

Lesson 14

Daniel 6:1-3

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

The "kingdom" in verse 1 over which Darius ruled was the old Chaldean kingdom that Cyrus had just conquered. This was the only earthly kingdom that Daniel has been concerned with so far, and so he continues to refer to it as just "the kingdom." In particular, he is not referring to all of Medo-Persia.

Verse 1 says that Darius appointed 120 princes over the whole kingdom. The word translated "princes" in the KJV is better translated "satraps." What is a satrap? Edwin M. Yamauchi, in his book *Persia and the Bible*, wrote:

The satrap was in charge of all aspects of provincial rule. He levied the funds necessary for his administration and provided troops for the king.

Darius' first responsibility was to appoint these 120 administrators over the newly won territory. He appoints 120 satraps and three presidents or commissioners of which Daniel becomes the chairman.

Liberals argue that there weren't really 120 satraps. Are they correct? Be careful - that's a trick question.

Satraps operated in areas called satrapies, and the ancient records give various figures for the number of satrapies. Herodotus says there were 20, the Behistun Inscription of Darius I gives 23, and a tomb inscription gives 29 - none is close to 120.

So why does Daniel say there were 120 satrapies? He doesn't. He says there were 120 satraps. That word can apply to various levels of administrators, including lower officials of which there could be many in a single satrapy.

Verse 2 tells us that three head administrators (including Daniel) watched over the 120 satraps so that

the kingdom would not be damaged. That means Daniel was in charge of watching the tax collectors so that they could not steal from the king. (And perhaps we see another motive at play here why some of these satraps might want to remove honest Daniel from such a position!)

We see in verse 3 that Daniel's character and integrity are such that Darius plans to make him his prime minister. If Darius and Cyrus were coregents, then this position would have made Daniel third in power, which is what the late Belshazzar had promised him!

Why did Darius think so highly of Daniel? Hadn't they just met?

- Daniel had a good reputation. Verse 3 says that an excellent spirit was in him!
- Daniel had recently made a very successful prediction concerning Belshazzar.
- Daniel was not a Chaldean, but he was very familiar with their system.
- Daniel was experienced. (He was over 80 years old at this time!)
- And, most importantly, God was on Daniel's side, and God wanted Daniel in this position to influence the new government.

We have seen Daniel from age 13 to age 80, and one thing we can say for sure is that Daniel was not one to ever shrink back from a challenge! When Daniel was 13, he did not say he was too young. When Daniel was 80, he did not say he was too old. When God called on Daniel to do something, Daniel answered the call! God never got a busy signal when he called Daniel! What about when God calls me?

Daniel 6:4

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, jealousy and likely greed quickly rear their ugly heads. Those who are jealous and envious of Daniel seek at once to bring him down.

But nothing they could possibly do could bring Daniel down one inch. They could lie about him and change the opinion of other men, but they could do nothing to change God's opinion of Daniel - and that is ultimately the only opinion that matters.

We need to remember this, particularly when faced with false accusations. God knows the truth, and he will never be fooled by a false accusation. We know that Satan is an accuser of God's people and that he accuses us night and day (Revelation 12:10). We just need to make sure that whatever he accuses us of is not true.

This is not the only place in Scripture where something like this occurs. Jesus, also, was delivered up because of envy, and he also faced false accusers.

In Proverbs 6, God lists seven things that he hates:

Proverbs 6:17-19 - Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.

Of how many of these seven things were these envious men guilty? All seven!

So we know what God thought about the actions of this mob, and we know what God thought about the faithfulness of Daniel.

Daniel 6:5

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

What a compliment! Do people see us this way? If people wanted something bad to say about us, would they find it? We need to make sure that the most anyone can ever truthfully accuse us of is following the law of God!

And the time is now here where that accusation alone is enough to get us cancelled, fired from our job, or worse. In other countries, proclaiming God's word on homosexuality can get you jailed, and in other countries proclaiming God's word on anything can get you killed.

These accusers knew that to succeed they would have to put Daniel in a position where he would have to choose between obedience to God and obedience to the government (and they knew what he would choose!).

Two questions: (1) Is that true of us? (2) Does the world know that it is true of us?

Daniel's life was such that these men knew he would choose God when forced to make that choice. They were counting on it! Are our lives such that the world knows that we too will choose God when we are called to make such a choice? Or have we already shown them otherwise?

But these accusers had a problem: Persia had no law against monotheism. The solution? They would just create a law that would look merely political to Darius, but would pose a religious issue for Daniel.

Again we see history repeat itself. The so-called "hate speech" and "hate crime" laws may sound good on the surface until you ask how their authors define "hate." For most of them, mere disagreement is equated with hatred, and so just reading Romans 1 out loud has been classified by some as a hate crime.

