

BOOK OF DANIEL
DARIUS THE MEDE
DANIEL 6

Introduction

This one of three people whom we find were named Darius in the Old Testament. The name means “*he that informs himself*” or “*a king.*”

1. There is a *Darius the son of Hystaspes*, and king of Persia (521 B.C. - 485 B.C. He is the one who allowed the Jews to rebuild the Temple. (Ezra 4:5,24)
2. There is a *Darius the Persian*, Darius Nothus and probably the last king of Persia. (Nehemiah 12:22)
3. There is *Darius the Mede*, the son of one named Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes. We see here that he succeeded Belshazzar as king of Babylon at 62 years of age.

This Darius was both the son of one named Ahasuerus (Daniel 9:1) and the father of the Ahasuerus whom we met when last week in Sunday School in the book of Esther. The name *Ahasuerus*, by the way, just means “*king*” or “*mighty man.*”

Just as we saw that Belshazzar was not the absolute ruler of the Chaldean empire, so we see the same is true with Darius.

Cyrus the Persian was the main ruler over the **Medo-Persian Empire** during this time. **Daniel 6:28** is believed to be portraying Daniel as prospering not in the consecutive reigns of two independent sovereigns but during the reigns of two contemporary rulers, one being subordinate to the other.

We believe and there is evidence to suggest that **Darius was appointed by Cyrus to rule over Babylon**, which was a comparatively small portion of the vast Medo-Persian Empire.

You will also note that **Darius** is said to have “*took the kingdom*” (Daniel 5:31) The word “*took*” here comes from a Chaldee word that means “*acquired.*”

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This suggests that he ruled by appointment, rather than by conquest and thus would have been subordinate to **Cyrus**, who appointed him.

Also, note Daniel 9:1 where **Darius** is said to have been “*made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.*”

I. THE PROMINENCE OF DANIEL (6:1-3)

One of **Darius**’ first responsibilities was to reorganize the newly conquered kingdom of Babylon.

He appointed 120 “*princes*” to rule the kingdom of Babylon. These “*princes*” would have been responsible to the three “*presidents*” so that the king was greatly aided in his administrative responsibilities.

Daniel was an exceptional administrator, partly because of his extensive experience under King Nebuchadnezzar for about 39 years, but mostly because of the hand of God on His life.

So Darius planned to make Daniel responsible for the administration of the entire kingdom. This, of course, created friction between Daniel and the other 2 presidents and the 120 princes.

II. THE PLOT OF THE LEADERS. (6:4-9)

The other 2 presidents and the 120 princes sought some basis on which to accuse Daniel in his administrative work. They were probably jealous of his position and resented him because he was a Judean.

But they found that Daniel was not corrupt. In fact, he was “*faithful*” and they could not find any error or fault in him.

They decided that they would have to find some basis for accusation in his religious practices, which obviously were well known to them.

So they devised a plot. They suggested to King Darius that he alone be made the sole object of petitions in the kingdom for a 30 day period.

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Whether these 122 leaders consulted the other mentioned leaders or lied about it we do not know. What we do know is they lied about having discussed it with Daniel.

All prayer was supposed to be addressed to the king in recognition of his power and position in the land!

The penalty for rebelling against his religious authority was to be death by being thrown into a den of lions!

If Darius had not been so flattered and had not had a heart filled with pride that loved to feed his self-importance, then there would have been no reason for him to sign this decree!

According to the Medo-Persian custom, the decree was irrevocable once it was signed!

III. THE PRAYER OF DANIEL. (6:10-11)

The decree signed into law by Darius became public knowledge.

But Daniel, knowing of the decree, followed his customary practice (just as he had done before) of going to his own upstairs room three times each day to pray to God.

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

Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem. What was the basis for his praying toward Jerusalem?

Psalm 5:7—“But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”

2 Chronicles 6:21; 34-39

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Daniel’s prayer included a time of giving thanks before God as he acknowledged God’s goodness to him.

