was the source of the law that "no man should be admitted to the King's presence, but everyone should consult him by means of messengers" (Herodotus 37-38; cf. Est. 4:11). Thus one sees the beginnings of firm, enduring laws, for which the Medes and Persians would later become famous (cf. Dan. 6:8, 12, 15). Deioces was deported to Syria after being taken captive by the Assyrians in 715 B.C. His successor, Cyaxares I, paid tribute to Sargon, king of Assyria, and attacked an Assyrian province called Harhar in 702 B.C. (Whitcomb, *Darius* 68). It is difficult to improve upon the concise words of Whitcomb:

About the year 700 B.C., Cimmerian and Scythian tribes began to move south into the Iranian plateau, pushing the Medes before them. Also the Persians moved south from Parsua to a region south of the Elamite land of Anzan (or Anshan²) and named it Parsumash in memory of their original home. At this time their leader was Achaemenes (700-675 B.C.), founder of the Achaemenian dynasty, who is noted for having led troops from Parsumash and Anzan against Sennacherib at Halulina in 681 B.C.

Phraortes, king of the Medes, began his twenty-two-year reign in 675 B.C. by forming an anti-Assyrian coalition of Medes and Cimmerians, and causing the Persians to become his vassals. But the Persians, under the leadership of Teispes (675-640 B.C.), son of Achaemenes, regained their independence from the Medes following the death of Phraortes in 653 B.C. The Persians were also able to conquer some territory to the east of Parsumash, which they named Parsa; and after the destruction of Elam by the Assyrians in 646 B.C., Teispes assumed the title, "Great King, King of the City Anshan."

Cyaxares II (635-585 B.C.), the new Median king, succeeded again in dominating the Persians. In 615 B.C. he led the Medes in a mighty invasion of Assyria, and with the aid of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C. Two years later he delivered the final blow to the Assyrian army by defeating Ashurballit at Harran. Absorbing all of northern Mesopotamia, he moved into Asia Minor, met the powerful Lydians, and was forced to establish a common frontier with them at the river Halys (May 28, 585 B.C.).

In the meantime, Teispes had divided his territory between his two sons, Ariyaramnes (640-615) and Cyrus I (640-600), the former taking the eastern region of Parsa and the latter ruling over Parsumash and the city of Anshan. However, both of these Persian kings remained vassals of the Medes. The son and grandson of Ariyaramnes, Arsames and Hystaspes, remained petty rulers; but the son of Cyrus I, Cambyses I (600-559), married Mandane the daughter of Astyages (585-550), successor to the throne of Media. Their son was Cyrus II, the Great (Whitcomb, *Darius* 68-69).

The following is a list of Persian Kings from Cyrus onward in the order of their reigns:

THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE (539-331 B.C.)	
KINGS	CONTEMPORARY BIBLE BOOKS
Cyrus II the Great (559 [Persia], 550 [Media], 539 [Medo-Persia]-530)	Daniel (605-536)
Cambyses II (530-522)	Ezra (538-458)
Pseudo-Smerdis (Smerdis, Bardiya) (522-521)	
Darius I (Hystaspes) (521-486)	Haggai (520), Zechariah (520-518)
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) (486-465)	Esther (486-465)
Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) (465-424)	Nehemiah (444-420), Malachi (440)
Xerxes II (424)	Nehemiah (444-420)
Sogdianos (Sekydianos) (424-423)	Nehemiah (444-420)

Darius II (Nothos) (423-404)	Nehemiah (444-420)
Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) (404-359)	
Artaxerxes III (Ochos) (358-338)	
Arses (338-336)	
Darius III (336-331)	

CYRUS THE GREAT

Childhood

Herodotus relates that Astyages, ruler of the Medes, dreamed that his daughter, Mandane, would give birth to a child who would rule over all of Asia (39). Mandane was given in marriage to a Persian named Cambyses, and she gave birth to a son who would later be known as Cyrus II, the Great. Because of his dream and his lust for power, Astyages ordered the baby boy to be killed by his servant Harpagus, but his plans were thwarted when Harpagus gave the boy to a cowherd named Mitradates. Harpagus had ordered the cowherd to kill the child, but Mitradates and his wife tricked others into thinking the child was dead, and they reared the boy as if he were their own son. The boy's identity was discovered by Astyages when Cyrus was ten years old. As punishment for failure, Astyages killed Harpagus' only son, who was about thirteen, and Astyages deliberated on what to do with Cyrus. Astyages' counselors, called magi, convinced the ruler to send the boy back to his parents, Cambyses and Mandane, in Persia (44-45). Astyages would later impale these same magi after Cyrus would come back to conquer him! (47).

Conquest

When Cyrus reached manhood, he "became the bravest and most popular of his contemporaries" (Herodotus 45), taking his father's place as the Persian king of Anshan in 559 B.C. (Whitcomb, *Darius* 70). Soon afterwards, Harpagus began plotting against Astyages, encouraging Cyrus to lead an army of Persians in rebellion against the Medes. Harpagus was also gathering his own men to rebel against the Median king. Remembering the treachery of his grandfather in trying to kill him, and knowing that the Persians resented Median rule, Cyrus began rallying the tribes of Persia to rebel against Astyages in 550 B.C. (Herodotus 46-47; Pfeiffer 501). Astyages ignorantly placed Harpagus as the general of the Median army. As the battle commenced, Herodotus relates, "When the Medes marched against the Persians and began to do battle with them, some of the Medes who were not in on the conspiracy fought, others deserted to the Persians, and most fought badly on purpose and then ran away"! (Herodotus 47). Astyages was taken prisoner, thus ending his thirty-five year reign around 550 B.C. (Herodotus 47; Pfeiffer 501). "From this time forward, the Medes and Persians fought and served together as one unit under the brilliant leadership of Cyrus" (Whitcomb, *Darius* 70; cf. Dan. 6:8; Est. 10:2). This new force would emerge to dominate history for hundreds of years, and "From this time, all their customs, rites, and laws, became amalgamated" (Barnes).

