

108 THE ATTACK ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Introduction: Search the web for information on King Darius the Mede, a major character in the book of Daniel, and you will find him described as “historical fiction” or other ways to dismiss his existence. Before the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder Tablet in 1879, the last Median king was Cyaxares II, who was known to be identical with Darius the Mede. But King Cyaxares, along with King Darius in the book of Daniel, were cast aside as fabrications according to modern historiographers. The loss of Darius to history appears to be due to substandard scholarship and/or an anti-Bible agenda. The prophecies in Daniel are so plentiful and exact, adversaries of the inspiration of the Bible apparently welcome any “findings” that would discredit them. We will seek to show that Darius was the Hebrew throne name of Cyaxares, king of the Medes, and he was the supreme ruler at the time of the invasion of Babylon in 539 BC. Cyrus became king over the Medo-Persian Empire upon Cyaxares’ death, a year or two later. We have inserted (Darius) at times in this paper, to help the reader recognize more quickly the connection we are making between Cyaxares and Darius.

1. Median Kings—not to be confused with the later Persian kings named Darius, Xerxes, Ahasuerus.

625-585 BC Cyaxares I

585-547 BC Astyages=Xerxes=Ahasuerus

547-538 BC Cyaxares II=Darius, the Mede

2. The Cyrus Cylinder propaganda

The “Cyrus Cylinder”, a propaganda “history” commissioned by Cyrus sometime before his death, was discovered in 1879. This fabricated narrative was meant to elevate Cyrus as a populist supreme leader, a faithful servant of Marduk and a liberator of the people, in contrast to the negative reputation of the Medes. To facilitate his own status, Cyrus erased his uncle, the Median King Cyaxares (Darius) from existence and maintained Cyaxares’ father, the Median King Astyages, was subdued and his kingdom subordinated to the Persians. Herodotus, in his *The Histories*, promoted this story and even added that the Medes were made slaves to the Persians. Herodotus additionally asserted that Cyrus had a humble upbringing; however, Cyrus was the privileged son of the king of Persia. Herodotus is often called the “father of history”, while others call him the “father of lies”.

3. Be cunning, deceitful, a thief and a robber

Persian King Cambyses, Cyrus’ father, reportedly gave his son this advice: the man who proposes to overcome his enemies “must be designing and cunning, wily and deceitful, a thief and a robber” (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.6.27). Cyrus apparently took this advice to heart with his revisionist history, removing his uncle from even existing and relegating his grandfather and all the Medes to having to “bow in submission” to the Persians.

4. The identity of Darius and Cyaxares was common knowledge until the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder.

That Darius the Mede was identical to Cyaxares II was common knowledge to scholars and Bible commentary writers from Josephus to the 19th century. With the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder, irrational revisions began to take place. They discarded essential elements of Xenophon’s history, *Cyropaedia*, and other ancient writings that had documented Darius or Cyaxares. This is not credible scholarship. One can understand historical figures having been deleted from a chronology, but to claim that valid historians added key people to a narrative, including intricate details, is an entirely different matter and must be viewed skeptically. The deletion of Cyaxares and Darius from history reeks of an anti-Biblical bias enabling the widespread dismissal of the truly astonishing prophecies in Daniel, claiming they were second century inventions, i.e. written after the fact.

5. Historian Xenophon wrote *Cyropaedia*, revealing a Darius “look alike”—the Median King Cyaxares.

In contrast to Herodotus, historian Xenophon wrote in detail of the close, familial relationships of the royal families of the Medes and the Persians. The daughter of the Median King Astyages, who was the father of Cyaxares (Darius), was married to the King of Persia, Cambyses. She was the mother of Cyrus. Astyages had a strong affection for his grandson, young Cyrus, and Cyrus stayed with his royal grandfather at times. Astyages, along with Cyaxares (Darius) and the youthful Cyrus are said to have hunted together as well as conduct a small military operation together against some Chaldeans in Median territory. (*Cyropaedia* by Xenophon was written Re: 370 B.C.)

