

Daniel 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

Analysis

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom (שָׁפַר קִדָּם דָּרְיָוֶשׁ וְהָקִים עַל מְלָכוּתָא לְאַחַשְׁדַּרְפָּנָא חֲמָה וְעֶשְׂרִין)—The Aramaic shefar qodam Daryavesh (שָׁפַר קִדָּם דָּרְיָוֶשׁ, "it pleased before Darius") indicates the king's deliberate administrative decision. The word achashdarpenaya (אַחַשְׁדַּרְפָּנָא, "princes") refers to satraps—provincial governors in the Persian system. The number 120 likely represents satraps over smaller districts, distinguished from the higher-level satraps mentioned in secular sources.

This administrative structure demonstrates Persian imperial genius. By dividing the vast empire into manageable units with clear accountability, Darius prevented any single governor from accumulating dangerous power. The system also created layers of oversight—the three presidents (6:2) supervised the 120 satraps, who in turn governed local territories. This bureaucratic complexity made conspiracy difficult but not impossible, as the plot against Daniel (6:4-9) would demonstrate.

Daniel's survival of regime change—from Babylonian to Persian rule—shows God's providence protecting His servants through political upheaval. While empires rise and fall, God's purposes continue. The transition from Babylon to Medo-Persia fulfilled earlier prophecy (Daniel 2:39, 5:28) and positioned Daniel to influence Persian policy, particularly Cyrus's decree allowing Jewish return (Ezra 1:1-4). Believers today can trust that political changes, however dramatic, cannot thwart God's plans or remove His protection from those who serve Him faithfully.

Historical Context

This occurred in 539 BC immediately after the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon. Darius the Mede (possibly another name for Cyrus or a subordinate governor) reorganized the conquered territory using Persian administrative methods. The satrap system characterized Persian rule for two centuries (539-331 BC), creating one of history's most efficient empires. Archaeological discoveries, including the Behistun Inscription and Persian administrative tablets, confirm this governmental structure. Daniel, now in his 80s, demonstrated remarkable adaptability—serving effectively under Babylon, then transitioning to serve Persia with equal excellence.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Daniel's successful transition between empires encourage you to remain faithful during political or organizational upheaval?
2. In what ways does God use administrative structures and secular governments to accomplish His redemptive purposes?

Interlinear Text

שָׁפַר H8232	קָדַם H6925	דָּרַךְ וְשָׂ H1868	וְהָקִים H6966	עַל H5922	מַלְכוּתָא: H4437	לְאַחַשְׁדָּרְפָּנֵי א H324
an hundred H3969	and twenty H6243	and H1768	which should be H1934	over the whole H3606	kingdom H4437	

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 5:31 (Kingdom): And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

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