His prayer was also a prayer of supplication before God, no doubt for guidance and help (v. 11).

There is no doubt that the responsibility of high office rested heavily on Daniel and he sought God’s wisdom in the decisions he had to make.

Daniel was more than 80 years old at this time (539 B.C.); he was about 16 when he was taken captive 66 years earlier (605 B.C.). So because of his years he may have also sought God for physical strength to carry on his duties.

Daniel surely would also be praying about the persecution he knew would be coming his way soon.

Daniel made no attempt to hide his devotion to or his dependence on God, even though it now meant disobeying a governmental decree (cf. Acts 5:29). Daniel would not and could not look to Darius for the guidance and strength he knew God alone could supply.

Apparently his opponents knew both when and where he prayed, so they assembled (lit., “to gather tumultuously”) and found him and, as expected, he was praying.

IV. THE PROSECUTION OF DANIEL. (6:12-18)

Accusation was soon made against Daniel by his opponents before King Darius who had issued the decree.

So, Darius found himself bound by his own law! Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian had been above the law, but Darius the Mede was bound by law!

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Hearing their accusation against Daniel, whom they belittled as one of the exiles from Judah, Darius was greatly distressed!

Though Darius knew he was bound by the law he had made, he sought some way to rescue Daniel from the penalty the law incurred!

Finding it impossible to do so, he gave the order that Daniel be thrown into the lions' den.

As Daniel was thrown in to the lion's den to what seemed to be certain death, the king said, *"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."* (Vs 16)

Whether Darius knew about God's deliverance of Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace in Nebuchadnezzar's day is not known. Yet, Darius' statement expressed a desire that Daniel be spared.

He certainly wanted him spared, for he obviously appreciated his administrative abilities. Maybe he had been impressed with Daniel's confidence in his God.

A stone was placed over the mouth of the den, which was then sealed with a royal seal, so that Daniel could not escape from the lions' den nor could he be rescued by someone.

The seal, which was an impression made in clay by an image on a ring, would inform others that the stone was not to be tampered with in an effort to free Daniel.

Reluctantly the king confined Daniel to the lion's den.

The king was deeply agitated that he had been tricked by the other presidents and princes and that he was now subject to his own laws. So he spent a night without sleep or food.

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V. THE PRESERVATION OF DANIEL. (6:19-23)

At dawn Darius hurried to the lions' den. He was in anguish over the possibility and the probability of finding Daniel consumed. However, he hoped against hope that Daniel might have been rescued by the God he served.

Daniel answered Darius that God had indeed kept him unharmed because of his innocency (v. 22) and because he trusted in God (v. 23).

God's Angel had kept the lions' mouths shut. I believe this Angel, like the One in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children (3:25), was a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ.

VI. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE KING. (6:24-28)

Darius was upset with those who conspired against Daniel. So he commanded that all of those who accused Daniel, along with their families, be cast into the same lions den that Daniel had been thrown into.

Darius, who by his decree was being revered for a month as a god, then made a proclamation that all subjects of his nation—all the peoples, nations, and men of every language—must fear and reverence Daniel's God.

This was an amazing turnaround on Darius' part! The reason for this, Darius wrote, is that Daniel's God lives (He is the living God; cf. 6:20). (The gods of the Medes and Persians were dead idols as are all other gods!)

The one true God is eternal, His kingdom is indestructible, and He intervenes in people's affairs and delivers those who trust Him!

He works by miraculous power (signs and wonders; cf. 4:2-3) to perform His will, including the miraculous delivery of Daniel.

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Such a God is truly to be revered and worshiped. In spite of the opposition of the princes and the presidents, Daniel was honored and once again we see that he continued!

Conclusion

Darius was a man who let his pride get in the way of good judgment.

Darius was a man who was hasty in his decisions.

Darius was a man who learned about God from a man who knew God personally.

Darius was a man who exalted God when he came to know Him.