

DANIEL

Week 16, chapter 6

Daniel chapter 6 continues that part of the book that was written in Aramaic. So we find that the focus is on the gentile captors of Judah. And those captors have now transitioned from the Babylonians to the Median-Persian coalition; from the head of gold to the chest and arms of silver, as predicted by Nebuchadnezzar's dream-statue made of 4 different metals. The first Media-Persian king was Darius and as we discovered last week, it appears that he was appointed into his position as king by someone who had higher authority. All paths point to that person as Cyrus II also known as Cyrus the Great.

There are a couple of important points to understand. First is that the Medes and the Persians had for some years become more than allies. They were separate kingdoms, but they co-operated closely together in their imperial aspirations. In fact we find that the last few generations of the line of Median Kings (Darius's royal line) shared a common Patriarch with the last few generations of the line of Persian Kings (Cyrus's royal line). And that Patriarch was a fellow named Cispis. This ancestral tie is no doubt the basis for this unusually tight relationship between the Medes and the Persians.

Second is that every record discovered, whether Babylonian, Persian, Median, or Greek, that chronicles the fall of Babylon into the hands of the Medes and Persians says that it was Cyrus who led the attack and is given credit for the conquest. So it seems clear that for whatever his political purpose, Cyrus appointed a member of the Median royal family to be the king over the former Babylonian Empire. It is also important to understand that when Cyrus conquered Babylon, it essentially joined together the former Babylonian Empire with the Kingdom of Media and the Kingdom of Persia to form an even more expansive empire. However there is no indication that Darius was the king over this gigantic new combined empire; rather, it seems that he was only king over the portion that used to be the Babylonian Empire. The Kingdoms of Media and Persia apparently were not included under his rule. Rather it seems that Cyrus controlled those 2 kingdoms personally, as well as the newly formed empire in its totality. So even though Darius was given the title of king, he functioned much like Joseph did when he was the Vizier of Egypt under the Pharaoh. That is, while Darius had a great deal of autonomy, in the end he was still under, and beholden to, Cyrus.

As Darius (*Daryavesh* in Aramaic and Hebrew) began his career as king, he decided to set up the government of his portion of the empire by dividing it into 120 districts each controlled by an administrator (that our CJB calls a viceroy). These 120 administrators were divided into 3 groups, each group reporting to 1 of the 3 chiefs who then reported directly to Darius. Daniel was appointed as one of the 3 chiefs. However Daniel was so skilled in his job, and his

reputation so impeccable, that Darius let it be known that he was considering making Daniel the Chief of Chiefs, essentially making him 2nd in command to King Darius. This did not settle well with the other 2 chiefs and some number of their loyal viceroys. So they decided that they had to discredit Daniel. However since Daniel was the epitome of administrative and moral perfection, they couldn't find the slightest cause to bring a complaint against him to the king. So, they did something quite clever: they convinced the king to sign into law an empire-wide decree that Daniel couldn't possibly obey.

Let's re-read a portion of Daniel chapter 6.

RE-READ DANIEL 6:6 – end

Verse 6 says that the means to deposing Daniel will be to force him to do something that conflicts with the law they want the king to sign, because it will also conflict with the "law" of Daniel's god. And when he does what they know he'll do (obey the law of his god over the law of the king), they'll have cause to get rid of him. What "law of Daniel's god" are they talking about? It's obvious: the Law of Moses, the Torah Law. Now we shouldn't think that these chiefs knew much if anything about the Law of Moses. Rather this is meant in the sense that all god-systems have their own unique set of laws, and they were well aware that perhaps the most unique and visible law among the Jews was that they only had one god to worship; and that god didn't allow the worship of any other gods. This reality was especially highlighted in Nebuchadnezzar's era when **Shadrakh, Meshakh and Aved-N'go** refused to bow down the golden statue, and they wound up in the fiery furnace because of it. But the point I want to make for the moment is that in the bible when the term "the law" is applied to the Hebrew people or in a Hebrew context, it is only ever speaking about one thing: the Law of Moses: the Torah.

