

## Daniel 6:1-28

### Historical Context

The Medes were the second dominant Gentile world power of which Daniel spoke in Daniel chapter 2. At the height of their power, their kingdom stretched from the Indus River valley in the east to Greece and Egypt in the west. It spanned 3 continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) and covered 2,100,000- sq miles. During the reign of Darius the Great (522-486 BC) It was divided into 20 provinces, each led by a satrap, or governor, who was responsible for its administration and taxation.

In Dan 5:31 we see Darius the Mede take over the city of Babylon. Instead of destroying the city the Medes simply took it over, retaining much of its administrative infrastructure. Daniel 6 opens with Darius the Mede re-organizing the province of Babylon shortly after he takes power. Daniel is now 81 years old!

### Outline

The chapter can be outlined as follows:

- a. Daniel's Position, vs 1-3.
- b. The Conspiracy, vs 4-9.
- c. Daniel's Faithfulness, vs 10-11.
- d. The Accusation, vs 12-15.
- e. The Sentence, vs 16-17.
- f. Daniel's Deliverance, vs 18-23.
- g. The Conspirators Comeuppance, vs 24.
- h. The Decree of Darius, vs 25-27.
- i. The Conclusion, vs 28.

### Daniel's Position, vs 1-3.

Vs 1, *It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom.*

There are three theories as to who Darius the Mede was. I reviewed two last time. Either he was a co-regent with Cyrus, one of Cyrus's generals named Gabaru, or some feel he was Cyrus himself, as the word "Darius" is a Persian word for King, much like Pharaoh, or in English, the word "King." I tend to favor either one of the first two—but there is no certainty. We do know this is not Darius the Great (who took power in 522 BC) but rather Darius the Mede who is now in charge of the province of Babylon. The word, satrap, means administrator. Darius is re-organizing the province of Babylon by appointing 120 administrators to run it.

*Vs 2, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.*

Over them will be three administrators, including Daniel, who will report directly to Darius. Now why is Daniel appointed? This reflects well on Darius. Perhaps he learned of Daniel's role in confronting Bel, and no doubt he learned of Daniel's service to Neb and thus resurrected his administrative career. Daniel is now at the youngest 81 and perhaps 86 years old. (note Moses was 80 when called to go to Egypt, Caleb was 85 when he wanted to take the land). The "why" of all this bureaucratic re-shuffling is explained at the end of vs 2, *so that the king might not suffer loss*. Darius did not want to lose any money.

*Vs 3, Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*

Daniel is once again a curve buster. He was better than all the others in chapter 1:20, again in chapter 2: 46-48, and chapter 4:8. God blesses Daniel in his work. (a good lesson for us –see Col 3:23). Darius is impressed and plans to appoint Daniel chief administrator over the whole province (a position he held in Dan 2:48). In other words, instead of having three administrators report to Darius, two would report to Daniel, who would alone report to Darius.

### **The Conspiracy, vs 4-9.**

*Vs 4, At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.*

Obviously, Daniel's excellence and Darius's plan to make him chief administrator did not go down well for his co-workers. They become jealous and develop two conspiracies against Daniel to bring him down. The first is here in verse 4, as they look to bring charges against Daniel in the way he does his job. One can imagine his co-workers sifting through his clay tablets and papyrus, looking for any discrepancy or error, so they may bring charges against him. But Daniel was a man of integrity, so even those who hated him could not fault the way he lived, and because nothing could be found to accuse him in the discharge of his duties (a remarkable thing since his service record was long). A second conspiracy was formed in verses 5-9.

*Vs 5, Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."*

Recognizing that Daniel could not be faulted in his work, the conspirators develop a plot to entrap him regarding his religious practices. These were pagan people and had noted Daniel's singular devotion to his Jewish God. Also remember that Darius had retained many of the

Babylonian officials from before and they no doubt remembered what happened to his friends SMA and how Neb threw them into the furnace for refusing to bow down to Neb's idol.

*Vs 6-7, So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den.*

These conspirators now devise a plot to force Daniel to either compromise his faith or disobey the law of the land. In other words, they tried to bring his religious practice into conflict with the state (see Acts 4:19). The phrase, *went as a group*, has the implication of rushing with eagerness. Note verse 7: the conspirators tell Darius that all the administrators have agreed. This was a lie, as only those who conspired against Daniel agreed. Obviously, Daniel was an administrator, and he had not agreed. Darius was therefore deceived.

