

The Book of Daniel⁴⁹

Lesson 9

Daniel Chapter 6

The Lion's Den 536 BC

Darius's Administration

Daniel ^{6:1} It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, ^{6:2} 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.⁵⁰

Darius divides the kingdom into 120 portions and assigns each to a satrap. He selects Daniel, even in his old age, as one of three commissioners over the satraps. Over the next few days and months, he grows fond of Daniel.

In the Old Persian language, the word "satrap" means "the protector of the realm." Each satrap controls his portion of the kingdom for the king. Forty satraps report to one commissioner who reports to the king. Darius' organization assures that no outside force can take control of any portion of the kingdom.

Daniel's Position

Daniel ^{6:3} Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

Daniel, now close to if not over 90 years of age, still exhibits the extraordinary spirit of the Lord upon him. Daniel does everything with excellence and grace and those qualities allow him to find favor in the eyes of Darius. Evidently, Darius makes it known that he intends to elevate Daniel to the second position under him in the entire kingdom, placing Daniel above the commissioners, a position he acquired 69 years before in the Babylonian Kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar.

Commissioner's Jealousy

Daniel ^{6:4} Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

Daniel has handled the business of the Babylonian Empire perfectly and honestly for many years and he has seamlessly made the transition to the Persian Empire. With each day, Daniel has grown in favor in Darius' eyes and within a short time, the king intends to place him in charge of the entire kingdom. The whole scenario does not sit well with the other two commissioners or the satraps. Out of jealousy, the officials

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⁵⁰ In the New American Standard Bible, any text in (xxxx) is not in the original manuscripts but is added to help clarify the meaning.

seek to discredit Daniel in some area of his governmental leadership but no dishonesty is discovered that will enable them to bring an accusation against him.

Commissioner's Conspiracy

Daniel ^{6:5} Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God." ^{6:6} Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!" ^{6:7} "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den." ^{6:8} "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." ^{6:9} Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

In the midst of Daniel's service in the Babylonian and Persian Empires, he never strays from his faithfulness to the Mosaic Law; therefore, to catch Daniel the high officials must create a circumstance whereby Daniel will transgress the law of the land by holding to the Mosaic Law. As the anger against Daniel grows, the prefects join the effort. In the Babylonian and Persian Empires, the prefects rule the wise men of the kingdom who include the magi, sorcerers, and chaldeans. Additionally, the governors, or mayors of the cities, join the effort. The group presents Darius with a document making a law that for 30 days no one in the realm of the Medes and the Persians can pray to any god. The law states that everyone must pray to Darius for the 30 day period. For some unknown reason, Darius signs the law.

In the Medo-Persian Empire, once a permanent law passes through all the usual formalities, even the king cannot change the law by executive order. Laws can be changed, but only through the formalities of the governmental system. However, temporary laws, such as the 30-day injunction, do not have to go through the usual system. Once the king signs the temporary law, it cannot be changed even by the king. Without disclosing the full reason for the 30-day law, the officials encourage Darius' signature which places both Daniel and the king in the proverbial box from which they cannot escape.

Daniel's Prayer

Daniel ^{6:10} Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (~~now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem~~); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

Daniel knows about the signing of the law and he evidently knows its content, yet he enters his private house and continues his custom of praying to the Lord God three times a day. Daniel will not compromise his principles. He will uphold the policies of the empire and care for the needs of the people, but he will not forgo the principles that have guided his life since his days in the Southern Kingdom.

Commissioner's Infiltration

Daniel ^{6:11} Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

The scoundrels of the empire do not have to wait long before finding Daniel in prayer before his God. Daniel prays at 9:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM everyday; therefore, the officials can watch for Daniel at the next prayer time and catch him breaking the law.

Commissioner's Complaint

Daniel ^{6:12a} Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?"

The officials return to Darius to complain about Daniel, and with cunning premeditation, they begin their assault by reminding Darius to enforce the law he recently signed.

Darius' Response

Daniel ^{6:12b} The king answered and said, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

Darius confirms that the 30-day law cannot be changed.

Commissioner's Grievance

Daniel ^{6:13} Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

How long do the officials watch Daniel transgress the new law? They see him break the law at least three times and maybe more. Within two or three days they report Daniel's misconduct to Darius.

Darius's Distress

Daniel ^{6:14} Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set *his* mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

How does Darius respond to the claims of the officials? Does he say, "Oh no, not Daniel." Perhaps Darius becomes furious because of the trickery of the officials. We do not know Darius' thoughts except that he becomes distressed over the law and continues trying to determine a way around the statute for Daniel's sake until sunset.

