

Sermon – 23/09/2007 pm

A Plot to Eliminate Daniel

Study Text: Daniel 6:1–9

A number of states in India have enacted ‘freedom of religion’ laws. Christians are suffering greatly under these laws because they are designed to prevent people from changing their religion. Most people in India believe you are born into a religion, and they cannot understand those who want to change their religion. The effect of these laws has been to criminalise conversion. A person who wants to change their religion, i.e. become a Christian, must prove before a magistrate that they have not been coerced or bribed in any way. The person who baptises them is liable to imprisonment under this law.

Daniel fell foul of a law fabricated specifically to trap him in his religious belief and practice. He was the victim of jealousy in the new regime now operating in Babylon.

Promotion

Daniel was a young man when taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605BC. He served as chief minister in Nebuchadnezzar’s regime. The king found him full of integrity and wisdom, and the spirit of the Holy God. When Nebuchadnezzar died, his son became king, and then Belshazzar. Although not in the ministry of Belshazzar, Daniel was called upon to read the writing on the wall. The Babylonian kingdom ended with Belshazzar, some 66 years after it began. The gold head of the image dreamed of by Nebuchadnezzar came ‘crashing down’ (3:35).

The Babylonian kingdom and its kings had all gone, but Daniel remained. The kingdoms of men will come and go, but the kingdom of God remains. The kingdoms of this world will all one day become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Revelation 11:15). At the age of about 80 Daniel was again taken into the royal service. He was made a governor in the new regime of Darius the Mede.

Some people dispute the historicity of Darius since his name does not occur outside the Bible. But those who believe the Bible to be historically accurate still have difficulty identifying this man. Some say that Darius was actually another name for Cyrus the Persian since elsewhere in the Bible Cyrus is spoken of as the liberating king (Isaiah 45:1). But that would mean the ‘and’ would have been removed from 6:28. It is quite possible that Darius was appointed by Cyrus to rule over Babylon when they took it from the Babylonians.

Darius divided the kingdom into 120 administrative regions and set satraps over these. To keep a check on these local rulers he appointed three governors, one of whom was Daniel. Good administration requires delegation, but there are risks associated with delegation. What if the delegates turn out to be incompetent or corrupt? Daniel distinguished himself even above the other two governors – whose true credentials will soon be seen.

The king found *an excellent spirit* in Daniel (6:3). We know that the Spirit of God was in Daniel, but this reference was probably to his integrity and honesty, a rare character in rulers in those days, not to mention our own day. The other governors could find no error or fault in

Daniel – and they tried hard (6:4). They were jealous and dug deep to find dirt they could throw at Daniel. Politics has changed little it seems. Not only politics of course but basic human nature which is sinful.

‘In the midst of graft and corruption on every hand, Daniel stood out as a man governed by a sense of loyalty and integrity that stemmed from his right relationship with God’. This is the secret to upright living – a right relationship with God. Do not jealously compare your self with others, even as Christians. Make Christ the yardstick of your life.

What a tremendous testimony Daniel had in this heathen nation, a testimony that began when as a young man he purposed in his heart not to defile himself (1:8). Do you find Daniel’s life a challenge as you examine your own life? Maybe Peter was thinking of Daniel when he wrote *Beloved... have such conduct among the Gentiles that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God* – and further he writes – *when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God* (I Peter 2:12, 20).

Plot

‘A common situation develops at this point: jealousy leads men to attack a colleague who is more competent than themselves’. When the king contemplated promoting Daniel to chief governor over the whole realm (6: 3), the hearts of the other governors and satraps were stirred to jealousy. They probably despised Daniel already because he was a Jew and did not join in their corruption and idolatry. Daniel did not go with them to the pub or the gambling parlour. He did not go with them to the football on the Lord’s Day but instead he went to church.

These jealous men met together in secret to plan how they might discredit Daniel, and even get rid of this upright man altogether. They realised at the outset they would not be able to find fault in his words or actions. Daniel always spoke the truth and acted with integrity. He faithfully served the king while remaining faithful to his God. They decided the only way to get at Daniel was through his faithfulness to God. If they made worship of his God illegal, they could trap him.

Such a plot was nothing new. Satan knew that if he could get Adam and Eve to compromise in their obedience to the Lord God who made them, they would be his. Daniel was also under satanic attack. These men were agents of Satan. Daniel’s faith in God would be sorely tried. He had faced many tests to his faith throughout his life; advancing age did not give him any immunity to further attacks. Let us not think that it is only the young or those immature in the faith who face faith-testing times.

There is one difference between Daniel and Adam in the test they faced – Adam was living in a perfect world. Sin came into the world when Adam failed the test, and the whole world was plunged into sin and death. Daniel was living in this sinful world. To live in obedience to the laws of God in a fallen world automatically puts one at odds with the world.

‘For in no case can a man of God live a consistent life in the world without making apparent the fact that his life is separate from what the world does and approves. And whenever the world becomes aware of this difference she resents it and finds her animosities stirred’.

Having hatched their plot, the wicked men raced off to tell the king. They did not of course tell him it was a plot to trap Daniel; they told him he was a great king and should be worshipped more. Their very first words were a lie. It was not *all the governors* because clearly Daniel was not ‘consulted’. The word consulted together is interesting. It is a translation from the Aramaic of course but note the hypocritical overtones in this word. A wicked plot to kill aman is called a ‘consultation’.

Satan is an expert at declaring the view of ‘experts’ and the ‘majority view’. How often are we told that some opinion or theory is the scientific fact because ‘all the experts’ say so. If you are able to look behind such statements you may well find that many ‘experts’ disagree, and for this reason were not consulted. Deceit and hypocrisy are well-oiled weapons in Satan’s armoury. If ever there was a case of wolves in sheeps clothing it was these men standing before king Darius.

Permanency

What was the decree they wanted the king to sign? They wanted him to forbid anyone in his kingdom praying to any god or man, apart from the king, for thirty days. It was nothing really – just thirty days. It would do no harm! No one would even notice! Is that what they hoped the king would think? The penalty for breaking this law was, however, very severe; it was in effect the death penalty.

Why did Darius sign this law? Why did the Victorian Government sign the law on religious vilification? Was he ignorant of the intent of this law? Was he being hoodwinked by his advisors? So it seems. This law, like that in Victoria, was bad law, law designed not for the good of the people but for the evil intent of a few. The people of God often suffer under such laws. Darius signed the law into effect without consulting the wisest man in his kingdom, the man in whom was the Spirit of the Holy God.

The law of the Medes and Persians does not alter (6:8). No one could change this law once it was signed, not even the king so it seems. It was like the Pope declaring a doctrine or practice for the church *ex cathedra* – he is supposed to speak with infallibility. But the law of God does not change either, and the law of God overrides any law made by men as we will see. The question is ‘will men obey the law of God rather than the law of man when the two come into conflict?’

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