The law that they want to be applied throughout the former Babylonian Empire is that no one is to make a request of any god or man for a full lunar cycle (30 days); one month. What this is referring to is prayer; no one was to bring their prayer directly to their gods or through any holy man who represented their gods. Why the king went along with this is difficult to say; what could possibly have been a legitimate purpose for this new, and temporary, law? After all, while his chiefs did it to try and get rid of Daniel, the story confirms that King Darius had much affection and respect for Daniel and knew that he was loyal. So there must have been some logical pretext for their request that he found was reasonable, but none is recorded for us.

On the other hand, from a cultural standpoint, there indeed was logic to what these conspirators suggested. In the ancient Middle East a king was seen as the earthly representative, if not actual embodiment, of that nation's gods. So the idea is that for 30 days Darius would be the sole earthly representative of the gods who could be approached by anyone in the empire for any reason. Perhaps the idea was to mimic what Nebuchadnezzar did when he ordered that everyone in the empire was bow down to the golden statue or risk being thrown into the furnace. That edict was meant as a means for all of his subjects to declare allegiance to the Babylonian Empire while making it clear that despite the many kingdoms and nations that formed the empire having their own unique sets of gods, King Nebuchadnezzar overrode them all. Thus it was not that anyone's gods were to be renounced or disrespected.

And this was not a law strictly pointed at the Jews; everyone was to follow it. But it did affect the Jews the most because the Torah Law didn't permit their accepting or worshipping any other god than Yehoveh (even though in practice we know they did so regularly). The gentile people of that era had no problem accepting everyone else's gods right along with their own.

But one of the subtleties of this passage is in verse 9 when these chiefs want the king to sign his name to the decree. And this is because according to Median-Persian law, when the king signed a decree (as opposed to merely orally declaring it) the law became irrevocable, written in stone. We find this same situation regarding the Jewess Esther as she was still residing in Persia.

Esther 1:19 If it pleases the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be altered, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

Verse 11 says that Daniel heard of the new law, went home, ignored it and did what he normally did; he prayed to the God of Israel 3 times per day, near a window that faced Jerusalem. We are not to take from this that Daniel tried to make a spectacle of himself, or sought to draw attention. He wasn't trying to make a point or to become a martyr. He was inside his own home doing his usual ritual in the same manner and place; and of course he could be seen from outside and these conspiring chiefs knew this as windows were but openings in the stone walls of the buildings. And by the way: it is from this passage that the Hebrew tradition was formed that wherever possible synagogues around the world are to be constructed so that they face towards Jerusalem. This is yet another proof in itself that the Book of Daniel is not only valid and truthful, because the Jews have memorialized Daniel praying towards Jerusalem in their religious thought and in their architecture. And this tradition was established before Yeshua's day, only a century or so after when the liberal bible critics claim that this fictitious book was written. Would the Jewish people do that if they well knew, or even suspected, that Daniel was a fraud? The Jewish people themselves would obviously have known whether this was a new book or an older book, and of course known if it referred to Antiochus Epiphanies (as liberal bible critics say) or to the Jews' time in Babylon (as the book itself purports). So the idea that this was a late writing from the era of the Maccabees (about 165 B.C.) becomes further exposed as the dishonest product of an secular humanist Enlightenment agenda as we more carefully examine each point.

Verse 12 tells us that, of course, the co-conspirators hung around outside Daniel's window and spotted Daniel praying. They immediately ran to the king reminding him that he had signed the irrevocable law that prohibited such a thing for 30 days. Darius confirmed that the law could not be rescinded or changed and was downhearted to learn that the violator they brought to him was none other than Daniel.

Let's pause to consider an aspect of this story that shouldn't go unnoticed. There is little other way to look at what Daniel did but as a rebellious, even though pious, act of civil

disobedience. He knew of the decree and had a clear choice: obey God's law or obey his government law; doing both at the same time was impossible. Here we encounter a conundrum that the Rabbis and Sages have always wrestled with; and the New Testament chronicles how various Jewish factions dealt with trying to square God's law with Roman law. So I think the best way to put Daniel's response to the king's edict into perspective is to equate it with modern day application. The Church has had an equally hard time with the matter of civil disobedience of Believers especially since we hear in the Book of Romans an unmistakable call to obey our human government.