Note the decree was to preclude any petition to any god or person, other than the king for thirty days. The conspirators wanted to make sure there was enough time to ensnare Daniel. A decree was a rule or law, signed by the king that was unalterable. Even the king must obey it (and suffer for its error if it was a bad ruling—note Esther 3:8-12 and 8:1-8). Why was it designed this way? The best reason was to avoid whimsical and autocratic laws (i.e., Neb). The punishment for violating the decree would be death by being thrown to the lions. Now why would Darius sign this? There are two possible reasons. The first is political. This decree would ensure allegiance to the new regime. In the polytheistic theology of the times, the king was viewed as the representative of the gods they worshipped. He was the visible manifestation of them and was viewed as the son of the gods. As a conquering king, newly subjugated peoples would be required to worship Darius and his gods in acknowledgement of their victory over their gods. They could still worship their gods but would have to enlarge their worship to include Darius and his gods. The conspirator's law therefore was designed to ensure that everyone in the newly conquered Babylonian province would acknowledge and worship Darius as the representative of the gods of the Medes and Persians. The second is personal. Darius may have been driven by vanity and the adulation and singular focus of the law on him as the only one to be worshipped for 30 days may have stoked his feathers in just the right way (see Acts 12:20-23).

*Vs 8-9, Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.*

Note the imperative to sign. There is an urgency in the conspirator's request. As we have noted, Darius signs the decree for a combination of political and personal reasons.

### **Daniel's Faithfulness, vs 10-11.**

Vs 10-11, *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.* <sup>11</sup> *Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.*

In verse 10, we see Daniel consciously maintains his daily religious routine. He learns of the decree and goes home, as he always does, gets on his knees, and with windows open faces Jerusalem and prays. In 1 K 8:30, 35, 42, 44, and 48, Solomon noted that you should pray *toward the temple*. Ps 55:16-17 notes prayers are to be offered *morning, noon, and night*. This was Daniel's practice. This routine was not meritorious nor mandated by the law, rather it is the reflection of Daniel's devotion and relationship he shares with God. His windows are open, he has nothing to hide. In other words, I am going to live my life just as it has always been lived. I will not conceal or hide my faith. Note the content of his prayers, *giving thanks*.

In verse 11, the conspirators *went as a group* (again rushing with eagerness) to find Daniel praying and obviously disobeying the decree they just got Darius to sign.

### **The Accusation, vs 12-15.**

Vs 12, *So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.*

Verse 12 notes the conspirators go back to the king to remind him of his royal decree. Indeed, Darius re-validates the law and notes it cannot be repealed. The trap is now set.

Vs 13, *Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day."*

In verse 13, the conspirators spring the trap. Note this accusation is like the one made against SMA in 3:8-12. The fact they are Jews is brought out in both. The accusers also allege the offense as a personal slight against the king (*he pays no attention to you*) and a disregard for the law of the land (*or to the decree*).

Vs 14, *When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.*

Darius now sees he has been tricked. Note the difference in his response compared to Neb in 3:13. Darius was greatly distressed. The word is also translated displeased. It has the connotation of evil or bad. What he displeased or distressed about is the plot seems evil to him. So, Darius determines to find some loophole to save Daniel. Darius knows the problem is not political as Daniel is allegiant to him, rather it is a religious issue.

*Vs 15, Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, "Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."*

In verse 15, the conspirators put further pressure on the king. This is the third time the phrase "went as a group" is used. Again, it means with urgency. Note they repeat the laws cannot be changed. Darius knows this. Darius is being forced to remember.

### **The Sentence, vs 16-17.**

*Vs 16, So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"*

Darius had no other options. So, he pronounces the sentence. Note Darius was impressed with Daniel's faith and expresses a simple hope that his God would rescue him.

*Vs 17, A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.*

In verse 17 the deed is done. A stone is rolled over the opening to the den. The word den also means pit and in this instance the idea here is a pit. Note the stone is then sealed with the ring of the king and his nobles (the conspirators). The double sealing ensured that Daniel's fate would not be changed, and the law could not be broken.

### **The Deliverance, vs 18-23.**

*Vs 18, Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.*

Darius is very agitated. So much so he spends the night without sleep and without food or entertainment. The word entertainment has been translated in many ways. Some have suggested music, women, diversions, and dancing. I think the word entertainment is a good one as it encompasses whatever occupied Darius's evening. He is simply too upset to do anything other than wait for the morning when he can legally open the den.