When Cyrus perceived that his newly combined territories were secure and stable, he began expanding his sphere of rule. He focused his attention to the northwest, to a very wealthy

nation called Lydia. Lydia's ruler was Croesus, "whose legendary wealth was the result of shrewd control of overland trade between Asia and the Greek world" (Eerdmans 306). According to Herodotus, Croesus had instigated the war against Persia, to his nation's detriment (34). Lydia's capital of Sardis fell to Cyrus in 547 B.C., as well as a large portion of Asia Minor (Eerdmans 306). When Cyrus was about to burn Croesus alive, Cyrus reportedly had mercy on him, and the two men became friends (Herodotus 32-33).

Cyrus then turned his attention to Babylon, which theoretically should have been the most challenging endeavor of his life—after all, this was the capital of the Babylonian Empire, with towering, thick walls and twenty years of supplies stored up inside to endure the greatest of sieges (Ussher 116). However, because of God's hand in all of this, Babylon fell with ease, and Cyrus' army practically walked into Babylon without resistance. Although there had been some fighting outside the city walls, the Nabonidus Chronicle literally says that on the day Babylon was taken, Cyrus' army entered Babylon "without battle" (cf. Isa. 45:1-4).

Archaeological discoveries from the mid-sixth century B.C., such as the Nabonidus Chronicle and the Cyrus Cylinder, have shed light on Cyrus' conquest of Babylon, coinciding with the Biblical record of events. These discoveries chronicled both the achievements of Cyrus and insight into the character of Cyrus. The Nabonidus Chronicle is a clay tablet with four columns of cuneiform writings on its two sides. The Cyrus Cylinder is a baked clay cylinder about nine inches long, containing the record of Cyrus' capture of Babylon without battle, his release of captives to their own nations, and his restoration of treasures to the native peoples (Thompson 174).

The Nabonidus Chronicle records that Nabonidus, the last king of the Babylonian Empire, had a habit of not returning to Babylon for the New Year procession of the gods. He left the capital city, living in a northern Arabia town called Teima for ten years, and the Chronicle reveals that his eldest son (Belshazzar) held "the kingship" in Babylon during that time (Myers 459; Thompson 168). This is surely why the Book of Daniel records Belshazzar as being the last king of Babylon (Dan. 5:30). There was much resentment towards Nabonidus in Babylon because of his absence. Without his presence, the procession of the gods could not be properly held, and every year the Babylonians grew more discontent (Thompson 168).

With Babylon having thick walls 300 feet high, Cyrus chose to take Babylon through ingenuity rather than might. By diverting the river flowing into Babylon and allowing his men to enter the city by the riverbed, he caught Babylon by surprise as they were celebrating their false gods (Herodotus 65; cf. Dan. 5). The Nabonidus Chronicle reveals that Cyrus' men, led by Ugbaru, took the city without battle. "The impregnable walls of Babylon were of no help to Nabonidus, for his capital city surrendered without a fight" (Pfeiffer 473). Nabonidus' son, Belshazzar, was apparently slain that very night, and Nabonidus would be taken prisoner (Dan. 5:30; cf. 2 Kin. 25:7). Seventeen days later Cyrus and his governor, Gubaru, officially entered the city (Whitcomb, *Darius* 23).

When Cyrus arrived, he was greeted with joy as a liberator. The Babylonians believed that the god Marduk had lead Cyrus peacefully into the city because Marduk was not pleased with rulers like Nabonidus who were unfaithful. However, the Jews knew that Jehovah was behind all of this! It was time for the prophecies to be fulfilled—the throne of Babylon would be taken and the rulers of Babylon would mourn:

Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate...Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms (Isa. 47:1, 5).

Ceasing Captivity

Cyrus' rapid rise to power and relative ease of conquest happened because God was going before Cyrus and "opening the gates" for him to conquer these kingdoms:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel (Isa. 45:1-3).

God had foretold Babylon's fall to the Medes and Persians hundreds of years prior to these events: "...Go up, O Elam [Persia, JPH]: besiege, O Media..." (Isa. 21:2). "The burden of Babylon...Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them..." (Isa. 13:1, 17). Barnes noted the following about Isaiah specifically mentioning the Medes:

The Medes - This is one of the places in which the prophet specified, "by name," the instrument of the wrath of God...In looking at this prophecy, therefore, we are to bear in mind:

- (1) the fact that, when it was uttered, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria;
- (2) that a long time was yet to elapse before it would become an independent kingdom;
- (3) that it was yet to secure its independence by the aid of that very Babylon which it would finally destroy;
- (4) that no human foresight could predict these revolutions, and that every circumstance conspired to render this event improbable.

The great strength and resources of Babylon; the fact that Media was a dependent province, and that such great revolutions must occur before this prophecy could be fulfilled, render this one of the most striking and remarkable predictions in the sacred volume.

Isaiah got even more specific when he named the very leader who would bring all of this to pass! Thus saith the Lord through Isaiah:

That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith

to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else (Isa. 44:26-28; 45:1-6).

Well before the captivity and destruction of Jerusalem even took place, Isaiah prophesied that someone named "Cyrus" would cause Jerusalem to be inhabited again, the city would be rebuilt, and the foundation of the temple would be laid. Isaiah received this revelation "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (740-701 B.C.; Isa. 1:1). The temple was not destroyed until 586 B.C., and Cyrus' decree would not occur for some fifty years after that! The kings following Isaiah's time were:

(1) Manasseh (55 years) II Kings 18:1-20; 20:11; 20:21; 21:18; II Chron. 32:33; 33:20.

