

As I mentioned last week, verse 28 could be translated:

*<sup>28</sup> So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius even the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Darius could have been a throne name that Cyrus used  
(It could even be a nickname used by the Jews –  
sort of like in the book of Judges, where we hear of Eglon, King of Moab.  
It is highly unlikely that any Moabite would name his son “Eglon” –  
since Eglon can be loosely translated as “fat and greasy.”)

Others have proposed that Darius is another name for Gubaru,  
the governor whom Cyrus appointed over Babylon –  
but the actions of Darius are more fitting for the high king –  
not as much for a governor.

### **1. The Law of God and the Law of the Medes and the Persians (v1-9)**

*It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom;  
<sup>2</sup> and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give  
account, so that the king might suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup> Then this Daniel became distinguished above all  
the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned  
to set him over the whole kingdom.*

It might seem odd at first that Daniel would receive a high position in the Persian government.  
After all you might think those who had been high officials in the Babylonian government  
would be considered dangerous by the Persian government!!

But when you look at the practice of ancient kings,  
one of the ways that you *avoid* rebellion and revolution  
is by co-opting the high officials of the prior government,  
bringing them into your government in order to provide continuity –  
in order to make people “happy” and content with your rule!

The old royal family will be largely exterminated –  
but the old aristocracy will be largely appeased  
by patronage and inclusion in the new government.

And *especially* someone like Daniel!  
After all, Daniel is a foreigner.  
He has no particular allegiance to Babylon –  
but he has been a part of the Babylonian establishment for nearly 70 years.  
He is an old man – and therefore not likely to have the energy to foment rebellion! –  
but he is well-versed in negotiating the ins and outs of the city.

Further, he “prophesied” the fall of Belshazzar and the triumph of the Medes and Persians.  
As such, he would likely be viewed as “pro-Persian” by the new rulers.

Of course, *most* of the high officials of Babylon would have been pro-Babylonian.  
If they resented Daniel before – when he was honored by their kings –  
now they are really bothered!  
And now they have a foreign king  
who may not really understand the intricacies of Babylonian life –  
so maybe they can use this to their advantage!

So they start by looking carefully for some ground for complaint or fault against Daniel.

*<sup>4</sup> Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.*

Most of the time, you can find *something* wrong with people in power.  
Especially in a day before double-entry bookkeeping,  
it can be really easy to accuse someone of fraud or corruption –  
and even if they are innocent, the facts can make them *look* guilty.

But Daniel was *careful* – he was *faithful* – he was diligent in his labors,  
and so nor error or fault was found in him.

He was blameless.

That doesn’t mean that he never sinned.  
It just means that in his conduct as a ruler,  
he remained above reproach in all his dealings.

This is the standard that we use today for pastors, elders, and deacons.  
I think of a case in a sister church  
where an elder decided to declare himself a “sovereign citizen”  
(in other words, that he was his own country –  
and therefore he renounced his U.S. citizenship,  
and refused to pay any more federal, state, or local taxes!).

When the case was brought to the presbytery,  
the presbytery declared that such a man was not fit to be an elder,  
since he refused to give honor to whom honor was due!

Daniel provides us with an excellent example of how a godly man should engage  
in an ungodly society.

Since Daniel believed that the Most High God rules the kingdom of men  
and gives it to whom he will,  
therefore, Daniel will serve whatever king God places over him,  
and seek the welfare of the city.

The Christian church does not seek revolution –  
it does not seek to *overthrow* the rulers of this age.  
Rather, we seek *reform* – we seek to call the rulers of this age to repentance and faith –  
so that the rulers of this age may prosper and flourish under the mighty hand of God!

And because of that, the only way for our enemies to come against us  
should be by focusing on our religion:

<sup>5</sup> *Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”*

And this is where a *real* conflict *can* be found!

The Law of Daniel’s God *does* conflict with the laws of the nations!

<sup>6</sup> *Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement<sup>[a]</sup> to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever!” <sup>7</sup> All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.*

First, it’s important to note what is forbidden:

“whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days...”

This does not forbid all religious worship of the gods  
(the priests of Marduk would *never* have gone along with this;  
even their hatred for Daniel would not convince them  
to suspend their regular sacrifices...)

Further, this does not say that the King is a god.

(after all, whether this is Cyrus or Gubaru,  
a Persian king would be a worshiper of Ahura Mazda –  
“the Lord of Wisdom” in Zoroastrian teaching).

Persian religion did not consider the king to be a god –  
but the king *was* seen as mediator and representative of the gods.

