

## SESSION EIGHT

### DANIEL 6:1-28

#### *Daniel in the Lion's Den*

*"who by faith . . . shut the mouths of lions"*

#### INTRODUCTION

Although no date is given at the beginning of this chapter, the event probably took place in the first year of Darius the Mede (539-538 BC) when he was establishing the administration for the newly created province of Babylonia under Persia. Although Cyrus the Great was the ultimate ruler over Persia, he did not reside at Babylon. The rule of Babylon was entrusted to Darius the Mede under him, and Cyrus returned to his capital at Ecbatana. Daniel would certainly have been on hand when Cyrus entered Babylon on Oct 29, 539 BC, and very possibly would have had the opportunity to have met him.

#### A. THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST DANIEL (6:1-9)

##### 1. Daniel's Rise in the New Political Structure (1-3)

Although there were numerous officials involved in the administration (cf. 6:7), the province of Babylon (which included even Judah) was divided into smaller districts and governed by 120 satraps (*'āḥašdarp<sup>e</sup>nîn*; אֲחַשְׁדַּרְפֵּי נִינְוֵי). These district officials were in turn responsible to three commissioners (*sāarak*; סָרָק). Daniel, though a very old man, was made one of the three commissioners (*NIV* "administrators").

Responsibility: *"that the king might not suffer loss"*

- a. in territory due to uprisings
- b. in taxation due to graft

Why was Daniel chosen to be in the administration?

- a. He had a long experience and wide acquaintance with the Babylonian government.
- b. He had a reputation for honesty & integrity in service.
- c. His reputation as being a "spiritual" man and interpreter of dreams and visions.
- d. His successful prediction at Belshazzar's feast

Note: This would have certainly come to the attention of either Darius the Mede or Cyrus the Great (or both of them).

##### 2. The Plot Devised Against Daniel (4-5)

- a. Daniel's Reputation (v 4)
  - 1) *"no negligence or corruption was to be found in him"*

He was not only an honest government employee, but he was very competent in his work as well.

How refreshing it is to find a man in business or politics who has integrity! Cf. Eph 6:5-8. There can be a temptation when working in the midst of dishonest workers to begin operating just like them. Our focus must stay on our true master, Jesus Christ!
  - 2) *"he was faithful"*

The world needs examples of people who are faithful! Daniel was a model of a stewardship faithfully discharged (cf. Proverbs 20:6; 1 Cor 4:2).
  
- b. The resentment towards Daniel

Since Daniel was a Jew, others in the administration who were race-conscious resented his elevation in government, particularly the idea that he might be the "prime minister" of sorts over all the officials (v 3). There could be a couple of reasons for this:

  - 1) For those who operated by graft and corruption, Daniel's honesty would have hampered their conduct.
  - 2) Apparently the status of the exiled Jews was still one of being an inferior race (at least resented).
  
- c. The root cause of resentment toward Daniel

As a Jew, Daniel was one of God's chosen people. Throughout the Bible and history, Satan has had a special hatred for Jewish people and Christians.

  - 1) Through the Jewish people have come the Scriptures and the Messiah.
  - 2) God's faithfulness rides on fulfilling His promises to the Jewish nation, and thus Satan desires to prevent this.
    - a) Balak's attempt to curse them through Balaam (Num 23:7-10)
    - b) Numerous pogroms throughout history against the Jews.
    - c) Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jews
    - d) The Antichrist will make a massive effort to exterminate them in the Tribulation (Zech 12—14); Rev 12).

Note: This was a crucial moment in God's program with Israel! From God's perspective, this was a significant time, and it is not surprising that satanic opposition sprang up. Notice several important events going on about the same time during 539-538 BC.

- a) On Oct 29, 539 Cyrus entered Babylon

It is very possible that Daniel met him at that time, and possibly even shared the prophecy of Isa 44:28--45:7 with him. Since Daniel was appointed a high official in the realm, Cyrus certainly knew of him and probably had further contact with him even after Darius the Mede was appointed to rule over Babylonia.

- b) Dan 9:1-3 - This first year of Darius was a time of intensive Bible study and prayer for Daniel.

He would have realized through his study of Bible prophecy (Jer 25:11) that God was about ready to act again on Israel's behalf.

- c) Cyrus' Decree in Ezra 1:1-4

He is not only motivated to initiate the return to Judah, but he is very aware that Solomon's temple had been plundered by Nebuchadnezzar (see Ezra 1:7; 6:3-5). This decree was made in his first year, i.e., his first regnal year (Mar-Apr 538 to Mar-Apr 537), probably after the events of Daniel 6.

- d) Two crucial questions:

- i) Did Daniel, in his position of authority and influence, counsel Cyrus to make the decree permitting the return and rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem?
- ii) Was Satan attempting to eliminate Daniel before he could share prophetic details with Cyrus and influence him in the furthering of God's program with Israel?