(2) Josiah (31 years) II Kings 21:24; 23:20.

(3) Jehoahaz (3 months) II Kings 23:30-33; II Chron. 36:5-8.

(4) Jehoiakim (11 years) II Kings 23:34; 24:7; II Chron. 36: 5-8.

(5) Jehoiachin (3 months) II Kings 24:6-12; II Chron. 36:8-9.

(6) Zedekiah (11 years) II Kings 24:13; 25:29.

Thus a minimum of 160 years elapsed from the close of Isaiah's ministry to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 or 536 B.C. The predictive element of Isaiah's prophecy is remarkable (Turner, *Survey* 23).

According to the historian Josephus, Cyrus was actually shown the words of Isaiah's prophecy, in which Jehovah referred to Cyrus by name as His "shepherd": "Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written" (XI:I.2). "The Lord honours him with the title and character of his 'shepherd', who was to lead his flock, the people of Israel, out of the Babylonish captivity, and guide them into their own land. It is very usual, both in sacred and profane writings, for kings to be called shepherds" (Gill).

The restoration of the Jews had not only been foretold by Isaiah, but later God revealed more details through men like Ezekiel (Eze. 37), Daniel (Dan. 2; 5), and Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12;

29:10; 51:11). Jeremiah had foretold that the captivity of God’s people in Babylon would last seventy years (25:11-12; 29:10), and through Cyrus, this prophecy was about to be fulfilled!

Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years of captivity is of great significance. In the Law, God had warned the people that, if they were disobedient, they would be taken captive and their land would be desolate. The land would enjoy its sabbaths during this time, making up for the period of Israel's rebellion (Lev. 26:34, 35). The chronicler wove Jeremiah's seventy years together with this idea of sabbath rest in 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21. The chronicler went on to say that God stirred up Cyrus to send the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild His temple—in fulfillment of His word to Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:22, 23). The ending of 2 Chronicles is parallel to the beginning of the Book of Ezra, which also references Jeremiah's prophecy and God's stirring of the king's spirit (Ezra 1:1-4). Cyrus conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and issued his decree for the Jews to return in 538 B.C....This return likely occurred in 536 B.C., but some think it took place the same year as the decree...If 536 B.C. is correct, then 'seventy' is an exact number...If 538 B.C. is correct, then 'seventy' is a round number (Myers 304).

Keil and Delitzsch wrote that Jeremiah’s prophecy began with “...the year 606 b.c.; hence the seventy years terminate in 536 b.c., the first year of the sole rule of Cyrus over the Babylonian empire.” Gill commented that the first year of Cyrus and Darius is assigned different dates by different scholars: “Bishop Usher (z) and Mr. Whiston (a)...[place it] in the year of the world 3467 A.M. and 537 B.C. Dean Prideaux (b) places it in the year 538; and Mr. Bedford (c) in the year 536.”³ Clayton Winters gave the following dates:

EVENT	DATE
Cyrus issued the decree of return (Ezr. 1:2-4)	538 B.C.
Reconstruction of the temple began (Ezr. 3:8)	536 B.C.
Opposition to the temple project (Ezr. 4:6)	530 B.C.
Decree issued to stop the temple construction (Ezr. 4:7-23)	522 B.C.
Work on the temple resumed (Ezr. 4:24 ; 6:3-12)	519 B.C.
The temple completed (Ezr. 6:15)	515 B.C.
Ezra began his work in Jerusalem (Ezr. 7:8,9)	458 B.C.
Ezra’s work completed (Ezr. 10:17)	457 B.C.
Nehemiah’s return to rebuild (Neh. 2:5ff)	445 B.C.

Although Cyrus fulfilled God’s will in his decree for the Jews to return and rebuild, after the decree he seemed to detach himself from such matters. When the Samaritans opposed the

rebuilding of the temple, there is no evidence from Ezra that Cyrus made any effort on behalf of the Jews to help them complete their task:

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia [9 years], even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem (Ezra 4:4-6; cf. 6:1-12; Turner, *Daniel* 308).

The truth is that although Cyrus was an important person in God's Plan, Cyrus was not fully dedicated to serving and worshiping the one true God. Ancient historical writings and archaeological discoveries have made that clear.

...though this Cyrus was a great humanitarian, he was no worshiper of Jehovah as the one and only God. Cyrus was originally a worshiper of Marduk. Anyway, Cyrus believed that every man had a right to worship the god of his choice; and thus he allowed all captive peoples to return to their homelands, and he allowed them to carry their gods with them (Turner, *Daniel* 307).

There is more inspired Text regarding Cyrus the Great in books like Isaiah and Ezra than Daniel, but Cyrus is mentioned by name three times in the Book of Daniel: "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" (1:21); "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (6:28); and "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision" (10:1).

...allowing that Daniel was seventeen years of age when he was carried captive to Babylon in 605 BC, he would have been a minimum of 82 to 84 years of age when Cyrus entered Babylon as the great Persian ruler. The date was October 29, 539 BC. Under Cyrus, Darius ruled as governor. In time Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, ruled as co-regent, and Cyrus himself held the title "King of the Lands." In 530 BC Cyrus was slain in battle in the northeast territory, and Cambyses became king.

In short, Cyrus' reign after he reached Babylon was a period of nine years; during that nine year period, Daniel prospered. He was some 91 to 92 years of age at the end of the reign of Cyrus (Turner, *Daniel* 205).

