

Daniel 3:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:

Analysis

The accusers' strategy becomes clear: they quote the king's own decree back to him, reminding him of his authority and the universal obligation to obey. By reciting the full list of instruments and the worship requirement, they emphasize the decree's comprehensiveness—no exceptions, no ambiguity. This rhetorical technique binds Nebuchadnezzar to enforce his own law, making punishment appear as defending royal authority rather than religious persecution.

The phrase "Thou, O king, hast made a decree" subtly flatters while constraining. By emphasizing the king's personal authorship of the law, they make disobedience appear as personal affront to the monarch rather than merely legal violation. This manipulation exploits royal pride, making clemency toward disobedient subjects seem like weakness or self-contradiction. Ancient Near Eastern monarchs, having issued absolute decrees, often felt bound by them even when reconsidering (cf. Darius in Daniel 6:14-15).

This verse exposes how evil uses legal structures for persecution. The law itself may not have been crafted to target Jews specifically, but accusers weaponize it against the faithful. Similarly, end-times persecution will use legal frameworks to justify martyrdom (Revelation 13:15-17). Christ faced similar manipulation when accusers used Roman law to demand His execution (John 19:12). Believers must recognize that persecution often comes cloaked in legal legitimacy, requiring

wisdom to navigate unjust laws while maintaining ultimate obedience to God (Acts 5:29).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern royal decrees, once proclaimed, were considered irrevocable expressions of the king's word. Monarchs believed their authority depended on decree enforcement—failing to punish violators would undermine royal power and invite further disobedience. This made rulers prisoners of their own pronouncements, as seen later with Darius (Daniel 6:14-15).

The comprehensive nature of Nebuchadnezzar's decree—specifying exact musical cues and universal participation—left no room for exception or interpretation. This absolutism served both religious and political purposes: enforcing worship demonstrated the king's power while creating a test of loyalty across the diverse empire. Laws requiring participation in state religion effectively criminalized monotheistic faith.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do accusers weaponize the king's own decree against him, and what does this teach about how legal structures can be exploited for persecution?
2. What parallels exist today where laws ostensibly serving neutral purposes are applied to persecute faithful believers?
3. How does Christ's experience of being condemned through legal manipulation prepare believers for similar injustice?

Interlinear Text

דְּיְ אָנֹ שְׁ וְכָלְ דְּיְ אָנֹתָה
Thou O king hast made a decree H1768 and all man H1768
H607 H4430 H7761 H2942 H3606 H606

שְׁבָכְ אָקִיתְ רָסְ מְשֻׁרְקִיתְאָ קְרַבְ אָקְלָ יְשָׁמָעָ
that shall hear the sound of the cornet flute harp sackbut
H8086 H7032 H7162 H4953 H7030 H5443

יְיַזְבְּ אָקְלָ יְסִיףְ נִתְהַרְאֵן
psaltery and dulcimer and all kinds of musick shall fall down and worship
H6460 H5481 H3606 H2178 H2170 H5308 H5457

לְבָבָאָןְ לְאַלְמָ
image the golden
H6755 H1722

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 6:12 (Kingdom): Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

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