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THE DECREE OF DARIUS AND THE LION'S DEN FOR DANIEL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL  
NUMBER 15  
DANIEL 5:31-6:14

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, Daniel, Chapter 6 should begin in Daniel 5:31.

DANIEL 5:31 "And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three-score and two years old." There was a king in Media by the name of Astyages. He had two children; one boy named Cyaxares II and a daughter named Mandane. Mandane was married to the king of the little kingdom called Anshan or Persia, and his name was Cambyses and they had a son, whom we have studied, named Cyrus the Great, a man who was born again. In a very short time he conquered the whole world of his day. The rapidity with which he conquered the world was only exceeded by one man, and his name was Alexander the Great. Cyaxares II had no children and when he died the Median throne went to Cyrus, the king of the Persians. As a matter of fact, he had already conquered little Media. Cyrus is the one who conquered Babylon at the time of the handwriting on the wall. Cyaxares II is also known in history as Darius the Mede. He is the Darius in our passage and at the time of our passage, he was 62 years old and will die in two more years and his son-in-law and nephew, Cyrus the Great, was completing his conquests in other parts of the world at that very time. His father-in-law and uncle, Darius, had been left in charge in Babylon while Cyrus was completing his conquests in other part of the world. In addition to Darius, Cyrus the Great had left General Gobrias there to back him up. So two years from this time, when Darius died, Cyrus the Great was king of both these kingdoms, the Medes and the Persians. The highest law of that day was the law of the Medes and the Persians. We are going to study these laws in this passage and these laws were rather unusual for this reason--in this system the king was subject to the laws just like the common citizens, and this was indeed unusual in the ancient world.

I always smile to myself when I see historians who run down the Persians and play up the Greeks. Actually, the Persians were so far ahead of the Greeks in so many areas. They were ahead scientifically, and in astronomy, and math, and in many other practical areas. The Persians were actually never conquered. Later we will see them appear as the Parthians and the Romans never conquered them. Not until the days of the Mohammedans were they finally phased out. The Persians were the first people in history to subject their kings to the same laws under which they lived. This was not true of any other kingdom of the ancient world. In this study we are going to see Darius put himself in a rather ridiculous position by signing into law a provision with which he could not live. The Persians were a most unusual people and their kingdom lasted for over 200 years and they protected the Jews and their kindness to the Jews made it possible for them to return to Palestine and have their golden age between 515 and 323 B.C.

The Persians in 539 B.C. permitted the Jews to start going back to their land so they could rebuild their temple of worship. So the protection provided by the Persians and the Golden Age of Israel have a very definite link. During the 200 years of the Persians empire many of their rulers were born again leaders. Cyaxares II became a born again individual and at the end of this passage we will see the tract he wrote about his salvation, similar to the one written by Nebuchadnezzar. We learned

from Isaiah 45:1-5 and Isaiah 44:21 that he was born again. He is also mentioned as a believer in Ezekiel 1 and Ezra 1:1-4 and in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. Xerxes, the famous ruler who tried to conquer Greece accepted Christ as Saviour and is Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther. Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 2 tell us that Longimanus was saved. But I defy anyone to show me the names of any Greeks in the Bible who were saved. It is not recorded in Scripture. There is a conflict, academically, in history and in our culture. The conflict is between Christianity on the one hand and neo-classicism on the other, which is represented by people worshipping at the shrine of the Greeks. Now we got many wonderful things from the Greeks, but morally they were the most depraved people in the ancient world. But in almost every ancient history class taught in this nation, the Greeks are magnified and glorified and the Persians are classified as the villains. But the Bible turns this around the other way.

So Daniel 5:31 tells us that Darius the Median took the kingdom, but the Chaldean language says that he received the kingdom. In other words, his nephew, Cyrus the Great, gave the kingdom to him. Cyrus the Great put his uncle Darius on the throne while he went out to expand the empire.

DANIEL 6:1 "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;" Darius will die in two years, and the Median line will die with him, and Cyrus the Great who was half Median and half Persian will found a new line which will last for almost 200 years. His mother was the Median Princess Mandane and his father, Cambyses, the King of Persia.

Darius was 62 years old, backed up by General Gobrias, a very capable general. His genius led to the conquest of the city of Babylon. Two years will elapse until the return of Cyrus, and in the meantime, Darius will rule Babylon. Darius established a new system for ruling the empire by using 120 princes in places of leadership. General Gobrias probably came up with this organization because we read, "It pleased Darius." In other words, he agreed to this plan. The word for prince is satrap and this is the word for governor. There were 120 provinces and over each province was a satrap. The provinces were divided into groups of 40 each, and the leader over each 40 was called a president, and Daniel was the leading president.