Pfeiffer noted the following about Cyrus' reign:

Cyrus proved to be a generous conqueror. Although he did not hesitate to plunder the wealth of Ecbatana, the Median capital, the city itself was spared and became one of the capitals of the Medo-Persian Empire. Many of the Median

officials were kept at their posts. This policy of clemency was new in the politics of the Near East, but it was to characterize the reign of Cyrus.

With the conquest of Media, Cyrus fell heir to Median claims in Assyria, Mesopotamia, Syria, Armenia, and Cappadocia. Some of these claims conflicted with those of Babylon, and we read no more of an alliance between Babylon and Cyrus. Beside the Medo-Persian Empire there were now three great powers—Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt. The first two of these were subdued by Cyrus himself. His son Cambyses was to conquer the third (501).

Dan Cates wrote:

By the time his reign ended, Cyrus had survived numerous attempts on his life, had united Media and Persia, and had defeated the Lydians and the Babylonians and the Egyptians. More important than these accomplishments is the fact that he fulfilled prophecy, being the Lord's shepherd when he released the Jewish captives from Babylonian captivity.

Cyrus the Great was truly a remarkable leader, and he is especially interesting to Bible students, with him specifically named by God even before his birth and fulfilling such powerful and uplifting prophecies. Consequently, Cyrus tends to get more of the "historical spotlight" than Darius the Mede, but one actually reads more about Darius in the Book of Daniel than he reads about Cyrus the Great (cf. 6:1-28).

DARIUS THE MEDE

The Book of Daniel mentions a "Darius" in several passages (Dan. 5:31; 6:1-28; 9:1; 11:1), and there are also references to a "Darius" in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah (Ezra 4, 5, 6; Neh. 12:22; Hag. 1, 2; Zec. 1, 7). Are these all references to the same person, or to different people? Various rulers of the same nations throughout history often wore the same names or titles. Titles or names such as Pharaoh, Antiochus, Ptolemy, or Caesar were passed down and worn by many men—not just one. One should not make the mistake of assuming that "Darius" always refers to the same person, anymore than he would assume that there was only one person called Pharaoh or Caesar. Even Cyrus the Great was actually Cyrus II.

The Darius of Daniel 5:31 and 6:1-28

Daniel chapter five records the account of the hand writing on the wall, declaring the end of the Babylonians' reign: "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan. 5:25-28).

Daniel himself had shown Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the dream of the great image—with "his breast and his arms of silver," thus representing the Medo-Persian Empire arising after the fall of the Babylonian Empire (cf. Dan. 2:32, 39). Daniel chapter five makes it clear that God's prophecies were fulfilled—the Medes did take Babylon: "In that night was

Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old” (Dan. 5:30-31). Remember, however, that the writing on the wall foretold that the kingdom would be both “divided” and “given to the Medes and Persians”—not just the Medes. Daniel 6:28 sheds more light on this: “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Dan. 6:28). Therefore the phrase “given to the Medes and Persians” is a reference to the kingdom of Babylon being given to Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. The Babylonian Empire was partitioned, or “divided,” just as the hand had written, and this Darius the Mede was over the division containing the area of Babylon as a governor under Cyrus.

There is no question about the identity of Cyrus the Persian, but who is this Darius the Mede? He could not have been Darius I Hystaspes the Great, who later ruled over the entire Persian Empire (521-486 B.C.; cf. Waldron 61). Some believe Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great were the same person, but Daniel 6:28 would effectively eliminate that possibility because of the two rulers being listed separately. Josephus believed that the Darius of Daniel 5:31 was the same person as in 6:1, a “kinsman” of Cyrus:

...when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsman Cyrus, had put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians, he was sixty-two years old. He was the son of Astyages, and had another name among the Greeks. Moreover, he took Daniel the prophet and carried him with him into Media, and honoured him very greatly, and kept him with him: for he was one of the three presidents whom he set over his three hundred and sixty provinces... (X:XI.4).

Gill maintained that all references to Darius in the Book of Daniel were referring to “Cyaxares the son of Astyages, and uncle of Cyrus; he is called the Median, to distinguish him from another Darius the Persian, that came after, Ezra 4:5.” Gill wrote, “Cyrus was the son-in-law of Darius, and inherited the kingdom after him; which is true, for he married the daughter of Cyaxares or Darius who was his uncle.” The aforementioned conclusions seem to rely heavily upon the writings of Xenophon (ca. 434-355 B.C.). Xenophon wrote in a period relatively near the time of Cyrus the Great, and his words do shed light on many aspects of life during the days of Cyrus; however, Xenophon’s writings were not intended to be a meticulously accurate record of the life and exploits of Cyrus, but rather more of a historical novel or historical romance (Whitcomb, *Darius* 22, 75).

Digging for Darius

This description “Darius the Mede” is not found in historical writings outside the Biblical account, but an archaeological discovery of the nineteenth century called The Nabonidus Chronicle sheds light on who was in charge when Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians.

The Nabonidus Chronicle revealed that one named Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, entered Babylon together with the army of Cyrus the Persian. These ancient writings also revealed that Ugbaru died less than one month later (Whitcomb, *Darius* 17). The Nabonidus Chronicle also reveals that a different man named *Gubaru* was described as Cyrus’ governor and was given power by Cyrus to install sub-governors in Babylon: “Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon. Gubaru, his governor, installed (sub-)governors in Babylon” (Whitcomb, *Darius* 17).

Compare this information with Daniel 6:1: "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom." Combining information from the Nabonidus Chronicle with Daniel 6:1, the Darius of Daniel 6:1 can rather confidently be identified with Gubaru; but questions remain unanswered. Who is this man named Ugbaru who entered Babylon with the army of Cyrus and died three weeks later? Furthermore, is the Darius of Daniel 5:31 a reference to Ugbaru, or Gubaru?