And while the decree is somewhat unusual –

it is entirely in keeping with the sorts of things that kings did  
when they were establishing their authority over a new realm.

Even though Cyrus was a worshiper of Ahura Mazda,  
when he took the throne of Babylon,

he commissioned what is now called “the Cyrus cylinder” –  
which declares that Marduk (the god of Babylon) had established him as king.

And as he is establishing his authority and his right to rule,  
it would not at all be surprising to have a temporary injunction like this one.  
Any petition which one would ordinarily make to the gods  
must come through Cyrus (or Darius as he is named here).

He is the one mediator between the gods and man!

And then the courtiers seek to bind Darius to this decree –  
to prevent him from revoking it – once he realizes why they have recommended it!

And so they appeal to the “law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be revoked.”

Now, there is a little bit of a problem here:

Namely, there is no record in Persian or Babylonian lore  
of this whole idea that “a law of the Medes and the Persians cannot be revoked.”  
The only place you find this idea is in the Jewish writings of Esther and Daniel!

So what’s going on here?

I would suggest that this is *not* a verbatim transcript  
of the conversation between the king and his courtiers.  
Rather, this is Daniel’s summary of the *point*  
of the conversation between the king and his courtiers!

Ancient historians regularly used dialogue to communicate the point of what had happened.

There is no reason why biblical historians could not have done the same.  
The Bible never says that we have verbatim transcripts of what people said.  
Rather, the Bible says that what it teaches is *true*.

The conversations recorded in scripture are true and accurate  
in terms of telling us *what happened* –  
even if they don’t use the exact words that were said at the time.  
(I know that some people think that the Holy Spirit guaranteed  
that the human authors wrote down the exact transcript of what was said –  
the only problem with that view is that scripture never tells us this!  
Scripture never *says* that the Holy Spirit guarantees  
a verbatim transcript of all conversations!)

What scripture guarantees is that every word in scripture  
is the true and faithful word of God.

(Just think of how the Gospels often give us the same story told in different words –  
sometimes even in slightly different order.)

If you insist on verbatim conversations and absolute chronological consistency,  
then you wind up with Peter denying Jesus 9 times – instead of three times!

If we take the Gospels as our standard –  
then we can see how the book of Daniel may be using a sort of hyperbole

in its language about the Laws of the Medes and the Persians.

Because what you see here is how the Book of Daniel pits the Law of the Medes and the Persians against the Law of Daniel's God.

Whose Law will stand?

Whose decree cannot be revoked?

And even more, whose Law is the standard by which all other laws are judged?

So, however the decree of Darius was worded,

the *effect* of the decree was to forbid all petitions that did not go through the King!

For thirty days, the King alone was the mediator between god and man.

## **2. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem (v10-11)**

<sup>10</sup> *When Daniel knew that the document had been signed,*

Curious.

Maybe the courtiers *thought* that all this had been done behind Daniel's back,  
but Daniel knew all about their plots.

And it did not change his habits.

He did not go to the King and try to overturn it.

Neither did he try to keep his religious practices secret.

After all, if he even *appeared* to honor the King's decree,  
he would be denying his God before men!

I have a friend who has taught in North Korea.

Yes, you heard that right.

North Korea.

There are Christians there!

But many Christians have compromised their witness

by bowing before the statue of Kim-il-Sung.

They justify it by saying that in oriental culture, you bow to all sorts of people!

But such logic would have resulted in Daniel's three friends bowing to the image.

And it would have resulted in Daniel bringing his petitions *first* to Darius.

But Daniel does not compromise his witness.

He does as he has always done:

*he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.*

Here is this octogenarian getting down on his knees as he has every day, three times a day,

for over 70 years.

Do you want to have the courage to stand in the face of danger the way that Daniel did?

Then you should adopt the pattern of life that Daniel did!

Habits are really important –

but not just mindless habits –

intentional, self-conscious habits!

Habits that flow out of a disposition and character that is formed by the Holy Spirit.

Think about what Daniel is doing!

Three times a day he prays at a window that faces Jerusalem.

Psalm 55:16-17 says,

“But I call to God, and the LORD will save me.

Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,  
and he hears my voice.”

Daniel has been shaped by this pattern of worship,

and he will not change – even at the cost of his own life!

And he prays toward Jerusalem –

just as Solomon had said.

When Solomon dedicated the temple,

he had prayed that God would hear his prayers –

and that God would hear the prayers of all who prayed *toward this place*.

Therefore, all throughout Israel’s history,

they prayed *toward the temple*.