DANIEL 6:2 "And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage." The No. 1 president of the provinces was Daniel and he was the one surviving ruler from the Babylonian Empire. Isn't it interesting that Nabonidus was able to live through all this and Cyrus the Great pensioned him for life and left him permanently in Tema, where he had been on a leave of absence for about 15 years. His son, Belshazzar, was killed when they broke into the banquet hall the night of the handwriting on the wall. They slaughtered everybody else but Daniel just stood there in his new robe and golden chain as the third ruler in the empire. They said to Daniel, "Who are you?" And Daniel said, "I'm No. 3" and they said, "Now you are No. 1." So Daniel was named the chief president and he was a link with the past. There were two other presidents. One was a Mede and the other was a Persian. But the empire is going to be run by a Jew, a Mede, and a Persian and the Jew is going to be No. 1. We are going to discover that the Mede and the Persian are very jealous of the Jew because he is very efficient. He was not only great in the field of Bible doctrine, but he knew how to apply doctrine and he was also great in administration. His administration was flawless and although they will try to find some flaw in him, they will not be able to do it. He did his job as unto the Lord. He was capable because he was a prepared man. So Daniel was president over the other presidents.

DANIEL 6:3 "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." The words actually say, "Then this same Daniel" was above the satraps "because an excellent spirit was in him." We now begin to realize the reason for these 23 silent years. Because of them he was a prepared man. There is no substitute for the knowledge that comes from Bible doctrine.

Illustration--"What would you do if Jesus came into the room? Would you try to hide what you are doing and would you pull out the Hymn Book and the Bible?" Now people who go for that sort of clap-trap just don't know the score. They never will understand Bible doctrine. The point is this--If Jesus were to come into the room, the important thing is how much Bible knowledge do you have in your mind. You don't impress God with such phrases as "God willing" and "Dear Brother." Those people who moan and cry in their prayers and "Claim the blood" just never will understand the score. The only time you claim the blood is when you believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour, and you don't pray by claiming the blood. If you don't know doctrine, you can't be used.

JOSHUA 3:7 "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." If God doesn't promote you, then promotion isn't worth it. Joshua had been a faithful general for forty years, had studied doctrine, and God magnified him. Now the two other presidents, the Median president and the Persian president didn't like it one bit that Daniel, the Jew, was promoted over them. Here we have three aristocrats, and Daniel from the tribe of Judah was placed over them. The Chaldean language says, "He had a distinguished spirit." It really means the right kind of attitude built on Bible truth.

Darius quickly saw the superiority of Daniel and sought to put him over the entire realm and by this time Daniel was 82 years old. He had been brought to Babylon in 605 B.C. and was about 14 at that time. We are now at about 538 B.C. so this would make him 82 years of age. Joshua was 30 when he was promoted and Caleb was 85 and here Daniel is 82 and Darius placed him over the other presidents. In today's world we demand that people have experience before we give them a job, and then all too often we say they are too old after they have experience. Now people do not like authority and we are going to see that in the next verse.

DANIEL 6:4 "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." So they want to get him demoted. This is an amazing testimony to the faithfulness and efficiency of Daniel. They hated him and tried to find some flaw in him but they could not. Daniel is the only man in the Bible except Jesus Christ against whom there is not one incident listed where he disobeyed the Lord. Now in verses 5-7 we have the plot that was devised to trap Daniel.

DANIEL 6:5 "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." This was indeed an amazing compliment to Daniel. They would attack him through his faithfulness to God.

DANIEL 6:6 "Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live forever." These enemies met with Darius and said, "King, live forever." They wanted to get on the good side of the king, so they complimented him.

DANIEL 6:7 "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." It says here that all of them consulted together and that is a lie. Daniel is one of them and we know Daniel didn't agree to any such thing. Daniel is one of the presidents and he certainly would not be a part of this. Often today we hear people say, "But everybody's for it," when in reality they are not. Now everyone hadn't been consulted here, especially Daniel. This is quite impressive and sounded wonderful to King Darius. And this law would be binding on Darius as well as upon them.

Now this is one of the most fantastic pieces of legislation in the world. (Until the New Deal.) Here is an empire made up of 120 provinces, with a satrap over each one, and three presidents over them and for thirty days no one can make a request of any leader in all the kingdom except of Darius. Now this means that the empire would practically shut down for thirty days. Darius bought the package in toto and hit the hot wax with his signet ring and signed the legislation and it became the official law of the Medes and the Persians. Now why is Darius going to do a thing like this? I'll tell you why--it catered to his approbation lust. This decree made him a fantastic dictator. It made him a deity and he liked the idea. It was the highest compliment that had ever been paid him, for no one could ask anything of anyone but of him for thirty days.

DANIEL 6:8 "Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." This is a law which cannot be changed. This legislation had two purpose--to feed the ego of the king and to destroy Daniel. Of course, this was contrary to good administration. This legislation does not make good sense. The law of the Medes and the Persians was the law of the empire and even Darius the king was subject to it.

DANIEL 6:9 "Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree." Darius put his signet ring in the ax. Darius was not a married man and did not have a family. He had turned his affections to Daniel and now Darius was to be trapped by his own foolish decree.

