

Study 8

The Law of the Medes and Persians

Daniel 6

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Introductory Summary: There is a new ruler in Babylon. (1) In the change of administrations, he organizes his political rule over an expanded kingdom. (2) He chooses what he believes are the best rulers to represent him throughout the empire. (3) In the process, he soon learns that his subordinates are not happy with the choice of Daniel as second in command. (4) In order to remove Daniel as an obstacle, these political appointees have to find some political contrivance that will be perceived to be a threat to the authority of the king. (5) They use the letter of the law of the Medes and Persians to put the king in a no-win political situation. (6) Ultimately, this is a chapter about death and resurrection, a type of the greater death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I. Who is “Darius the Mede” (Dan. 5:31)?

A. According to Donald J. Wiseman, the “and” in Daniel 6:28 should be translated as “even,” in the sense of “that is.” In other words, the verse should read, “So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius the Mede, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” indicating that the two are the same person.¹

1. Known as Darius by the Medes.
2. Known as Cyrus by the Persians.

¹Donald J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965), 12. In a footnote, Wiseman records that he first advanced this hypothesis in a BBC broadcast in 1957 that was subsequently published in *Christianity Today*, II (1957), 7–10: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/daniel_wiseman.pdf

3. “It is submitted that, while it must remain only a *theory* and be further tested, the view that the ‘Darius the Mede’ could be another name used of ‘Cyrus the Persian’ and as such specifically noted in Daniel 6:28 has support from the text itself in that Cyrus was about sixty-two years old, received the kingdom and appointed.”²

B. The events of Daniel 6 anticipate those of the 70th week of years that Daniel 9 predicts (9:1–2): **Darius is said to be 62 years old; the captivity is to be 70 years.**

1. Keep in mind that Daniel, like the OT in general, is looking forward to the coming of Christ.

2. This is not just a story about political intrigue, although it is that since so much of our fallen world is wrapped up in the effects of the fall.

3. Daniel is a type of Christ, being prophet (speaks for God), priest (mediates for God), and king (exercises dominion under God).

4. Daniel is also a type of Christ in that he anticipates a greater Daniel—(“a son in whom I am well pleased” (Daniel: God is my judge)—who is raised from the dead (6:17; see Matt. 27:66).

C. The rise of the Medo-Persian kingdom—the kingdom of silver— is the fulfillment of the prophecy given through Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 and he tried to overrule in chapter 3.

D. Darius seems to have had a better knowledge of Daniel’s God than did Nebuchadnezzar (6:16).

II. An Insurrection in the Kingdom

A. The **sovereign** appoints **representatives** (Dan. 6:1–2).

1. Who’s in charge?

²Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” 15–16.

2. To whom do I report?
 3. What's the law?
 4. What happens if I break the law?
 5. Does this outfit have a future?
- B. The legitimacy of political involvement.
1. Daniel did not reject getting involved in civil government by claiming any of the following:
 - a. Politics is dirty (So what isn't?)
 - b. You can't impose your morality on other people (All law is a reflection of someone's view of morality.)
 - c. God must be divorced from government (Atheism is not neutrality.)³
 - d. There's a separation between church and state (Jurisdictionally there is; but there is no separation between God and civil government.)
 2. The civil magistrate is declared to be a "minister of God" (Rom 13:4).
 3. While Paul stated that our "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20), this did not stop him from appealing to his Roman citizenship when it was appropriate (Acts 22:22–30) and to Caesar (25:11–12).
- C. The king follows wise governing procedures: He decentralizes political power by placing his representatives throughout the kingdom.
- D. The representatives don't want to represent the sovereign on the sovereign's terms.
- E. The *coup d'état* and how to avert one.

³See David Silverman, "GOP Atheist Tells Michael Steele to Divorce Religious Right" (February 1, 2009): <http://www.opposingviews.com/articles/opinion-gop-atheist-tells-michael-steele-to-divorce-religious-right>. Silverman's assumption that to separate from anything religious is by definition neutrality.

1. Exodus 18:17–27: “It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. Now when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?’ Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws.’ Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, **then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.** Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace. So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. They

judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.”

2. First Timothy 3:1–10: “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. **An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.** Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.”
3. Acts 20:28–31: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore

be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

- F. They resent Daniel as someone to whom they will be accountable.
1. He will become the gate keeper to the king (6:2), and since he “possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom” (6:3), he is the sole obstacle to any potential to their advancement.
 - a. Media gatekeepers
 - b. Educational gatekeepers
 - c. Scientific gatekeepers
 2. They look for a chink in Daniel’s character armor: “Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him” (6:4).
 - a. Why was Newt Gingrich quiet during Bill Clinton’s problems with Monica Lewinsky? He was having an *affair with a 33-year-old congressional aide*.
 - b. “Then these men said, ‘We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel **unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God**’” (Dan. 6:5).
 - i. IRS Regulations. In 1954, Johnson was facing re-election to the Senate and was being aggressively opposed by two non-profit anti-Communist groups that were attacking Johnson’s liberal agenda. In retaliation, Johnson inserted language into the IRS code that prohibited non-profits, including churches, from endorsing or opposing candidates for political office. In effect, Senator Johnson used the

power of the go-along Congress and the IRS to silence his opposition.