Romans 13:1-7 CJB

^{CJB} **Romans 13:1 *Everyone is to obey the governing authorities. For there is no authority that is not from God, and the existing authorities have been placed where they are by God.***

² ***Therefore, whoever resists the authorities is resisting what God has instituted; and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.***

³ ***For rulers are no terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you like to be unafraid of the person in authority? Then simply do what is good, and you will win his approval;***

⁴ ***for he is God's servant, there for your benefit. But if you do what is wrong, be afraid! Because it is not for nothing that he holds the power of the sword; for he is God's servant, there as an avenger to punish wrongdoers.***

⁵ ***Another reason to obey, besides fear of punishment, is for the sake of conscience.***

⁶ ***This is also why you pay taxes; for the authorities are God's public officials, constantly attending to these duties.***

⁷ ***Pay everyone what he is owed: if you owe the tax-collector, pay your taxes; if you owe the revenue-collector, pay revenue; if you owe someone respect, pay him respect; if you owe someone honor, pay him honor.***

And then there is from Christ in the Book of Mark.

Mark 12:12-17 CJB

¹² ***They set about to arrest him, for they recognized that he had told the parable with reference to themselves. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away.***

¹³ ***Next they sent some P'rushim and some members of Herod's party to him in order to trap him with a sh'eilah.***

¹⁴ They came and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you tell the truth and are not concerned with what people think about you, since you pay no attention to a person's status but really teach what God's way is. Does Torah say that taxes are to be paid to the Roman Emperor, or not?"

¹⁵ But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you trying to trap me? Bring me a denarius so I can look at it."

¹⁶ They brought one; and he asked them, "Whose name and picture are these?" "The Emperor's," they replied.

¹⁷ Yeshua said, "Give the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor. And give to God what belongs to God!" And they were amazed at him.

So what are Believers to do when our government makes a law that directly contradicts God's law? Some denominations don't have too much of a problem with that since they claim that the NT says that under every circumstance we are to follow our local civil law and God's law takes a backseat. That reasoning was used in Nazi Germany as scores of thousands of Jews in hiding were turned in by Christians for eventual extermination so that these Believers could be obedient to what they saw as a biblical directive to obey the law of the land (no matter how unreasonable it might be). Therefore (especially as applies to the last few years) if the law of the land is for Gay people to be married, the church should embrace that law and perform the ceremony. If the law of the land is abortion on demand, then the church should respect it and not council against it or question its morality. If the law of the land is that there can be no employment discrimination towards homosexuals or transgender people, then the church is as equally obligated as secular employers to hire and include those folks at every level of ministry.

Canada has taken it so far as to make it illegal for Pastors, even inside the closed doors of their churches, to teach their congregations that God is against immoral sex. To speak homosexuality is called "hate". In fact, when I was in Canada a couple of years ago, there was a notorious case against a Pastor for doing just that. He preached a sermon against homosexuality calling it perverse in God's eyes. It was reported to the police and he was arrested as a criminal. After almost 90 days of incarceration he was finally released by agreeing not to do it again and attending a tolerance school.

Most any Believer in America over about 50 years old looks around today and feels that it's getting harder and harder to recognize our nation. Without getting into detail, we have ever-escalating attacks against the sovereignty of the church and the traditional family, and a government that seeks to take whatever God calls evil and make it good, and whatever God calls good and make it evil. How ought we to respond? Do we respond at all, or should it be only in private prayer? Did Christ, and Paul, intend for us to meekly submit to government laws that at times are explicitly in opposition to God and to His laws? If that's the case then was Daniel legalistic and self-righteously wrong in his actions? Should he have simply stopped praying to Yehoveh for a month in obedience to King Darius? Or has the way Believers are to respond today to such a challenge fundamentally different since the advent of Yeshua, and

therefore what Daniel did has no relevance to us?

Tough questions; but I believe the issue has been made overly complex and confused not because the answer is unclear but because whether Jewish or Christian, our religious doctrines and traditions have muddied the water. The Old and New Testaments essentially direct us to divide away the moral issues of divinely defined right and wrong from the financial and “fairness” issues that are all about like or dislike. Put another way: there is a clear dividing line between moral choice and personal preference.