Daniel 6:6-9

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 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. 8 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. 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

Notice that these envious accusers show up in a group to work their plan. Such people always seems to travel in a pack! Daniel stood alone before a pack of false accusers, as did Jesus.

Darius should have noticed that Daniel was not present, but as we will soon see, Darius was completely unsuspecting. He did not know that these men were out to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.

What was the proposed law? For one month, all petitions and all prayers in the realm must be

directed toward Darius only. Those who disobeyed would be cast into a den of lions.

Verse 7 uses the phrase "whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man." The word for "petition" just means request, but the reference to "any God" certainly suggests that religious requests are in view, as does the motive for this law to target Daniel for his prayers.

But what then is meant by a petition to a man? It likely refers to priests to whom petitions were directed so that the priest could mediate with the gods.

Darius likely did not see this law as making him a god to whom prayers would be directed, but rather as making him for 30 days the only priestly mediator to whom such requests could be made. He wanted to be the only middleman, and he wanted everyone to pray through a middleman. For 30 days, Darius was to be the only legitimate representative of deity.

Why did Darius agree with such a suggestion?

- It was very flattering, which is always a good first step with any politician.
- It reinforced the idea that the empire was now under new management. It would help unify the kingdom under Darius and Cyrus.
- It was a reasonable time limit. What harm could it cause to impose this seemingly modest requirement for only 30 days?
- And Darius was under the impression that Daniel had agreed to this plan. Verse 7 says all the presidents of the kingdom had agreed to the plan when in fact they had not.

Although the penalty was severe, Darius no doubt thought that it would never be imposed. Who could possibly fail to follow this simple 30 day requirement to which everyone had already agreed?

Why were offenders to be cast into a den of lions instead of into a fiery furnace? The Persians used fire in their religious ceremonies and thus would not have cast anyone into fire as a form of punishment. Edwin M. Yamauchi has written the following in this regard in his book *Persia and the Bible*:

But it is especially to fire and water that they offer sacrifice. ... Fire stands at the center of the Zoroastrian cult; no ceremony can take place without fire being present.

If Daniel had been written by a second century Jew living in Palestine as some suggest, then how did such an author know about this subtle difference between the Chaldean and Persian methods of execution?

Verse 8 tells us that the law could not be altered. Verses 12 and 15 will tell us the same thing. Why couldn't the law be changed or revoked?

Having a law that stood even above the despot was a very politically sophisticated system of government. Although we take it for granted, it was quite rare at the time (and sadly is at risk of becoming rare once again!).

Although we can only speculate about the reason for this system, this same requirement provided the drama in the book of Esther after the decree went out to kill the Jews.

History tells us that it also played a role during the reign of Darius III who ruled from 336 to 331 BC. Diodorus of Sicily reported the case of a man put to death under Darius III even though he was known to be perfectly innocent.

[Darius III] immediately repented and blamed himself for having committed such a great error, but it was impossible to have undone what had been done by royal authority.

And so secular history also shows us that the Persians had this sophisticated system of government.

Daniel 6:10

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Verse 10 tells us plainly that Daniel at some point learned that the document had been signed. And so whatever Daniel does next is not done in ignorance of the decree. Daniel knows the new law, and he knows the penalty for breaking it.

The chamber in verse 10 should be translated as an upper chamber. That Daniel's house had such a chamber likely indicates his high status.

And what did Daniel do when he heard about the decree? Did he run to the king to ask that it be changed or that he be excused? No - Daniel went before a different King! Daniel went to God in prayer.

Notice what we do **not** see in verse 10. We see no inner turmoil on Daniel's part - no wondering what to do. This was not decision time for Daniel - his decision to follow God had occurred nearly 80 years ago! All we see now is Daniel's unflinching obedience.

Daniel's prayers had been his lifeline all those years under the corrupting Babylonian influences. What would he do now that this decree had become the law of the land?

What were Daniel's options?

One option would be for Daniel to do nothing - that is, Daniel could compromise and simply not pray for one month. But Daniel could not simply do nothing because to do nothing would have been a sin.

 **James 4:17** - Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

A second option would be for Daniel to go underground and pray silently or pray at night when no one could see him.

Sadly, many today seem to have adopted this plan. But God has never put out a call for secret agents! We must speak out and let the world know where we stand. If we are on God's side, then we must let the world know at every opportunity.

Had Daniel quit praying as he normally did and instead began to pray in secret - how would the world have viewed that? What sort of example would that have set for the Persians or for the other exiles?

The world usually has no problem with our religion - as long as we keep it to ourselves. But we cannot please God if we keep our religion to ourselves. And we can't be the salt of the earth if we keep our religion to ourselves.