William Shea maintains that Ugbaru and Gubaru are simply different spellings for the same name (9). He also believes that all references to Darius in the Book of Daniel could be referring to Ugbaru, stating that Ugbaru's three weeks over Babylon would have been enough time to make this a feasible explanation (17-18).⁴

Whitcomb believed that all references to Darius in the Book of Daniel were to Gubaru, and he gives more details about Ugbaru and Gubaru:

Until the end of the nineteenth century, attempts were made to identify Darius the Mede with various persons mentioned in the writings of the Greek historians. Since Herodotus states (I, 109) that Astyages, the last Median king, had no son, many scholars tried to identify him with Darius the Mede. The most popular view was that Darius the Mede should be identified with the Cyaxares whom Xenophon represented as the son of Astyages and the last king of Media (I, 5:2). Ignorance of the historical identification of Belshazzar had even led some to speculate that Darius the Mede was Neriglissar or Nabonidus.

But the discovery of cuneiform historical texts in the late nineteenth century, which gave us our first accurate [extra-Biblical, JPH] information concerning the Neo-Babylonian period, dealt a death blow to these older hypotheses. It was discovered that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus; the Cyaxares whom Xenophon postulated as the son of Astyages was a mere figment of the imagination; and Astyages could have had no vital connection with Babylon. To the writer's knowledge, there are no contemporary advocates of these identifications.

After the publication of the Nabonidus Chronicle in 1880, many able scholars sought to identify Darius the Mede with the "Gobryas" of that text and with the Gobryas of Xenophon and Herodotus...But the failure to see that the so-called "Gobryas" of the Nabonidus Chronicle was actually two different persons, Ugbaru and Gubaru, because of an inaccurate translation by Pinches, left certain points in confusion. It was not understood, until Sidney Smith's translation was published in 1924, that Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutium, died shortly after the Fall of Babylon. Thus, he could not have been the same person as the Gubaru whose name appears in contract tablets for fourteen years after 539 B.C. Once the myth of the Nabonidus Chronicle "Gobryas" was dispelled, it became possible for the first time to postulate that Darius the Mede was Gubaru the Governor of Babylon rather than Ugbaru the Governor of Gutium (43-44).

One argument for Whitcomb's view is that Daniel 5:31 does not say exactly *when* Darius took the kingdom (or "received the kingdom," ASV). Could this be referring to Cyrus officially putting Gubaru over the kingdom of Babylon just seventeen days later? (Whitcomb, *Darius* 17,

23). If Xenophon's *Assyrian "Gobryas"* was an accurate description of Ugbaru, then Whitcomb maintains that Ugbaru cannot be the Darius the *Mede* of the Book of Daniel.

Xenophon (c. 434-355) spoke of a 'Gobryas' who was an Assyrian (i.e., Babylonian) prince that revolted to Cyrus with the district he governed (Cyropaedia, IV:6:1-2). Xenophon did not intend his *Cyropaedia* to be an accurate history of the career of Cyrus, but only an historical novel. Nevertheless, his 'Gobryas' must have been a reflection of some historical personage. Could it have been Darius the *Mede*? Hardly so, if Xenophon depicts his 'Gobryas' as an *Assyrian* prince who brought his province over to Cyrus. But it is possible that Xenophon was alluding to Ugbaru, the Governor of Gutium and conqueror of Babylon...

The great prominence given to Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel is more readily explained if we assume his identification with a Gubaru whose reign extended not only over a period of three weeks, or even a year, but of *fourteen years*" (539-525 B.C.)...

...in the Nabonidus Chronicle we learn that...[Gubaru's] *name was a final warning to criminals*...It is highly significant that neither Cyrus nor Cambyses are mentioned in any cuneiform texts as being the final and supreme authorities in Babylonia against who crimes would be committed. Only Gubaru held such a preeminent legal position in the vast and populous areas of Babylonia, Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine (Whitcomb, *Darius 22-23*; emphasis his).

Brother Rex Turner, Sr. maintained that the Darius of Daniel 5:31 was Ugbaru, who died shortly after receiving the kingdom from Cyrus, and that the Darius of Daniel 6:1 was Gubaru, both of whom served under Cyrus the Great. Regarding the Darius of Daniel 6:1, brother Turner wrote:

Now, who was this Darius? Was he the "Darius the Mede" of chapter 5:31? The answer is "No!"...Darius of 5:31 was Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium who, under Cyrus the Persian, entered Babylon on the 16th day of Tishri [October 12] 539 BC, and was slain in battle on the 11th of Arahshamnu [November 6] of the same year, whereas the Darius of Daniel 6:1 was Gubaru. After the fall of Babylon under Ugbaru, the governor of Babylon, this Darius of Daniel 6:1 was installed as governor by the same conquering Cyrus. The year was *ca.* 538 BC (*Daniel* 195-196).

With Ugbaru named as the governor of Gutium, one wonders if Gutium could have been in the land of the Medes. If so, this would lend credence to brother Turner's position that Ugbaru was Darius the Mede of Daniel 5:31. Although there are disagreements about the location of Gutium, there is evidence to support the fact that Gutium was in the territory of the Medes.

The terms Gutium and Gutians continued to be used in texts from northern and southern Mesopotamia during the second and first millennia. Often they refer to

a region or people from the Zagros mountains [where Anshan is; the area of Iran, JPH]...the term Gutian has no value as indication of a specific people and merely suggests uncivilized people from the Zagros. Any hostile group could be called Gutian. The Assyrian royal annals use the word Gutians when they refer to Iranian populations otherwise known as the Mannaeans or the Medes...In the fifteenth century the Babylonian king Agum-kakrime calls them “a barbarous people”...The seventh-century Assyrian king Assurbanipal accuses Gutians of assisting the rebellious Babylonians..., while the sixth century Babylonian king Nabonidus stated that they destroyed the temple at Sippar (Van De Mieroop).