Commissioner's Pressure

Daniel ^{6:15} Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

The officials will not let Darius set aside the law on Daniel's behalf. They pressure him to uphold the law as stated. Daniel must meet his punishment in the lion's den.

Darius' Order

Daniel ^{6:16} Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." ^{6:17} And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel.

Darius does not give Daniel an audience to explain himself. Rather, he orders Daniel's arrest and imprisonment in the den of lions. Darius goes to the mouth of the den and says to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." Does Darius make this statement as a prayer? Perhaps he makes it as a statement of fact knowing Daniel's God will deliver him. It is a difficult statement to interpret. Regardless, Daniel must be punished and Darius must keep the law. The soldiers put the stone over the mouth of the den and both the king and the nobles imprint their signet rings on the stone. Darius keeps the law and nothing can change in Daniel's behalf until morning.

Darius' Fasting

Daniel ^{6:18} Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

In his palace, Darius literally grieves. He cannot eat one bite of food and he cannot sleep a wink. His mind cannot stray from the thought of his faithful servant, Daniel.

Darius' Cry

Daniel ^{6:19} Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. ^{6:20} And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Darius runs to the lion's den as soon as the light of day begins to brighten the sky. "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, ... been able to deliver you from the lions?" Nothing but the deliverance of Daniel matters to the king. Surely Darius knows the stories of Daniel's past and has found them all to be true. Surely, Daniel's God can protect him in this circumstance too!

Daniel's Reply

Daniel ^{6:21} Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! ^{6:22} "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

Others in Daniel's position might have been angry with the king, but not Daniel. The lions "...have not harmed me," Daniel says. He has committed no crime against God nor against Darius and the kingdom. The officials had tricked Darius into signing a law based on evil intent against one person in the kingdom, Daniel! "O king, live forever!" Daniel replies. As a good king, Darius cannot break the law he has signed. If he breaks the law, the officials can appeal to Cyrus to punish Darius and enforce the 30-day law. But now, the officials cannot appeal to anyone because Darius has kept the law and ordered the required punishment.

Daniel's Removal

Daniel ^{6:23} Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Did the officials sleep well that night? Did they party through the evening and drink themselves into a stupor? We do not know, but why would they not celebrate? For 70 years Daniel has faithfully served in two empires without sin. In that time, many men have wished for Daniel's demise and his position of great authority to be gone. The Persian officials hate Daniel and want him dead. Nevertheless, Darius orders the men to take Daniel out of the den that morning.

Darius' Command

Daniel ^{6:24} The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children, and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

With Daniel safely out of the den, Darius gives a new order to snatch all men and their households from their beds who had conspired against Daniel and assemble them at the mouth of the lion's den. Darius then throws them into the den. In that moment, the tame lions become ravenous beasts until all are dead.

Darius' Decree

Daniel ^{6:25} Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and *men of* every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! ^{6:26} I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion *will be* forever. ^{6:27} He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Darius believes in Daniel's God and his decree proves it. He orders the kingdom to believe in his servant's God, the only true and living God. Listen to his words about God. "For He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion *will be* forever." Where in the world did Darius learn these words? Perhaps they came to him from the 70-year reputation of Daniel, the years of Nebuchadnezzar, the handwriting on the wall and now the experience in the lion's den. How does Darius know that the Lord's kingdom will never be destroyed? How does he know that the Lord's dominion will last forever? Does Darius personally encounter the living God? Absolutely! He now knows that Daniel's God can deliver, rescue and perform signs and wonders both in heaven and on earth. Does Darius become a true believer in the God of Daniel? Absolutely!

Daniel's Success

Daniel ^{6:28} So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel's success proves short-lived in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus. Darius dies shortly after the lion's den event in 536 BC. Cyrus' rule ends fewer than 6 years later when he dies fighting against the Massagetae people on the Syr Darya waterway near the Caspian Sea in December of 530 BC. Cyrus' son Cambyses, becomes the

ruler and reigns until September, 522 BC, when he is killed in route to put down a rebellion. Darius I, not the son of Cambyses, takes his place in the same year. Darius' father, Hystaspes, serves as one of the Persian Satraps of Bactria and Persis. At the death of Cambyses, he, along with many other nobles place Darius I on the throne in September of 522 BC. The Lord's last vision to Daniel occurs in 521 BC, 15 years after the experience in the lion's den. At that time, Daniel's age nears or exceeds 100.