After the death of his father, King Cyaxares (Darius) became aware of a Babylonian threat and requested additional troops from Persia. Troops were sometimes shared among the Persians and Medes. Cyrus, about 27 years old, was now a trained commander and Cyaxares requested he lead the Persian forces. One can find humor in the ways Cyrus had to placate his egotistical uncle so that he would not become jealous of Cyrus’ success and popularity. Cyaxares (Darius) was prone to wide mood swings and was egotistical and vain besides. Cyrus made sure to include him in decision making and assured Cyaxares (Darius) of his importance by providing him with great honors and elaborate gifts.

During the capture of Babylon, the Medes were in the ascendency. When Cyrus prepared a palace for Cyaxares (Darius) in Babylon, after the cooperative take-over of the city, it seemed to assuage any fears the king of the Medes may have had regarding Cyrus's power and popularity. Because Cyaxares (Darius) had no legitimate male heir to the throne, when he gave his daughter to Cyrus in marriage, her dowry was the kingdom of Media. If you have ever wondered how two kingdoms, the Medes and the Persians, could cooperate to conquer the Chaldean Empire, Xenophon's narrative explains it well. In addition, though the story of a ruler who demanded the people worship only him for a month in Daniel 6 seems far fetched, it all makes sense when one knows the erratic, seemingly bipolar behavior of the King of the Medes in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

6. Similarities of Cyaxares II in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* with Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel:

(Adapted, with permission and approval, from Young, *Xenophon's Cyaxares: Uncle of Cyrus, Friend of Daniel*)

A. Monarchs

Cyaxares: King of the Medes (Cyr. 4.5.8).

Darius: King of the Medes (Dan. 5:31).

B. Timing

Cyaxares: A contemporary of Cyrus the Great—his uncle (Cyr. 8.5.17).

Darius: A contemporary of Cyrus the Great (Dan 6:28).

C. Authority over the Persians around 539 BC

Cyaxares: Had authority over the Persians as late as shortly after the capture of Babylon in 539 BC (Cyr.8.5.17).

Darius: Had authority over the Persians shortly after the capture of Babylon in 539 BC, as evidenced by his decree of Dan 6:6–9: Only the supreme ruler could make such a decree.

D. Died shortly after 539 BC

Cyaxares: Died within two years after the capture of Babylon in 539 BC. Succeeded by Cyrus (Cyr. 8.6.22).

Darius: Died not long after the capture of Babylon in 539 BC. Succeeded by Cyrus (Dan10:1, 11:1).

E. Two different names implied or likely

Cyaxares: Only one name given, although Josephus said that Darius "was called by another name among the Greeks" (*Ant.* 10.11.4).

Darius: Only one name given, although separate throne names were often used in ancient times (Dan 5:31).

F. Impetuous, extreme behavior

Cyaxares: A "reputation for being violent and unreasonable" (Cyr. 4.5.9).

Darius: Unreasonable with disproportionate anger (Dan 6:24).

G. Craved honor, praise, prestige

Cyaxares: Egotistical and vain. He could change his course of action if offered something that would bring him greater praise and wealth (Cyr.4.5.51–53; 5.5.1–2, 38–40; 8.5.17).

Darius: Egotistical and vain. His counselors recognized this, persuading him to issue an edict that would make him the focus of everyone's prayers (Dan 6:6–9).

H. Why would Xenophon and Daniel make up a character with so many similarities? There is no evidence that Xenophon knew the book of Daniel.

Cyaxares: The current consensus among conventional historians is that he did not exist. However, no adequate motive is given for why Xenophon created this detailed imaginary figure.

Darius: Current consensus among non-conservative Bible critics is that Darius did not exist. However, no adequate motive is given for why the author of Daniel would create him.

Conclusion: There is no reason to doubt the identity of Cyaxares II and Darius the Mede. They were the same person. The lesson from this study is that it appears we are justified in viewing with skepticism any historical research when it contradicts the Bible. The amazing prophecies of Daniel were indeed prophetic and history reports their accuracy.

For a more thorough (and better) treatment of this topic, please see:

"How Darius the Mede was Deleted from History and Who Did It" by Rodger C. Young.

"Xenophon's Cyaxares: Uncle of Cyrus, Friend of Daniel" by Rodger C. Young.

Rodger C. Young's website: rcyoung.org