- d. The Plan

Persia had no law against monotheism, so a new statute was needed—one that would seem merely political to Darius but would be a religious issue for Daniel.

### 3. Darius is Manipulated to Enact a Statute Against Religious Petitioning (6-9)

- a. "All the commissioners . . . have consulted together"

This was an outright lie, because Daniel had clearly been left out. This lie will come back to haunt them!

#### A Lesson for Our Life

Recall Numbers 32:23 - "*be sure your sin will find you out*"

We never sin and get away with it!

- b. *"anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you"*

While this may have been suggested as a loyalty check (to give expression to and create respect for his new authority), it would have subtly appealed to his pride as an ego booster. By only requesting this for one month, they made it sound reasonable—it would have only been a brief interruption in the regular worship of the citizens of the realm.

- c. *"the law of the Medes and Persians"*

The policy of the Medes and Persians was that a law (once enacted) could not be reversed, even by the king himself (cf. Esther 1:19; 8:8).

Montgomery (in his commentary) relates a case involving the sentencing of an innocent man to death by Darius III (336-331 BC) whose royal power was limited from interceding:

"immediately he repented and blamed himself, as having greatly erred; but it was not possible to undo what was done by royal authority."<sup>1</sup>

## **B. DANIEL'S DETECTION, TRIAL, AND SENTENCE (6:10-17)**

1. Daniel Accused of Breaking Darius's Statute (10-15)

- a. *"windows open toward Jerusalem"* (v 10)

- 1) This relates back to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:27-30, 46-50). Prayer was to be directed toward the temple where God's name was caused to dwell.
- 2) Although the temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 BC, Daniel continued this practice as a symbol of his hope that someday the children of Israel would be able to return to this city of God. Jerusalem was the focal point of his hopes and prayers for the progress of the kingdom of God!
- 3) The Anticipation of Restoration
  - a) Ezek 11:23 - The Shekinah glory had departed
  - b) Jer 29:10,14 - The LORD had promised to return them to the land and to restore Jerusalem.

- b. *"Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, . . . he continued kneeling"* (v 10)

Daniel was well aware of the situation and knew they would be watching. But his testimony to God was more important than the consequences he might face!

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<sup>1</sup>From Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, I:748, citing a passage from Diodorus Sic., xvii, 30. Recorded in James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), 270.

- 1) Notice that he did not try to retaliate with a vindictive spirit.
- 2) Notice that he did not rationalize the situation and attempt to compromise (he was more concerned to please God than man).
  - a) he could have ceased for a month
  - b) he could have prayed privately
- 3) He used the situation to be a faithful witness for God!

A Lesson for Our Life

Matthew 10:32-33!

It is to our shame that some Christians today try to conceal their faith and keep it hidden, lest they should jeopardize their standing in the business world.

2. Daniel Cast Into the Den of Lions (16-17)

Try to imagine what this might have been like! [Illustration from Dr. Campbell, *Daniel: God's Man . . .*, 96-97]

**C. DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE AND HIS ENEMIES' PUNISHMENT (6:18-24)**

1. The King's Concern for Daniel (18-20)
2. Daniel's Deliverance (21-23)
  - a. "*I was found innocent before Him*" (22)  
Remember: Daniel's name means "God is my judge"
  - b. "*no injury . . . because he had trusted in his God*" (23)  
Daniel exercised faith at a crisis moment. This should not be limited to the moment he was thrown to the lions, but back to Dan 6:10 when he made the choice to be a faithful witness!
3. Daniel's Enemies are Destroyed (24)
  - a. This was done in keeping with the custom of ancient pagan despots. But compare Deut 24:16 for Israel's law.
  - b. Ultimately this reflects the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:3).

**D. DARIUS'S TESTIMONY TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (6:25-28)**

1. Darius's Decree (6:25-27)

Compare this with the decree of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:29).

- a. Nebuchadnezzar: negative--aimed to punish those who speak against Yahweh
  - b. Darius: positive--aimed to promote the reverence of Yahweh
2. Daniel in Favor under Secular Government (28)

Two possible translations! [Notice the footnote in the *NIV*]

- a. *"in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus"*
- b. *"in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus"*

### A Lesson for our Life

Notice the last phrase of Dan 6:10, *"praying . . . as he had been doing previously."* Fellowship with God was a priority in Daniel's life. In fact, it was at the top of his priority list. As one of the three commissioners over the realm, he would have led a very busy life. "Busy-ness" has a way of interfering with our relationship with God. We easily make excuses as to why we don't have time to get alone with God or avail ourselves of His throne of grace in prayer. Daniel never allowed "Busy-ness" to cut out his prayer life, and neither should we!

#### A suggestion:

Try to establish a regular time to meet with God for prayer, preferably early in the morning before the disturbances come along (Psalm 5:3). This may mean that you need to make a decision to go to bed early in order to rise early.