“Under Assurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III the Assyrian kings extended their rule into the Zagros. In the process they came into contact with small, ethnically diverse tribes, including the Medes” (Eerdmans 877). Based on this information, inhabitants of Gutium, although ruled by another nation such as Assyria or Babylon, could still consider themselves Medes. Therefore, Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, even though Xenophon described him as an Assyrian, could perhaps have been called a Mede.

According to the Cylinder...Cyrus achieved his first victories, under the protection of Marduk, over “the country of Gutium and over all the troops of Manda [Medes].” This Ugbaru is probably the Gobryas who, according to Xenophon, left the Babylonian side and switched to Cyrus. He commanded a vast region (*Cyr.* IV.6.1-11) at whose frontiers the Neo-Babylonian territory began (V.3.1). It was from the territory of Gobryas that Cyrus launched the attack on Babylon (V.2.1-21); it was Gobryas who guided Cyrus's army (V.2.22); he also was the one who took Babylon (VII.5.26-30). As fictionalized as it is, Xenophon's tale seems nonetheless to be based on oral transmission of Ugbaru's story. Ugbaru must have been the Babylonian governor of a territory situated in the foothills of the Diyala⁵ that, some years before 540, had seceded and was taking orders from Cyrus (Briant 41-42).

The following is a comparison of Ugbaru and Gubaru:

UGBARU	GUBARU
Initially translated as “Gobryas” from Nab. Chr.	Initially translated as “Gobryas” from Nab. Chr.
Governor of Gutium, possibly a territory of the Medes (Nab. Chr.; Cyrus Cyl.; Van De Mieroop; Briant)	Cyrus’ governor who appointed sub-governors in Babylon (Nab. Chr.; cf. Dan. 6:1)
Possibly Xenophon’s “Gobryas” of “Assyrian” birth ruling a kingdom in the area of the Medes (IV:6:1-2; cf. Dan. 5:31)	Possibly a Mede (Whitcomb, <i>Darius</i> 40; Dan. 6:1-2).
Initially entered Babylon with the army of Cyrus “without battle” (Nab. Chr.;	Entered Babylon (along with Cyrus) as Cyrus’ governor 17 days after Ugbaru took

Whitcomb, <i>Darius</i> 17)	Babylon (Nab. Chr.)
Died 3 weeks after entering Babylon (Nab. Chr.)	Ruled over area of Babylon for at least 14 years (Nab. Chr.; Whitcomb, <i>Darius</i> 22-23)

No matter the identity of the Darius of Daniel 6:1, this Darius elevated himself above God when he signed a blasphemous decree:

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree (Dan. 6:7-9).

Although Darius lamented his foolish decree, he could not annul or change it, because the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered—not even by the one who made the decree! “Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed” (Dan. 6:15; cf. 6:8, 12). Darius was amazed by the power of God to deliver Daniel from the lion’s den, and he sought to glorify the true living “God of Daniel.” The same Darius who made the blasphemous decree would then make a quite different decree:

I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (Dan. 6:26-27).

The Darius of Daniel 9:1

Brother Turner believed that Daniel 9:1 is a reference to yet another Darius, who was neither the Darius of Daniel 5:31 nor of 6:1-28 (*Daniel* 196). Daniel wrote, “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:1-2).

Brother Turner believed that the events of Daniel chapter 9 took place later in time, during the reign of Darius I Hystaspes the Great (521-486 B.C.), who ruled when the rebuilding of the temple was finally completed (515 B.C.).

Generally, the commentators have held that two of the references to a "Darius"- that is, chapters 6:1 and 9:1-are references to the same person; namely Gubaru,

or Darius of the seed of the Medes, who governed Babylon under Cyrus the Persian, but there was a third Darius who figured prominently in the history of the Medes and Persians, and may he have been that third Darius? (298).

Further, in contemplation of Darius' activities and accomplishments, who can really doubt that the Darius of Daniel 9:1 was the Darius I Hystaspes of 521 BC? If the evidence be granted, then the ninth chapter of Daniel was the last revelation which Daniel received (301).

Gill was strongly opposed to the view that this Darius could be Darius I Hystaspes:

This is the same with Darius the Median, that took the kingdom after the death of Belshazzar; so called, to distinguish him from Darius the Persian; and yet Porphyry has the gall to assert that this was Darius the Persian, under whom the temple was built, that Daniel might appear to live later than he did: Ahasuerus, whose son he was, is not he that was the husband of Esther, and was many years later than this; but the same with Astyages king of the Medes, and who is called Ahasuerus, in the Apocrypha:

'But before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineve, which was taken by Nabuchodonosor and Assuerus: and before his death he rejoiced over Nineve.'
(Tobit 14:15)

the father of Cyaxares, the same with this Darius,...was uncle to Cyrus that conquered Babylon.

Whitcomb argued that the references to Darius in Daniel 9:1 and throughout the Book of Daniel (5:31, 6:1-28, 9:1, and 11:1) are all referring to Gubaru (*Daniel* 79-81, 120, 144; *Darius* 7-8, 24, 40, 44; cf. Daugherty 116-117, 172, 206). Whitcomb wrote, "There are strong reasons for believing that Gubaru could have been given the honorific name of Darius upon being installed as vice-king in Babylon. We have further shown that Gubaru could very well have been the son of Ahasuerus, and that he also could have been a Mede" (*Darius* 40). One arguing Whitcomb's position would emphasize that this Darius of Daniel 9:1 "was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans," thus maintaining that this was a reference to Cyrus' appointing Gubaru as ruler over Babylon (cf. "received the kingdom," Dan. 5:31 ASV).

