

Reformation Fellowship Notes • June 7, 2020

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Handout #8

Daniel 6

I. Introduction

- A. The Babylonian Empire fell.
 - 1. It was replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - a) There was a lot of internal dissension in Babylon.
 - b) Cyrus capitalized on this dissension to overtake Babylon.
 - (1) It was a relatively friendly takeover.
 - (a) Nabonidus was given an area to rule in his retirement.
 - (2) But Cyrus carried out a propaganda campaign to claim that he was chosen by Marduk to conquer Babylon.
 - 2. It was a whole new empire,
 - a) But very little has changed.
- B. Daniel was old.
 - 1. About 84 years old
 - a) He had served in government at a high level for most of that time.
 - b) He may not have been a high-ranking official during the time of Belshazzar.
- C. Quick comment on the name of the emperor
 - 1. Great confusion about Darius the Mede
 - a) Who is he?
 - 2. D. J. Wiseman wrote an essay on this topic.
 - a) He concludes that Darius the Mede is Cyrus the Persian.
 - (1) Darius the Mede is a name that was only used the first year after conquering Babylon.
 - (2) The last verse of this chapter could be translated, *So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*
 - b) I am assuming that this equation is correct.
 - 3. Cyrus was 62 at this time

II. Daniel 6:1-5

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 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. 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. 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. 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.”

- A. Daniel continued to enjoy the favor of the emperor.
 - 1. He must have been a very competent and likeable person.
- B. Cyrus reorganized the administration of the empire.
 - 1. Why was a reorganization necessary?
 - a) Always happens
 - b) Cyrus institutes a completely different approach to Empire.
 - 2. How do you create a union of nations that will keep contributing to the one goal (wealth of the dominant kingdom)?
 - a) Assyrians—fear and intimidation
 - (1) Deport peoples and intersperse them throughout the empire
 - (a) Caused people to be dispirited
 - (b) Created chaos
 - (c) Force is the most expensive form of social control.
 - b) Babylonians
 - (1) Deport leaders of society to colonies
 - (a) Less disruptive, but still costly
 - c) Persians
 - (1) Let people return and rebuild their nations.
 - (a) Gratitude
 - (b) Less rebellion
 - d) This would have required a different mind-set from administrators.
 - (1) No heavy-handedness
 - (2) This would have been a very difficult transition.
 - 3. The empire was divided into 120 districts with a satrap appointed over each district.
 - 4. Three individuals were appointed as overseers of the satraps.
 - a) One of these overseers was Daniel.
 - b) Their job was to look out for the interests of the king.

His intention in appointing overseers of his civil service is that the king suffer no loss, that is, in territory due to uprisings, or in taxation due to graft. (Baldwin, p. 142)

- C. Daniel was particularly capable in this position.
 - 1. He was very successful.
 - 2. The king planned to make him the overseer of the entire realm.
- D. This aroused jealousy from the other overseers and the satraps.
 - 1. They may have preferred a system in which corruption was winked at.
 - 2. They looked for grounds to accuse Daniel for wrongdoing.

- a) They apparently surveilled Daniel looking for something they could use against him.
 - b) They could find nothing.
 - c) Daniel had a lot of integrity.
3. They realized that the only way to drive a wedge between Daniel and the king was to take advantage of Daniel's loyalty to the God of Israel.
- a) They wanted to show that since Daniel had a higher loyalty to God, his loyalty to the king was not complete.
 - (1) Complete loyalty to the Empire is inherently attractive to the spirit of Empire.
 - (a) The greater one's investment in Empire, the greater the attraction.

III. Daniel 6:6-9

So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! ² 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 man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ² Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." ² So King Darius put the decree in writing.

- 1. They colluded to entrap Daniel.
 - a) They devised a law that appealed to the king's ego.
 - (1) No one can pray to any god or man besides the king for 30 days
 - (a) Contributes to the unity of the empire
 - (b) Temporary measure
 - (i) Not long enough to raise the ire of the priests
 - (c) Grants the king god-like status
 - (2) Punishment for violation: thrown into the lions' den
 - b) They encouraged the king to sign the law quickly.
 - (1) The law of the Medes and Persians was considered irrevocable.
 - (a) The plotters wanted Darius to sign it before he recognized the unintended consequences of this law.
- 2. Darius signed the law.

IV. Daniel 6:10-15

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. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 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 man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?"

The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

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

¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, “Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

A. Daniel had a habit of praying to YHWH three times each day.

1. His house had windows facing toward Jerusalem.
 - a) He would pray on his knees facing Jerusalem.
 - (1) No commandment requires this.
 - (2) II Chronicles 6:28-31:

[Solomon:] “When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, ²⁹ and when a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel—each one aware of his afflictions and pains, and spreading out his hands toward this temple—³⁰ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of men), ³¹ so that they will fear you and walk in your ways all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers.

- b) Three times a day
 - (1) No commandment requires this.
 - (2) It could be based on Psalm 55:16-19.
 - (a) David is talking about the need for prayer in times of affliction:

*Psa. 55:16 But I call to God,
and the LORD saves me.*

¹⁷ *Evening, morning and noon
I cry out in distress,
and he hears my voice.*

¹⁸ *He ransoms me unharmed
from the battle waged against me,
even though many oppose me.*

¹⁹ *God, who is enthroned forever,
will hear them and afflict them— Selah*

2. Daniel continued this practice even after the law prohibiting prayer was instituted.
 - a) He was not cowed by the threat of execution.
 - b) His practice was semi-public.
 - (1) He could have modified his practice to make it private.

B. Daniel’s adversaries caught Daniel in the act.

1. They went as a group to spy on Daniel.
 - a) Many witnesses
2. They approached the king and asked him if he signed a law prohibiting prayer.

