

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 שָׁפֵר קָדֵם דָּרְיָוֵשׁ וּפְקִים עַל מֶלֶכְתָּא (—לְאַחֲשְׁדָרְפָּנָא מָהָה וָעָשָׂרִים) —The Aramaic shefar qodam Daryavesh ("it pleased before Darius") indicates the king's deliberate administrative decision. The word achashdarpenaya (אַחֲשְׁדָרְפָּנָא, "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

לְאַחֲרֵי־רְפָנִי אֵלֶיךָ מֶלֶכְתָּא:	שָׁפֵר	מֶלֶכְתָּא:	אֵלֶיךָ מֶלֶכְתָּא:	עַל	וּבְקִים	דָּרִי וְשָׁ	דָּרִי וְשָׁ	הַקְרִיבָה	וְשָׁפֵר
H8232	It pleased	Darius	to set	over	kingdom	princes			
H6925		H1868	H6966	H5922	H4437	H324			
מֵאַת	וְשָׁ	וְשָׁ	וְשָׁ	לְהַזְוִיל	בְּכָל	מֶלֶכְתָּא:	מֶלֶכְתָּא:	מֶלֶכְתָּא:	מֶלֶכְתָּא:
an hundred	and twenty		H1768	which should be	over the whole	kingdom	kingdom	kingdom	kingdom
H3969	H6243		H1934		H3606	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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