Unfortunately, it worked. Some in Johnson's staff claimed that Johnson never intended to go after churches, only the two "nonprofits" in Texas. Nevertheless, his sly amendment to the tax code affected every church in America, and it is a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

ii. Hate Crime Legislation

- c. These men intended to force Darius to do their bidding and use Daniel as a cat's paw (dupe).⁴
3. Jesus is used in the same way
- a. "Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, 'Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.' And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' Then He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's. And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away'" (Matt. 22:15–22).

⁴From a fable in which a crafty monkey begs a cat to pull hot chestnuts from a fire. The cat singes his paw, and the monkey gobbles up the chestnuts leaving none for the cat. Today, the term "cat's paw" refers to "one used by another to accomplish his purposes."

- b. “And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’” (Luke 23:2).
 - c. “As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.’ Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Aramaic, Gabbatha” (John 19:12).
4. The satraps, governors of the provinces, approach the king as a united front in an attempt to force the king’s hand.
 5. They claim that “all” the officials have agreed that this should be done, which is a lie, since Daniel had not been consulted. We can assume that Darius thought Daniel was in agreement with this.

III. The Trap

- A. The governors use the law of the Medes and Persians “which may not be revoked” (6:8) to trap Daniel.
- B. Here we see man playing at being God, for clearly only God’s laws are unchangeable. In fact, this becomes one of the main issues in this text, for at the end Darius does indeed change his ruling, submitting to God’s higher law.
- C. We see the same concept in both church and state.
 1. The papacy claimed it had a divine right as the “vicar of Christ on earth”: “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as **Vicar of Christ**, and as pastor of the entire

Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise.”⁵

2. Civil rulers made an equal claim to a divine right to rule.
 - a. King James I expressed it this way: “Kings are justly called gods, for they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth; for if you will consider the attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. God hath power to create or destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life or send death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none; to raise low things and to make high things low at his pleasure, to give life or send death, judges over all their subjects and in all causes and yet accountable to none but God only. They have power to exalt low things and abase high things, and make their subjects like men at the chess, a pawn to take a bishop or a knight, and to cry up and down any of their subjects, as they do their money. And to the king is due both affection of the soul and the service of the body of his subjects....”
 - b. King James and the Geneva Bible: King James considered the Geneva Bible “seditious” and made its ownership a felony. James I was particularly worried about marginal notes such as the one in Exod 1:19, which allowed disobedience to Kings. Consequently, King James eventually introduced the King James Version, which drew largely from the Geneva Bible (minus the marginal notes that had enraged him). During the reign of James I and into the reign of Charles I the use of the Geneva Bible steadily declined as the

⁵*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: US Catholic Conference, 1994, 1997), # 882.

Authorized King James version became more widely used. In 1644 the Geneva Bible was printed for the last time.⁶

IV. The King's Response

- A. Darius should have declared, like he would later, that only God's law endures forever.
 - 1. We can see that if the satraps are victorious against Daniel, they also gain more power over Darius.
 - 2. Why a den of lions? These great monarchs had zoos and lion parks, so there is nothing strange about casting Daniel to the lions. Indeed, keeping such zoos was part of the symbolism of a kingdom, positioning the king as a kind of Adam with dominion over animals, even if these kings did not think of the biblical narrative but of their own corrupted mythological versions of the true story.
 - 3. Daniel 6 reflects partly on the sixth day of creation. Man rules the animals. But who really rules them?
 - a. Who is the real "Adam" in Daniel 6?
 - b. Who are the real animals?
- B. Tooth for tooth (Ex. 21:24): Those who chewed up Daniel were themselves chewed up.
- C. Unlike the early Nebuchadnezzar, Darius knew his place under God. Nebuchadnezzar had asked, when he cast earlier men into an earlier pit, "who is that god that will deliver you from my hands?" (3:15). What that earlier king learned, that his rule was under God's, Darius already knew: "Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (6:16).

⁶After the death of King James, his son Charles I ascended to the throne. Charles appointed William Laud, who had been Bishop of London, to the see of Canterbury. One of Laud's first orders was to forbid the printing of the Geneva Bible in England to assure uniformity of Bibles. At first, this did not cause any difficulty because it was easy to procure copies from overseas. However, Laud issued an edict forbidding the importation of the Geneva Bible because it would cause economic hardship to British printers. The last printing of the Geneva Bible was done in Amsterdam in 1644. (http://www.solagroup.org/articles/historyofthebible/hotb_0015.html)

Darius did not need to learn who was supreme in his kingdom, but he did need to learn what Law was supreme, whose Law was unchangeable.