However because much of the institutional Church has claimed (wrongly) that God’s Torah laws that carefully define sin and morality are dead and gone for Christians, trying to apply God’s morality in our time has become a matter of opinion and shades of gray. In fact some liberal church doctrine essentially sees it that since each Believer is a separate container for the Holy Spirit then right and wrong, good and evil, sin and obedience, even what a Scripture passage means, is divinely customized and individualized (if not unique) for each and every Christian. And if whatever cultural definition of “love” is invoked in a case, then all bets are off.

However setting that dubious and rather convoluted argument aside for the moment, if we Believers can once again accept the entire biblical truth, taken from the Holy Writ itself, along with the ongoing relevance and authority of God’s laws and commandments for our modern lives, then we have a ready and crystal-clear definition of what morality is, and what it is not, in God’s eyes. The remaining issues concerning the matter of obedience to our government, then, amounts to some combination of personal preferences, personal views of fairness, and how much of our money and time we agree to cede to our government.

Let’s take that one step farther. In America among the hot debates in 2013 are the matters of Immigration policy and Health Care. From a biblical perspective those 2 matters fall under preferences, fairness, and finance. And despite our enormous philosophical and political differences on these issues.....sin, evil, and wrong-doing from the divine perspective aren’t at the core of those choices and options. Taxation is front and center for the citizens of every nation and likely always will be; but despite all the emotion involved, this is mostly about preference, fairness, and finance and not morality.

I am confident that both the OT and NT make it clear that it is the non-moral issues that are being contemplated when it comes to Believers obeying our human governments. Therefore if our government demands a huge portion of our income as taxes, God would have us pay it, no matter how painful. If our government has enacted a law to allow non-citizens to vote, to have free public education and free healthcare for them, etc., then we ought to obey it, no matter how unfair we might find such a thing. At least in America we have an opportunity to elect people to change those laws; but until that happens we obey them.

But what about the moral issues? Homosexuality? Marriage? Adultery? Abortion? What about contraception for our daughters given without parental permission in our public schools? The so-called Morning After pill available to any aged girl, without a prescription, and the seller being legally bound to keep the transaction secret from the girl’s parents? Sex education forced upon our elementary students that give a secular humanist viewpoint only, which

inevitably leads to promiscuity and normalizes some types of sexual immorality? Christians like to say today, WWJD: what would Jesus do? But in our study of Daniel we could also ask: WWDD. What would Daniel do? I think the answer is obvious: Daniel (and I have no doubt, Yeshua) would disobey the law of the land if what was demanded was immoral, a direct trespass against the Lord, and then accept the unhappy consequences if need be. And that is exactly what Daniel did when he continued to pray to the Lord knowing that a gruesome death was the promised outcome. It is what **Shadrakh, Meshakh, and Aved-N'go** did when they refused to declare allegiance to the one-world government and its gods. And, by the way, this is expected of Believers especially when the Anti-Christ reveals himself, blasphemes and declares himself to be God, and orders every manner of immoral and unclean thing to be followed and obeyed. Revelation tells us that there will be millions of Believing martyrs who commit civil disobedience against this one-world government and accept the deadly consequences.

Brothers and sisters, the reality is that our lot as Believers (the price we pay to be saved) is to obey God and let the chips fall where they may. That is what “taking up the cross and following Christ” means. The cross is not a pleasant or lovely thing; it is an execution stake. The cross is not a front row seat to a life of comfort and ease and “fitting in”. So we should not expect an easy life as a result of our trust in Yeshua.