Myers, Pryor, and Rehtin wrote, "In light of inconclusive evidence, we cannot be too specific about Darius' identity. Nevertheless, we should not conclude that (1) such a person never existed; (2) Daniel, therefore, is unreliable; or (3) the author was ignorant of contemporary history" (184).

The Darius of Daniel 11:1

Based on the verse following Daniel 11:1, this Darius seems to be the same Darius the Mede of Daniel 6:1 (most likely Gubaru). "There can be no question but that this rich king was Xerxes. Thus an identification of those kings, counting backward from Xerxes, would be: (5) Xerxes; (4) Darius Hystaspes; (3) Smerdis; (2) Cambyses; and (1) Darius/Cyrus" (Turner, *Daniel* 216).

The Darius of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah

As previously mentioned, The Book of Daniel mentions a “Darius” in several passages (Dan. 5:31; 6:1-28; 9:1; 11:1), and there are references to a “Darius” in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah (Ezra 4, 5, 6; Neh. 12:22; Hag. 1, 2; Zec. 1, 7). Not everyone agrees on the identity of these men, either. For example, Clayton Winters believed the Darius of Ezra 4:5 was Darius I Hystaspes the Great (19), while Turner believed this was Cambyses II, son of Cyrus II (*Daniel* 308). Scholars generally agree that the Darius of Ezra 5:5-6:12 and the Darius of Haggai and Zechariah’s writings were all references to Darius I Hystaspes the Great (Turner, *Daniel* 309; cf. Cates, Jamieson, et al.). Winters and other commentators seem to agree that the Darius of Nehemiah 12:22 was “probably Darius II, 423-404 B.C.” (Winters 140; cf. Keil). Even though there are disagreements about the identity of Darius, the contributions of the Medes and Persians to the Creator’s cause can surely be agreed upon by all.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CREATOR’S CAUSE

Retribution

The Babylonian Empire was one of the most powerful empires of history, and the city of Babylon was easily one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, but such greatness in the eyes of the world has the tendency to stir up deadly pride: “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30; cf. Pro. 16:18; Acts 12:21-23). Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by God (Dan. 4:31-33), but it was not yet time for the empire to fall. The fall would happen a few years later during the days of Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar: “And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 5:25-28; cf. 2:31ff). God would bring an end to the Babylonian Empire through Cyrus the Great, and Cyrus and his governors would “divide” the empire as they saw fit (6:1ff).

Although the Babylonians were in a sense doing God’s will by punishing God’s impenitent people (Hab. 1:6ff; 2 Chr. 36:16-17), the Babylonians were also wicked idolaters themselves and deserved punishment: “Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria” (Jer. 50:18; cf. 25:12-13; 50:1-46; 51:1-64; Isa. 13:1-22; 14:1ff; 21:1ff; 43:14; 47:1ff; 48:14-22; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32, et al.).

It is noteworthy that one reason why God would punish the Babylonians was because they had destroyed His temple: “Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple” (Jer. 51:11).⁶

...the king of the Chaldees...slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age...And all the vessels of the house of God, great and

small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof (2 Chron. 36:17-19).

Now God’s temple would be rebuilt under a new world empire, and the retribution God had placed upon His people through captivity would be taken away. God’s people would no longer practice idolatry, having learned their lesson through God’s wrath upon them (Eze. 16:41; 37:21-23). Several years after Cyrus’ death, the city of Babylon would be attacked again by Darius I Hystaspes the Great because of a revolt. The city fell to him and was greatly damaged near the same time the Jews were celebrating the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (515 B.C.; Turner, *Survey* 32). Babylon never again rose to the same splendor. Although Alexander the Great attempted to restore the city, he was murdered during the undertaking (ISBE).

Rebuilding

Through Cyrus’ decree, God’s people were given permission and resources to rebuild Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-8). Zerubbabel was commissioned to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:8, 11; 2:2; 3:8; 5:14-16). Although the work was delayed, the temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. during the reign of the Persian king Darius I Hystaspes the Great, who ruled from 521-486 B.C. (Cates; cf. Ezra 5; 6:1-15; Hag. 1:1; Zec. 1:1). Later, Nehemiah was commissioned to rebuild the walls and restore the city of Jerusalem itself under the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes I Longimanus (444 B.C.; cf. Neh. 2:5-8).

THE THREE RETURNS FROM CAPTIVITY			
DATE	LEADER	PURPOSE	TEXT
536 B.C.	Zerubbabel	Rebuild temple -- Work delayed until 519, finished in 515	Ezra 1 – 6 Haggai Zechariah
Time of Esther (between 486 and 458 B.C., between Ezra 6 and 7)			
458 B.C.	Ezra	Restore the Law	Ezra 7ff Nehemiah 8ff
445 B.C.	Nehemiah	Rebuild the walls – Took 52 days (6:15)	Nehemiah

Restoration

When the time was right for God’s people to return home (Jer. 25:11-12), God raised up Cyrus to do His will. God’s people could finally be restored to their homeland through the decree of Cyrus. Although not all of God’s people returned to the promised land upon Cyrus’ decree (Isa. 10:22), all twelve tribes scattered throughout the nations had the opportunity to return at this point (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Eze. 11:17; 37). However, those from the northern

kingdom who returned would not be allowed to return as a separate kingdom (Thomas 64; cf. Eze. 37:15-23).

Not only were the people restored to the land, but Ezra was also commissioned to restore the law:

This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him...For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:6, 9-10).