Orthodox synagogues to this day will orient the congregation toward Jerusalem!

Many in the early church insisted on facing east when they prayed

remembering the original Garden sanctuary in Eden – in the east.

But the *point* of the New Testament is that our sanctuary is oriented toward the heavens –

since we worship not in an earthly sanctuary,

but in the heavenly holy of holies!

Have you noticed how important the temple is in the book of Daniel?

We have seen it several times already.

First, in the capture of the temple vessels in chapter 1 –

along with the concern about food that would defile them –

and in chapter 5 that theme came back around,

as Belshazzar defiled the temple vessels,

and fell under God’s judgment.

Likewise, in chapter 2, we saw a stone cut from a mountain by no human hand

(and the theme of the temple-mountain is strong in apocalyptic writings).

Here, Daniel prays toward Jerusalem – toward the ruined temple.

As one commentator put it,

“the ideas about the presence of God in the Temple  
and the future coming of God’s kingdom as expressed in the liturgy...  
are also very much the substance of apocalyptic thinking” (from Gillingham, 151 – p2)

The holy mountain theme (Jerusalem) in the book of Daniel  
is a polemic against Babylonian and Persian pretensions –  
a counter-claim in favor of God’s future plans for Jerusalem.

“In the midst of Babylonian [and Persian] idolatry  
those who in the end are called the truly wise  
adhere to their faith and their cult [their worship]  
as a matter of spiritual and, eventually, even physical survival.” (47)

The patterns and rhythms of the liturgy – even if it is only a liturgy of one man! –  
are what help Daniel to remain faithful for 70 years under pagan rule.

Some people want to emphasize only the inward disposition –  
but is like the husband who says that his love for his wife  
is expressed solely in his heart attitude toward her –  
and therefore an outward show of affection is irrelevant!

As Dale Ralph Davis says well,

“A fellow like that deserves a skillet to the brain to get him to think properly” (88)

But what do you suppose did Daniel pray?

We are told in chapter 9.

(Maybe this wasn’t the same day – but it was at least the same year!)

(read)

Daniel’s prayer is given us as a sort of pattern for us.

It is a reminder that we should not be selfish in our prayers,  
but we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

We should see ourselves in the light of what God is doing in history –  
and thus pray for one another in that light!

Verse 11 then is striking to us:

*<sup>11</sup> Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.*

I remember a children’s Bible in my youth that pictured the courtiers standing outside –  
looking at Daniel praying by his window!

But we only think that way, because we think of houses as “private.”

There was nothing preventing these men from walking into Daniel’s house  
and finding him making petition and plea before his God.

And Daniel does nothing to stop them!

He *will not hide* his allegiance to the God of Heaven!

At the same time, also note that Daniel does not *flaunt* his refusal to obey the King’s edict  
He does not go into the King’s throne room and do his devotions there!

No, he simply continues his long-standing pattern of humble faithfulness.

After all, Daniel has *always* been a faithful servant to his king.

He has demonstrated by his words and his actions  
that service to the Most High God  
results in the honor and well-being even of pagan kings!

Love for God and neighbor demands nothing less!

But those who hate God will end up hating man as well!

### **3. Put Not Your Trust in Princes (v12-18)**

<sup>12</sup> *Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.”* <sup>13</sup> *Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”*

And so the courtiers bring their evidence before the King!

Daniel – one of the exiles from Judah – continues to petition his God three times a day!  
Notice that they do not say, “Daniel, one of the three presidents you appointed!”

No, they highlight his status as a foreigner – an outsider –  
someone expendable! (at least in their eyes!)

Now, Darius...

<sup>14</sup> *Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.* <sup>15</sup> *Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.”*

There is a certain sense in which our author is poking fun at Darius!

This powerful king who thought that he alone  
could be the mediator between god and man  
is now left helpless against the machinations!!  
Undoubtedly there was much more that was said and done,

and our text summarizes it in very simple words –  
but the point is clear!  
The courtiers had maneuvered the King into a corner,  
and now Darius must order Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den!

Put no confidence in princes!  
The Psalmists had said this many times!  
And Daniel's trust is not in mortal men – but in the God of Heaven!