Now should we go looking for trouble or martyrdom? Of course not. We should all seek peaceful lives and to live harmoniously with our neighbors and communities wherever possible. But when a government decides as Germany did recently that circumcision, for instance, is now deemed to be mutilation and thus illegal in all its forms, such a thing cannot be allowed to stand nor can it be obeyed, because its intent is obvious. Nor will we at Seed of Abraham Ministries ever stop preaching and teaching God’s Word concerning all forms of immoral sex, abortion, the sacred rights and duties of families to make moral decisions concerning our minor children, and that we are never to allow our Judeo-Christian faith to be intruded upon and suffer dilution by pagan, Muslim, Wiccan, or any other faith system because in our government’s eyes it is needed for tolerance’s sake. Whatever happens as a result of that position, happens. And I hope that is an attitude that will permeate the thoughts and lives of all who are listening to this message because day by day the government intrusion into our faith becomes deeper and wider; and biblical prophecy says it will get worse as we get nearer to the return of our King and Messiah. We have choices to make just as Daniel had.

Verse 17 shows that the political pressure upon King Darius was more than he could stand up against. And so convinced that Daniel had indeed violated this new law, he reluctantly ordered that Daniel suffer the consequences that the law demanded: death by being torn to pieces by lions. We get few details about how this sentence was carried out other than that Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, and then the exit was sealed up with a boulder and the king’s seal and that of his chiefs was put upon the boulder so that no one would dare try to rescue him.

There has been much scholarly criticism, doubt and speculation about this lion’s den incident. Some have claimed that there were no such things as lions dens constructed for such a purpose in that era. But setting aside such claims the truth is that we have no good idea of what this lion’s den looked like. Might it have been a cave? How about a subterranean

cavern? Maybe an empty water cistern? We just don't know. But the idea is that there was some inescapable place where lions were kept for the sole purpose of painful execution of the condemned.

Verse 19 explains that King Darius was most upset at this and couldn't sleep all night, nor could he eat. Thus in the morning he hurried to the lion's den in slim hope that somehow Daniel had survived. His voice full of anxiety he calls for Daniel to reply if he can, wondering if Daniel's god had been able to deliver him from sure death. Daniel hollers in response to the king, "Oh king, live forever!" That he was alive is one thing, but to show such respect to the king in this circumstance was another. And Daniel tells the king that indeed Yehoveh sent an angel that shut up the lion's mouths and he is thus unharmed. Further that he is innocent in God's eyes, and so should be innocent in the King's eyes. How can Daniel claim innocence to the king when he knowingly broke his government's law? I think this falls right back to our discussion of civil disobedience not to unjust laws, but rather to immoral laws. An immoral law is not a legitimate law at all as far as a worshipper of God is concerned. I can come to no other conclusion than in God's eyes His Believers are innocent when we refuse for the reason of righteousness, to obey a law of human government that amounts to an obvious and serious trespass against God's moral laws.

The king, thrilled that he still has his best councilor available to him, has Daniel freed from the lion's den. The final words of verse 24 sum up the entire point for the Lord even allowing this matter to go so far: "For he (Daniel) had trusted in his God". The Lord used this potentially deadly situation to His Own Glory, and that is something for us to ponder deeply as we encounter personal life-threatening situations in our journey. But we are also not to slide right by the miraculous nature of what transpired. It was a supernatural act of Yehoveh, accomplished through the power of a heavenly angel, that the lion's didn't harm Daniel. The lions were not killed; they simply didn't attack and eat Daniel, which should have been their natural instinct. This, of course, is another reason that the bible critical school cites as this story being only legend and myth because for them there are no such things as divine miracles.

But now the just execution of the co-conspirators against Daniel is brought about. Those who insisted on the law, and who brought Daniel before the King for sentence, are thrown into the lion's pit. They and all their families. These same lions that passively sat and laid down while Daniel was in the pit attacked these people and began tearing them apart before they ever reached the bottom. What a horrible sight that must have been. Yet, from a divine perspective, the actual accusers suffered a fate that was just in God's eyes. For it is God's law that those who bear false witness in a capital case are themselves guilty of murder for which the punishment is death. What about the innocent women and children, the family members, who were also killed? That is **not** God's justice, but it is rather standard Oriental justice. The idea is not that these family members had committed a crime. Rather it is that by the entire family being destroyed, the criminal's blood lines are brought to an end and his name will be forgotten and thus his eternal essence that was thought to live on after death would be terminated. This is the worst possible outcome for any human being.

We'll finish up chapter 6 and get well into chapter 7 next time.