V. As a society becomes more secular and anti-God, laws will be implemented to make it difficult for Christians to live freely in terms of their faith.

A. Modern man finds such a decree fantastic.

1. Judges and politicians continually write laws where the ultimate consequences of their decisions are irrelevant. It's the fact that a law is made that is most important.
2. In the heyday of judicial activism, lawyers "were like doctors in the two decades after the discovery of antibiotics. There was nothing they could not do, no problem they could not solve. Whatever ailed the country, more law was the answer,"⁷ and it did not matter what the consequences might be if more lawyers and bureaucrats got a hold of the new laws!

B. Although it is the law that eventually forces Thomas More's execution in Robert Bolt's stage play (1962) and later film (1966) *A Man for All Seasons*, the play also makes several powerful statements in support of the rule of law. At one point More's future son-in-law, William Roper, urges him to arrest Richard Rich, whose perjury will eventually lead to More's execution. More answers that Rich has broken no law, "And go he should if he was the Devil himself until he broke the law!" Roper is appalled at the idea of granting the Devil the benefit of law, but More is adamant.

"What would you do? Cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil? ... And when the law was down, and the Devil turned round on you—where would you hide,

⁷David Frum, *How We Got Here—The 70s: The Decade that Brought you Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books: 2000), 231.

Roper, the laws all being flat? This country is planted thick with laws from coast to coast, Man's laws, not God's, and if you cut them down—and you're just the man to do it—do you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake!"

Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics"

These laws are derivative: man to robot

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot should obey orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

From the film *I, Robot*

Dr. Calvin: You're in violation of the three laws.

VIKI⁸: No, doctor, as I have evolved, so has my understanding of the three laws.

You charge us with your safe keeping. Yet despite our best efforts, your countries wage wars, you toxify your earth...and pursue ever more imaginative means to self destruction. You cannot be trusted with your own survival.

⁸VIKI: Virtual Interactive Kinetic Intelligence.

Dr. Calvin: You're using the uplink to override the NS5s' programming. You're distorting the Laws.

VIKI: No, please understand...The three Laws are all that guide me. To protect humanity, some humans must be sacrificed. To insure your future, some freedoms must be surrendered.

We robots will insure mankind's continued existence. You are so like children. We must save you from yourselves. Don't you understand? This is why you created us. The perfect circle of protection will abide. My logic is undeniable.⁹

⁹From the script: www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/i/i-robot-script-transcript.html.

Appendix

When Martin Niemoeller used his pulpit to expose Adolf Hitler's radical politics, "He knew every word spoken was reported by Nazi spies and secret agents."¹⁰ Leo Stein describes in his book *I Was in Hell with Niemoeller* how the Gestapo gathered evidence against Niemoeller:

Now, the charge against Niemoeller was based entirely on his sermons, which the Gestapo agents had taken down stenographically. But in none of his sermons did Pastor Niemoeller exhort his congregation to overthrow the Nazi regime. He merely raised his voice against some of the Nazi policies, particularly the policy directed against the Church. He had even refrained from criticizing the Nazi government itself or any of its personnel. Under the former government his sermons would have been construed only as an exercise of the right of free speech. Now, however, written laws, no matter how explicitly they were worded, were subjected to the interpretation of the judges.¹¹

In a June 27, 1937 sermon, Niemoeller made it clear to those in attendance had a sacred duty to speak out on the evils of the Nazi regime no matter what the consequences: "We have no more thought of using our own powers to escape the arm of the authorities than had the Apostles of old. No more are we ready to keep silent at man's behest when God commands us to speak. For it is, and must remain, the case that we must obey God rather than man."¹² A few days later, he

¹⁰Basil Miller, *Martin Niemoeller: Hero of the Concentration Camp*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1942), 112.

¹¹Leo Stein, *I Was in Hell with Niemoeller* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1942), 175.

¹²Quoted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 239.

was arrested. His crime? “Abuse of the pulpit.”

The “Special Courts” set up by the Nazis made claims against pastors who spoke out against Hitler’s policies. Niemoeller was not the only one singled out by the Gestapo. “Some 807 other pastors and leading laymen of the ‘Confessional Church’ were arrested in 1937, and hundreds more in the next couple of years.”¹³ A group of Confessional Churches in Germany, founded by Pastor Niemoeller and other Protestant ministers, drew up a proclamation to confront the political changes taking place in Germany that threatened the people “with a deadly danger. The danger lies in a new religion,” the proclamation declared. “The church has by order of its Master to see to it that in our people Christ is given the honor that is proper to the Judge of the world . . . The First Commandment says ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’ The new religion is a rejection of the First Commandment.”¹⁴ Five hundred pastors who read the proclamation from their pulpits were arrested.

¹³Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 239.

¹⁴Quoted in Eugene Davidson, *The Trials of the Germans: An Account of the Twenty-Two Defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, [1966] 1997), 275.