#### An Explanation of This Foolish Decree

1. While this law did not make sense because it jammed the administration of the empire, it appealed to the ego and approbation lust of the king. This was the first time in his life he had been placed in such a place of honor.
2. All this law could do was to slow down the affairs of the empire for 30 days.
3. This legislation will accomplish their real purpose, so they thought, and that was to get rid of Daniel.

4. Because the king became emotionally involved with this legislation, it passed with his signature.
5. Emotion and ego destroy human stability and blind the true issues. When one becomes emotional, he cannot think clearly.
6. Bad decisions are based on emotion and we as believers are commanded to stay away from emotional believers. Romans 16:17-19  
"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

DANIEL 6:10 "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel saw through this immediately. He could have rationalized and could have said that 30 days without prayer would be better than to be destroyed in the lion's den. But remember--the Lord had promoted Daniel and only the Lord can demote Daniel. But Daniel never wavered in his devotion to his Lord. So when for 30 days all religious freedom was terminated, and when for 30 days the whole empire was interrupted by a ridiculous law, Daniel went right on with his accustomed prayers.

Notice--"He went into his house." He had a right to his privacy. And he opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed. The reason for this can be found in 1 Kings 8:46-50. When the Jews were under the 5th cycle of discipline, they were told to pray toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day and he found this principle in Psalm 55:17. Now when there is a conflict between human law and divine law, divine law always takes the precedence. He was consistent and didn't rationalize and he followed the customs he had developed over a period of 66 years. So he did just exactly as he had always done. He put it all in God's hands according to Psalm 55:22. He operated under the principle of Psalm 37:4-5. He knew the plot was devised to get him, but he prayed just the same. He did not faint in his mind, the principle of Hebrews 12:2. He continued to have perfect peace and Isaiah 26:3-4 is illustrated here in Daniel's activity.

Remember, Daniel was a favorite of Darius, but we will see that the power of Darius will not be enough to protect Daniel. But God has enough power to protect Daniel, and Daniel has chosen to go God's way. Later on Darius will trust in the Lord because of this experience with Daniel. Daniel carried his own happiness around with him, for he knew he had made the right decisions, so he went right on praying just as he had prayed before. This unjust law was designed to stop everyone from praying, but it didn't stop Daniel. Now we have some goofy laws like that today, but we need to remember that we as Christians have the right to pray anywhere and any time.

DANIEL 6:11 "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." Now this is exactly what they intended to do. They watched that window. We will call it the Jerusalem window. Please notice he didn't hide. He continued just as his custom had been. It is always patriotic to do what is right.

DANIEL 6:12 "Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Now in this verse Daniel's name is not mentioned. But these men in a very clever piece of strategy got Darius to restate the legislation. The king had to go along with his own law by restating it he placed himself in a no-turn-back situation.

DANIEL 6:13 "Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." They call him "That Daniel which is a Jew" and this was the way they had for playing him down. They didn't call him the chief president which he actually was.

This is a good time to examine this legislation. In a national entity, if that nation is to be stabilized, all legislation must be compatible with Bible principles. Some legislation is and some is not. For instance, legislation cannot make all people equal. This brings the analogy down to our day. Much legislation we have today attempts to make people equal, and it can't be done. It takes regeneration to make men equal and only God can do this. Neither can legislation remove poverty or change environment. Legislation is designed to protect the rights of the individual within a national entity. Legislation should be designed to allow freedom of choice in religion, business, and social life. Legislation should never force people against their free will. The federal government does not have the right to tell a man who can be hired and who cannot. Each person in a free society has the right to pick out his friends and associates. Legislation is designed to protect the innocent and to punish the guilty. Laws are designed to protect your freedom, your property, your conscience. Now socialism does not take these things into account. Another principle here is that patriotism begins with regeneration. Born again people have caused nations to survive, and Daniel's activity here is going to be one of the major factors that will inspire the Jews to get straightened out and go back to their land and have 200 years of their golden age. Two hundred years of peace and prosperity was the result of this action.

DANIEL 6:14 "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him." Here is the king's frustration. The king finally realized that he had been trapped by his own stupidity. He had tripped over his own approbation lust and was in a real jam. Darius loved Daniel more than all the other and here Darius came to realize that ego lust pays miserable dividends. We are often blinded by the nature of our actions until we see their consequences. The lust pattern is quite often the greatest blinder of self and it always is connected with emotionalism. He spent all day trying to save Daniel. He tried to rescind the law and tried to by-pass his own law but he was unable to do it. And that night Darius is going to suffer more in his bedroom than Daniel will suffer in the den of the lions. That night in the master bedroom of the palace, King Darius will be miserable while Daniel will have one of the best nights of his life sleeping with the warm lions for a pillow. Here is a king with everything, but miserable. But Daniel was safer than he had ever been before. Lions usually prowl at night, but on this night they all went to sleep and slept all night long. The lions all purred like kittens and went to sleep. So we will leave them at this point, the miserable king and the contented Daniel. Come back for the next study and see how it all turns out.