*Vs 19, At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den.*

Darius waits till the first light of dawn, then hurries to the den. The word hurries implies running.

Vs 20, *When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"*

Darius runs to the den and cries out in an anguished voice. The word anguished implies lament, or grieving. He fully expects Daniel not to answer so he cries out in grief and pain, *Daniel servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?* Note the power of Daniel's prior testimony. Darius notes he is a servant and serves God continually.

Vs 21-22, *Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."*

Daniel hears Darius's voice and responds. *May the king live forever!* This is an honorable reply. Daniel harbors no bitterness towards the king. He then describes how God rescued him. Just as God had sent an angel to rescue SMA, so God sent an angel to rescue Daniel. Note Daniel declares his innocence before God and Darius.

Vs 23, *The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.*

Darius is overjoyed. It is hard to describe Darius's reaction. The word overjoyed is the exact opposite of the word used in vs 14 of displeased. Daniel is removed from the den and closely examined (just as Neb and his people examined SMA) Not a mark is on him, and Darius knows it is because he trusted in his God.

#### **The Conspirators Comeuppance, vs 24.**

Vs 24, *At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.*

Darius now has his revenge. He knew the men who had come to him with the intent of doing Daniel in. And so, he orders their execution along with their families. The practice of punishing the one accused and his family was reportedly common in Babylon and Medo-Persia, though it was banned in the Mosaic Law (see Dt 24:16). The ferocity of the lions is noted in 24b.

#### **The Decree of Darius, vs 25-27.**

Vs 25, *Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: "May you prosper greatly!*

Darius now decides to issue another decree and writes to all within his kingdom. The word earth can also be translated as "land," indicating a region. This greeting is best seen as addressing all within Darius's sphere of authority.

Vs 26-27, *I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God, and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. <sup>27</sup> He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."*

Verse 26 starts with a clarification to whom this decree is addressed. Note it is to all within *my* kingdom. In other words, to those within my authority. Darius then declares his decree that all people must fear and have reverence for the God of Daniel. He lists several reasons as to why. One might wonder where Darius learned all these things. My hunch is Daniel told him and because God rescued Daniel, Darius has seen these truths validated and now holds them as his own. Note what he says:

- a. *He is the living God, Jer 10:10, But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King.*
- b. *He endures forever, Is 40:28, Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.*
- c. *His kingdom will not be destroyed, Ps 145:13a, your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.*
- d. *His dominion will never end. Ps 145:13b and your dominion endures through all generations.*
- e. *He rescues and saves, Ps 91:14-15, "Because he<sup>[b]</sup> loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. <sup>15</sup> He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.*
- f. *He performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Deut 6:22, Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household.*
- g. *He rescued Daniel. Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.*

### **Conclusion, vs 28.**

Vs 28, *So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus<sup>[b]</sup> the Persian.*

Verse 28 concludes noting that God prospered Daniel during the reign of Darius the Mede and then Cyrus. Daniel has survived deportation (605 BC), inculturation (chapter 1), the attempt to

wipe out all the wise men (Chapter 2), the attack on freedom of worship for SMA (chapter 3), the telling of Neb's dream (chapter 4), the fall of Babylon and regime change (chapter 5), and now a plot to assassinate him (chapter 6). In all these things Daniel prospered.

Daniel is the epitome of Ps 1:1-3, *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, <sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. <sup>3</sup> That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

Jer 29:11, *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

We can also learn from Daniel's example: what are the elements of his character and practice we can implement for ourselves?

- a. He is devoted to God. In Chapter 1 Daniel refuses to violate God's law in relation to eating, in Chapter 2, 4, and 5, he faithfully relates God's word to Neb and Belshazzar regardless of the circumstances and consequences. In chapter 6 he prays. His life is devoted to God.
- b. He leads a consistent life. From his youth till his old age, Daniel is consistent in his devotion to God and in his service to men. When you are devoted to God, there will be consistency in your outward attitude and action.
- c. He is known for his excellent spirit. Daniel is known by his integrity, his attitude, his knowledge, his wisdom, and his abilities. The point is this: concern yourself about the depth of your relationship with God and He will take care of the breadth of your influence.
- d. Age is not a hindrance to his usefulness. Any time is the right time to be used of God.
- e. He leaves himself in God's Hand, in chapter 1, 2, 4, 5, and now 6, Daniel rests in God's sovereign plan. He does not defend himself. He survives the ego of King Neb, the debauchery of Bel, and now the changing of empires under Darius, all the while resting in God's sovereign plan.