Respect for Law

The irrevocable law of the Medes and Persians helped the civilized world develop a respect for authority (cf. Dan. 6:8, 12, 15; Est. 1:19). This law “which altereth not” helped pave the way for a respect of God’s authority in His immutable, unchanging, everlasting Word: “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psa. 89:34; cf. Num. 23:19; Psa. 19:7; Isa. 40:8; Mat. 24:35; Heb. 6:17-18; 1 Pet. 1:25; Rev. 22:18-19, et al.). This respect for law during the time of the Medes and Persians would continue even until the time of the Romans, when the Messiah would enter the world (cf. Dan. 2:44). It would be during that period that God’s Word would be preached throughout the world—a new Law from the King of kings to which all men would be commanded to submit (Mat. 28:18-20). It was because of a respect for law that Paul was able to take the Gospel all the way to the very palace of Caesar himself in Rome! (Acts 9:15; 25:11-12; Phil. 1:13; 4:22).

Each of the world empires leading up to the time of Christ contributed their share to help prepare the world for the Messiah. Brother Turner noted the following:

Babylon contributed the synagogue...Medo-Persia contributed law and order...Greece contributed the vehicle of a high universal language...Rome contributed all of the above, and in addition Rome contributed and enforced peace such as the world had never known, a high standard of citizenship, good roads, and travel (Turner, *Survey* 1).

After these contributions were given to the world through the providence of God, “the fulness of the time was come,” and the Savior was sent (Gal. 4:4).

CONCLUSION

The student of history should acknowledge that “there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). Both history and the Scriptures reveal that rulers like those of Medo-Persia were put into power by God to accomplish His purposes. Therefore it behooves the Bible student to be familiar with such men who were key figures in

fulfilling the promises of God. The entire world should be thankful for the contributions towards man's eternal benefit, which God brought about providentially through rulers such as these.

ENDNOTES

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise specified.

² Cyrus II the Great would later become King of Anshan in 559 B.C.

³ Gill gave the following citations: "(z) *Annales Vet. Test. A. M.* 3467. (a) *Chronological Tables*, cent. 10. (b) *Connexion, &c.* part 1. p. 125, 128. (c) *Scripture Chronology*, p. 711."

⁴ Shea believes "King Ugbaru" had a queen, and both he and his queen were murdered by poisoning. He bases this on a record in the Nabonidus Chronicle of both Ugbaru and a queen dying (12-13).

⁵ The Diyala is a river in the Zagros Mountains of Iran called the Gyndes by Herodotus.

⁶ Although Babylon was not utterly destroyed by Cyrus, this was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's prophecy to humble the Babylonians and eventually bring Babylon to desolation. This process would actually be carried out by "many kings...from the coasts of the earth" (Jer. 50:41; cf. Smith).

WORKS CITED

Barnes, Albert. Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible. e-Sword Software. Franklin, TN: Rick Meyers, 2000-2009.

Briant, Pierre. From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire. Translated by Peter T. Daniels. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002.

Cates, Daniel Frazier. World Empires and the Bible IV: Media, Persia, Phoenicia, Carthage. Cates Publications, 2012.

Daugherty, Emanuel B. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel. Bethlehem, WV: Emanuel B. Daugherty, 2006.

Durant, Will. The Story of Civilization: Part 1 - Our Oriental Heritage. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. "Cyrus." Ed. David Noel Freeman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Gill, John. John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible. e-Sword Software. Franklin, TN: Rick Meyers, 2000-2009.

-
- Herodotus. The Histories. Ed. Walter Blanco and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992.
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. "Babel; Babylon (1)." e-Sword Software. Franklin, TN: Rick Meyers, 2000-2009.
- Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible. e-Sword Software. Franklin, TN: Rick Meyers, 2000-2009.
- Josephus, Titus Flavius. Josephus: Complete Works. Translated by William Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1967.
- Keil, Karl Fredreich; Delitzsch, Franz. Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament. e-Sword Software. Franklin, TN: Rick Meyers, 2000-2009.
- Myers, Edward P.; Pryor, Neale T.; Rechten, David R. Truth for Today Commentary: Daniel. Ed. Eddie Cloer. Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2012.
- Olmstead, A. T. History of the Persian Empire. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948.
- Pfeiffer, Charles F. Old Testament History. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973.
- Shea, William H. Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede. 27 May 2013 <http://www.atsjats.org/publication_file.php?pub_id=285&journ>.
- Smith, James E. The Fall of Babylon: A Problem in Prophetic Interpretation. Florida Christian College. Vol. XVII—No. 1. Fall, 1970. pp. 3-23. 27 May 2013 <<http://www.dabar.org/semreview/fallbabyprob.html#55>>.
- Thomas, Leslie G. Studies in the Book of Daniel. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1987.
- Thompson, J. A. The Bible and Archaeology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.
- Turner, Rex A., Sr. Daniel: A Prophet of God. Montgomery, AL: Southern Christian University, 1993.
- . Survey of Ecclesiastical History. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Christian School of Religion. Nd.
- Ussher, James. The Annals of the World. Ed. Larry and Marion Pierce. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2003.
- Van De Mieroop, Marc. "Gutians." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. 27 May 2013 <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gutians>>.

Waldron, Bob and Sandra. A Remnant Shall Return. Athens, AL: Bob Waldron, 1996.

Whitcomb, John C. Darius the Mede. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973.

---. Everyman's Bible Commentary: Daniel. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

Wikipedia.org. "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World." 24 May 2013 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Wonders_of_the_Ancient_World>.

Winters, Clayton. Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications, 1991.

Xenophon. Cyropaedia – The Education of Cyrus. Translated by Henry Graham Dakyns. Ed. F. M. Stawell. Project Gutenberg Ebook #2085, 2011. 27 May 2013 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2085>>.