And Darius understands that – at least in some sense.  
Indeed, from what we know of Zoroastrian thought,  
verses 16-18 are very much of what we would have expected from a Persian king:

*<sup>16</sup> Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared<sup>[b]</sup> to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" <sup>17</sup> And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.*

Notice that there is *nothing* said about Daniel's experience!  
Why is all the focus on Darius?  
Think about the effect of verses 16-18.  
Dale Ralph Davis says this well:  
"[the] depiction [of Darius] is intentional: as if to say,  
rulers may not be personally hostile to you,  
but, even if they favour you, you dare not pin your hopes on them,  
for they can prove as helpless as anyone else." (p89)

Darius has such respect for Daniel (and Daniel's God)  
that he does three things:  
first, he declares his affirmation that *Daniel's God* will deliver him  
(the ESV – like most English translations,  
cannot believe that a pagan king would say this,  
but the Aramaic is very clear:  
"Your God, whom you serve continually, he will deliver you.")  
Second, he seals the mouth of the den  
"that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel" –  
in other words, *if Daniel's God* delivers him from the lions,  
as Darius expects,  
the King does not want anyone else taking matters into their own hands!  
And third, Darius spends the night fasting.  
Ordinarily there would be "diversions" – entertainments of various kinds.  
But Darius is so concerned for Daniel that he spends the night in sleepless fasting.

You might say, “If he trusts God, then he should get a good night’s sleep!”  
But that’s not the way God works.

God works *through* our prayers.

Think of it this way:

you've heard the old line – “don’t pray for patience, God might give it to you!”  
But what happens if you don’t pray for patience?  
God may very well give it to you anyway!  
So why pray?

Because if you pray, then when God teaches you patience,  
you will receive it as his blessing!  
Whereas, if you don’t pray, then it will come in the form of chastisement –  
of discipline.

Darius may not have known how to pray –  
but he knew how to fast – how to humble himself before God  
and implore his mercy!

Thus, the irony of the story is that the *king* is found humbly petitioning God –  
the king who at the beginning of the chapter was declared to be the only one  
to whom petitions could come!

Do not trust in princes!  
Do not trust in political parties –  
do not trust rulers – even when they are well-disposed to you.  
They are mortal men who cannot save!

But salvation belongs to the LORD!

#### **4. Salvation Belongs to the LORD (v19-28)**

<sup>19</sup> Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

No sooner does Darius see the eastern sky begin to change,  
than he hastened to the den –  
and he calls out to Daniel –  
and for the first (and only) time in our chapter,  
we hear what Daniel says:

<sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also

*before you, O king, I have done no harm.”*

We hear nothing of Daniel’s emotional state –  
nor of the details of what had happened in the den.  
Rather, we hear a simple confession of God’s mighty deeds:  
“My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths.”

And we hear the reason for this:  
“they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before [my God];  
and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.”

Notice that Daniel does not pretend that he was innocent.  
He acknowledges that he was guilty of violating the king’s edict!  
But he makes the more basic claim – I have done you no harm.

The Christian may not always be able to obey the laws of the land.  
There may be times when the Christian must say,  
“We must obey God rather than man.”  
But even when we do –  
we must also insist that we do *no harm* to our rulers!

*<sup>23</sup> Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. <sup>24</sup> And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.*

Then the king – having fulfilled the letter of his unjust law –  
now takes vengeance on those who had prompted it!

This was the outcome that they had not foreseen!  
But this is the inevitable fate of those who conspire to destroy the innocent.  
Sooner or later, they will fall into the trap that they set for others!

In this case, it was sooner!  
After all, they are dealing with the most powerful King in the world.  
And they have raised his wrath against them!  
So those who had maliciously accused Daniel are themselves thrown to the lions –  
together with their wives and children.  
(God’s law did not permit children to be killed for the sins of the parents –  
but then again, Darius does not know God’s law!)

The basic lesson here is that those who desecrate God’s temple will pay...  
and, as Paul will say centuries later, ‘you *are* that temple.’

Our passage closes with another edict.

This time from King Darius.

It is quite similar to the edict of Nebuchadnezzar –

which may suggest that both kings requested Daniel to draft them!

<sup>25</sup> *Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:*

*“Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>26</sup> I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,*

*for he is the living God,*

*enduring forever;*

*his kingdom shall never be destroyed,*

*and his dominion shall be to the end.*

<sup>27</sup> *He delivers and rescues;*

*he works signs and wonders*

*in heaven and on earth,*

*he who has saved Daniel*

*from the power of the lions.”*

<sup>28</sup> *So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

We know very little about Cyrus’s religious views.

I will simply say that on the premise of God’s promise to Abraham,

that those who bless you I will bless –

we can at least hope that Cyrus will fare well at the final judgment.

And at the final judgment *every knee* will bow – and *every tongue* confess –  
that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

And so let us begin now!

Because Salvation belongs to the LORD!