- a) Given the nature of Persian law, the king had no choice but to execute Daniel.
- 3. Then they said they caught Daniel praying.
 - a) One of the exiles from Judah
 - (1) Obviously, a derogatory statement
 - b) He pays no attention to you.
 - (1) This is a gross exaggeration.
 - (2) This implies that Daniel is insubordinate.
 - (3) Daniel violates the law three times per day.
- C. The king was distressed because the law caught Daniel.
 - a) The king spent all day trying to figure out how to spare Daniel.
 - (1) The king cares deeply about Daniel.
 - b) Daniel's adversaries argued that the law could not be broken.
 - (1) Laws are only as good as the public will to enforce them.
 - (2) To ignore a law is to undermine all laws.

V. Daniel 6:16-18

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!"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.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.

- A. The king orders the execution to be done.
 - 1. Darius assures Daniel that God would protect him.
 - 2. Daniel is thrown into the lions' den.
 - a) A large rock is put in place and sealed.
 - (1) Under the authority of the king and his nobles
 - (a) They are pressuring him to carry through with the punishment.
 - 3. Darius went home and worried.
 - a) No food
 - b) No entertainment
 - c) No sleep
 - 4. The empire forced the emperor to do something he did not want to do.

VI. Daniel 6:19-24

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den.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?"²¹ Daniel answered, "O king, live forever!²² 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, O king."

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.*

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.*

- A. The king got up early and went to the lions' den to see what happened.
 - 1. Darius probably didn't sleep that night.
 - 2. He called out to Daniel.
 - 3. The king calls Daniel "the servant of the living God."
 - 4. Did your God save you?
- B. Daniel responded.
 - 1. He responds respectfully to the king.
 - a) O king live forever!
 - 2. My God saved me.
 - a) He sent his angel to muzzle the lions.
 - b) Because
 - (1) Daniel was innocent before God;
 - (2) Daniel was innocent before the king.
- C. The king ordered to have Daniel taken out of the lions' den.
 - 1. He also ordered to have Daniel's enemies thrown into the lions' den,
 - a) Along with their wives and children.
 - 2. These people were attacked before they hit the ground.
 - a) The lions ate them completely.

VII. Daniel 6:25-27

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land:

"May you prosper greatly!

²⁶ *"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.*

²⁷ *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."*

- A. Darius issued a decree to the entire empire.
 - 1. Every people, language and nation
 - 2. May your peace abound!
 - 3. Everyone should fear the God of Daniel.
 - a) His kingdom is living and eternal.
 - b) It will never be destroyed.
 - c) He will rule forever.
 - d) He saves.
 - e) He performs signs in heaven and on earth.
 - f) He delivered Daniel from the lions.
 - 4. There is no extra-biblical confirmation of such a decree.

VIII. Daniel 6:28

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- A. I talked about this earlier.
- B. A complete reversal of what the plotters had intended
 - 1. It's great to see the good guys win!

IX. Conclusion

- A. Why are chapters 3 and 6 so similar?

Similarities between this chapter and chapter 3 include not only the general theme of God's deliverance from certain death but also structure, style and vocabulary. There is the same use of repetition effectively employed so that, for example, the thrice-repeated refrain 'the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked' anticipates the irony of verse 26, where the new decree effectively negates the object of the original decree of verse 7. There is also a certain overlap in vocabulary between the two chapters, illustrated by the word 'satrap' just cited, by *dat*, 'decree' (3:29; 6:5 'law') and by the idiom 'make a decree' (3:10, 29; 6:26) (Baldwin, p. 140)

- 1. One could argue, "the chapters are similar because the events they describe are similar."
 - a) But why did God orchestrate similar events?
 - b) And why similar structure, style, and vocabulary?
- 2. We are clearly being encouraged to relate the two chapters.
- B. One explanation: Continuity of Empire
 - 1. The Persian empire replaced the Babylonian empire.
 - a) But more stayed the same than changed.
 - 2. The tendency of sinful human beings to gravitate toward Empire results in the persistence of Empire no matter who is in power or what political changes take place.

- a) Solzhenitsyn's point that revolutions don't change anything
- C. That continuity is assured by the administrative apparatus.
 - 1. There are a limited number of people who have the experience and training to operate a complex administrative system.
 - 2. Their interests are closely allied with the interests of the Empire.
 - 3. In both events, a nameless cadre of administrative personnel work to destroy Daniel and his friends.
 - a) Daniel and his friends are not in solidarity with the cadre.
- D. Empire takes on a life of its own.
 - 1. Personnel
 - 2. Institutions
 - 3. Laws
 - 4. Even the emperor is a victim of Empire.
- E. Within the ranks of the administrative personnel, Daniel keeps finding some sympathetic people.
 - 1. The Emperor
 - a) Nebuchadnezzar
 - b) Cyrus
 - 2. Ashpenaz, chief of the court officials
 - 3. The guard assigned to the young interns
 - 4. They buffered Daniel and his friends from the harshness of Empire.
- F. Other unrelated comments pertaining to this chapter
 - 1. The unintended consequences of sweeping laws is a huge problem.
 - a) In a complex system, no one can predict all the ways that a given change will impact all of the parts.
 - (1) The bigger the change, the greater the unpredictability.
 - b) Incremental change is usually much better.
 - 2. Daniel is a remarkable man
 - a) Capable
 - b) Incorruptible
 - c) Unflappable
 - d) Devoted to God
 - e) Loyal to his people
 - (1) He prayed faithfully for the forgiveness of Israel.
 - f) Worthy of our admiration and emulation