A third option would have been for Daniel to just rationalize the situation. Just think how much good he could do if he stayed in power. He had just gotten his power back after being without it for so long. God wouldn't want Daniel to lose that power again so quickly, would he?

We too are faced with such choices every day. Remember what Joshua said:

Joshua 24:14-15 - Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

The false gods of the Amorites haven't gone anywhere! They are with us to this day. We must make a choice.

We must choose whose side we are on, and, once we do that, all of our other decisions will be easy.

As a fourth option, Daniel could concern himself with pleasing God instead of pleasing men and not worry about the consequences - and that is exactly what Daniel did.

There was no decision to be made. Daniel had made the decision to follow God long ago, and whether he was 13 or 83, Daniel would not compromise with the world. What a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to God!

Why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? It seems to have been based on statements by Solomon made at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8.

1 Kings 8:44-45 - If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way thou shalt send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause

Also, God's presence resided in the temple:

1 Kings 8:10-11 - And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

While Ezekiel 11:23 tells us that this presence left prior to the destruction of the city in 587 BC, Ezekiel 43:2 tells us that God promised to return - and in fact Cyrus' order to rebuild the city had probably already been given.

Why did Daniel pray three times a day? That likely came from Psalm 55.

Psalm 55:17 - Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Daniel had a habit of praying to God, and that is what he was going to do. There is nothing wrong with habits if they are good habits, and we too should pray habitually and study God's word habitually - and we should not let anything stop us. Not even lions were able to stop Daniel! What does it take to stop us? Daniel would rather have been eaten by lions than stop praying to God!

For what was Daniel praying? In Daniel 9:1-2 we will discover that since Darius had begun to reign Daniel had been reading Jeremiah with regard to the 70 year period of exile.

And so Daniel knew it was time for his people to return from their exile, and many may have already returned. And so the returning captives may have been the primary item on Daniel's prayer list, and he could hardly stop praying for them now that they needed his prayers the most.

At first glance, this event looks just like what we saw earlier with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - but there is an important difference. Here evil men were trying to force Daniel to shirk his duty for true worship, while the earlier event with Daniel's three friends was focused on an attempt to make them engage in false worship.

Chapters 3 and 6 together warn us to avoid false worship and to pursue true worship, no matter the cost. We must avoid the strange fire, and we must use the approved fire.

Daniel 6:11-12

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

This group waited around for Daniel to pray, and then they went and reported to Darius as soon as he did.

█ "Like little children, they were peeking around corners and looking in windows."

Notice the word "thou" in verse 12. "Hast thou not signed a decree?" Suddenly this law has become the king's idea!

Darius is reminded of his decree, and Darius not only remembers it, but he also points out that the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked.

This passage provides absolute proof that Daniel did not believe that a separate Median kingdom conquered the Chaldeans prior to the Persian kingdom under Cyrus. The late-date hypothesis that the second kingdom is Media and the third kingdom is Persia cannot stand in the face of verse 12. Daniel treats Media and Persia as a unified kingdom - which all historians agree they were.

We are about to watch God as he changes and revokes a law that cannot be changed or revoked!

█ Mark 10:27 - With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

Daniel 6:13-17

█ 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 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. 16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Notice the statement in verse 13 tying Daniel to the captivity of Judah. They are telling the king that Daniel is not one of us - likely to plant the idea that Daniel is disloyal.

The charge made against Daniel is similar to the charge made against Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego:

Daniel 3:12 - There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.

Likewise, verse 13 charges Daniel with having no regard for the king.

This was a false charge both times. It was not true that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego paid no heed to the king, and it was not true that Daniel did not regard the king. They just did not give their ultimate loyalty to any earthly king because that belonged only to God.

But Darius' response is not what the conspirators had hoped for! Yes, Darius becomes very upset (as they had hoped), but (unlike Nebuchadnezzar with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) Darius does not become upset with Daniel or Daniel's prayers. Instead, Darius becomes upset with himself (verse 14) when he suddenly realizes the real reason for the decree.

He had been duped by Daniel's enemies, and I am sure he now regretted not having discussed the matter with Daniel personally. Darius was likely more angry at himself than with anyone else.

Verse 14 tells us that the king labored to deliver Daniel until the sun went down. What did the king do? He likely called the lawyers! What they needed was a loophole! Why only until the sun went down? (Well, lawyers do charge by the hour...) Perhaps swift justice was also required by Persian law.

Darius no doubt respected Daniel for his loyalty to his God, and he tried to save his life. But there was nothing he could do. Providing Daniel with armor, or feeding the lions ahead of time would have undermined the law of the Medes and the Persians. A miracle was Daniel's only hope.

#daniel