

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Darius the Median, who succeeded Belshazzar in the kingdom of Babylon, having heard of Daniel's extraordinary wisdom and understanding, constitutes him the chief of the three presidents who were over the whole empire, and purposed also to make him prime minister or viceroy, Daniel 6:1-3. This great partiality of the king towards a stranger of Jewish extraction, and who had been carried captive into Chaldea, raised up a great many enemies to Daniel; and a scheme was even contrived by the presidents and princes to ruin him, Daniel 6:4-15; which succeeded so far that he was cast into a den of lions, but was miraculously delivered, Daniel 6:16-23. Darius, who was greatly displeased with himself for having been entrapped by the governors of the provinces to the prejudice of his faithful minister, is pleased and astonished at this deliverance; punished Daniel's enemies with the same kind of death which they had designed for the prophet; and made a decree that, throughout his dominions, the God of Daniel should be had in the greatest veneration, Daniel 6:24-28.

Verse 1

A hundred and twenty princes - A chief or satrap over every province which belonged to the Medo-Persian empire. Afterwards we find it enlarged to one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, by the victories of Cambyses and Darius Hystaspes. See Esther 1:1. Josephus reckons three hundred and sixty satrapies or lordships; but this is most probably an exaggeration or mistake.

Verse 2

Three presidents - Each having forty of these presidents accountable to him for their administration.

Daniel was first - As being established over that part where was the seat of government. He was confirmed in his offices by Darius.

Verse 3

The king thought to set him over the whole realm - Intended to make him grand vizier or emir ul amrim. This partiality of the king made Daniel the object of the other presidents, and the grandees of the kingdom.

Verse 4

Sought to find occasion against Daniel - But they found no blemish in his administration, for he was faithful to his king: this was a virtue. But he was also faithful to his God: this they hoped to construe into a crime, and make it the cause of his ruin.

Verse 7

Whosoever shall ask a petition - What pretense could they urge for so silly an ordinance? Probably to flatter the ambition of the king, they pretend to make him a god for thirty days; so that the whole empire should make prayer and supplication to him, and pay him Divine honors! This was the bait; but their real object was to destroy Daniel.

Verse 8

According to the law of the Medes and Persians - I do not think that this is to be understood so as to imply that whatever laws or ordinances the Medes or Persians once enacted, they never changed them. This would argue extreme folly in legislators in any country. Nothing more appears to be meant than that the decree should be enacted, written, and registered, according to the legal forms among the Medes and Persians; and this one to be made absolute for thirty days. The laws were such among this people, that, when once passed with the usual formalities, the king could not change them at his own will. This is the utmost that can be meant by the law of the Medes and Persians that could not be changed.

Verse 10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed - He saw what was designed, and he knew whom he served.

His windows being open - He would not shut them to conceal himself, but he kneeled down with his face turned toward Jerusalem, and prayed thrice each day, giving thanks to God as usual. When the Jews were in distant countries, in prayer they turned their faces towards Jerusalem; and when in Jerusalem, they turned their faces towards the temple. Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, 1 Kings 8:48, had entreated God to hear the prayers of those who might be in strange lands, or in captivity, when they should turn their faces towards their own land, which God gave unto their fathers; and towards the city which he had chosen, and the house which was dedicated to his name. It was in reference to this that Daniel turned his face towards

Jerusalem when he prayed.

Verse 12

Shall be cast into the den of lions - Either this was the royal menagerie, like that place in the Tower of London, where wild beasts are kept for the king's pleasure, and the public amusement; or they were kept for the purpose of devouring certain criminals, which the laws might consign to that kind of death. This is most likely, from the case before us.

Verse 14

The king - was sore displeased with himself - And well he might, when through his excessive folly he passed a law that, for its ostensible object, would have been a disgrace almost to an idiot.

And set his heart on Daniel - He strove by every means to get the law annulled. He had no doubt spoken to several of his lords in private, and had gone from one to another till the going down of the sun.

Verse 15

Then these men assembled - Having got favorable answers, as we may presume, from many individuals, he called a parliament; but they now collectively joined to urge the execution of the law, not its repeal.

Verse 16

Then the king commanded - With a heavy heart he was obliged to warrant this murderous conspiracy. But when passing sentence his last words were affecting: "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." He is thy God; thou servest him, not occasionally, but continually; therefore "he will deliver thee." Daniel had now the same kind of opportunity of showing his fidelity to God, as his three Hebrew companions before. The lions were not less terrible than the fiery furnace.

Verse 17

A stone was brought - All this precaution served the purposes of the Divine Providence. There could be no trick nor collusion here; if Daniel be preserved, it must be by the power of the Supreme God. The same precaution was taken by the Jews, in the case of the burial of our blessed Lord; and this very thing has served as one of the strongest proofs of the certainty of his resurrection and their unmingled wickedness.

Verse 18

Passed the night fasting - He neither ate nor drank, had no music to solace, nor sweet odors burnt or brought before him, and he passed the night without sleep. All this points out his great sincerity; and when it is considered that Darius could not be less than sixty-two or sixty-three years of age at this time, it shows more fully the depth of his concern.

Verse 19

The king arose very early - By the break of day.

Verse 20

He cried with a lamentable voice - His heart, full of grief, affected his speech.

Servant of the living God - The king was convinced that, unless his God saved him, his destruction was inevitable.

Verse 22

My God hath sent his angel - Such a one as that who attended Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the fiery furnace, and blew aside the flames, so that they could not hurt them.

Before him innocency was found in one - Because I was innocent God has preserved me; and now that I am preserved, my innocence is fully proved.

Verse 23

No manner of hurt was found upon him - And why? Because he believed in his God. How mighty is faith? It interests that power in the behalf of the believer by which the sea is dried up, the mountains removed, the dead raised to life, sin forgiven, the heart purified, Satan vanquished, death conquered, and God himself delighted and glorified! See Hebrews 11.

Verse 24

They brought those men - It was perfectly just that they should suffer that death to which they had endeavored to subject the innocent; but it was savage cruelty to destroy the women and children who had no part in the transgression.

Verse 25

Then king Darius wrote - And the substance of this decree, which was made by a heathen king, was to point out the perfections of the true God, and the fidelity of his devoted servant.

Verse 26

I make a decree that - men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel - As in the case of the three Hebrews, Daniel 3:29. The true God was known by his servants, and by the deliverances he wrought for them. See his characters in this decree.

1.He is the living God, the Author and Giver of life; all others are dead gods.

2.He is steadfast for ever. All things change; but he is unchangeable.

3.He has a kingdom; for as he made all things, so he governs all things.

4.His kingdom shall not be destroyed. No human power can prevail against it, because it is upheld by his omnipotence.

5.His dominion is without end. It is an everlasting dominion, under an everlasting rule, by an everlasting God.

6.He delivereth them that are in danger and bondage.

7.He rescueth those who have fallen into the hands of their enemies, and implore his succor.

8.He worketh signs in the heavens.

9.And wonders upon earth; showing that both are under his sway, and are parts of his dominion.

10.And to complete all, He hath delivered Daniel. Before our own eyes he has given the fullest proof of his power and goodness, in rescuing his faithful servant from the teeth of the lions. What a fine eulogium on the great God and his faithful servant!

Verse 28

So this Daniel prospered - He had served fine kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. Few courtiers have had so long a reign, served so many masters without flattering any, been more successful in their management of public affairs, been so useful to the states where they were in office, or have been more owned of God, or have left such an example to posterity.

Where shall we find ministers like Samuel and Daniel? None so wise, so holy, so disinterested, so useful, have ever since appeared in the nations of the earth.