

• *The story so far – the victory of a believer despite the oppression of pagan kingdoms*

A major theme of the Book of Daniel, as we have seen, is the victory of the individual believer despite the oppression of pagan kingdoms. The four young men had refused to become so Babylonian as to deny their membership of the people of Israel (Daniel chapter 1). Daniel had interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar and so his experience with a pagan king had been placed in the context of hundreds of years where the people of God would be distinct among the citizens of the land in which they lived (chapter 2). The conflict between loyalty to God and loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar arose in an acute form for the three friends of Daniel but God had enabled them to stand firm in their loyalty to the God of Israel (chapter 3). At the end of the first four chapters of the book came the greatest victory of all. Daniel had been involved in Nebuchadnezzar's conversion (Daniel chapter 4). Yet the conversion of the emperor is not the only possibility and over twenty years later Daniel had been involved in God's giving a warning to Belshazzar on the evening when the Babylonian empire came to an end (Daniel chapter 5).

• *Once again Daniel is promoted to high office – this time under Darius*

Now once again Daniel is appointed to high office. Darius appointed 120 governors to rule over the land with three senior officials above them, one of whom was Daniel^{□1}. It was a very high honour. Daniel had refused Belshazzar's offer of high promotion^{□2}. Now it came to him from Darius. Presumably the appointment came as a result of what happened at the very end of Belshazzar's rule. When Darius heard of the way Daniel had told Belshazzar that his kingdom was finished and that another emperor was about to take over, Darius must have wanted precisely such a person to be one of his senior officials.

□1 6:1-2
□2 5:16-17

• *Darius the Mede is most likely one and the same as Cyrus the Persian*

But who exactly is 'Darius the Mede'? Is he perhaps Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, or could he be Gubaru, an appointee of Cyrus, or is he Cambyses, Cyrus's son? The most likely answer to the question, in my opinion, is that Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian are the same person. Cyrus was the son of a Median princess (according to Herodotus the historian). Josephus said he had two names. He was well able to call himself both Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. Cyrus's age at this time is known to have been sixty-two years. So there is much that suggests Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian are the same person. Daniel 6:28 should be translated: *So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, during the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Faithfulness to both country and God

Once again we see a model of faithfulness to the country combined with faithfulness to God. Daniel was so trustworthy in his work for Darius that he was about to become a deputy for the king over the entire land^{□1}. Apparently the king was suffering loss because of corruption in the land^{□2} and he could find few men that he could trust. Daniel had shown himself faithful in doing the work given him, and faithful in handling money.

□1 6:3
□2 6:2

Daniel faced much jealousy

But Daniel faced much jealousy. One might think that a faithful man would be admired by everyone but it was not so. Those under Daniel do not find it easy to continue to profit financially at the king's expense while Daniel is in charge, so a way is sought to get rid of him. They realize that unless they can get him into trouble in connection with his faith in God he is not able to be accused in any other way^{□1}. Daniel renders to Darius the things that belong to Darius and to God the things that belong to God.

□1 6:4-6

• An unalterable law banning prayer to any other God – the pagan view of religion and state

Once again the pagan view of religion-and-state becomes visible. The king is persuaded to ban praying to any god except a state-appointed god^{□1}. Inevitably this will lead to persecution. In this case the suggestion is that Darius himself is to be the state-deity, for thirty days! The king signs the document which makes it law, and apparently it was Persian custom that such rulings, once made, could not be cancelled^{□2}(see Esther 1:19; 8:8 for a similar situation). It is a classic case of malicious scheming. Daniel was a very high official in the state of Persia and yet faces manipulation and treachery from men who are jealous of him. Even Darius himself cannot rescue him.

□1 6:7-8

□2 6:9

Daniel will not deny his knowledge of God

• Daniel's bold public testimony to his faith in the God of Israel

Daniel will not deny his knowledge of God. He makes not the slightest attempt to hide his praying to the God of Israel! If anything, he seems to ask for trouble. The key words here, at the end of verse 10, are *as he had been doing previously*. He was known for his praying. If he now prayed privately or secretly it would in effect be saying that he was not praying to God but was obeying the decree concerning prayer to Darius. To stay out of trouble would be to seem to accept idolatry. How often men and women betray the Lord Jesus Christ not by doing something but by doing nothing and staying quiet. In Elijah's day there were 7,000 believers who kept so quiet about their faith that Elijah did not even know they existed! All Daniel had to do to avoid trouble was to keep out of sight for thirty days. He simply had to close his windows or pray elsewhere. But Daniel knew what his enemies were doing and he had no intention of denying his faith in the God of Israel. He does not even have to think about it. Facing Jerusalem, he prays as boldly as ever. He maintains a bold testimony concerning his faith in the God of Israel.



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