

Daniel – Chapter 6

- *Yet another test for Daniel*

The event of this chapter was well known to the Jews and Christians of the first century. It is specifically mentioned in Hebrews Ch. 11, the well known passage often called the hall of faith.

- *Advanced in years*

Daniel was deported from his homeland of Israel as a 17 year old teenager and since the 70 year captivity ended shortly after the fall of Babylon, he would be 83 to 87 years old at this time. He served over 60 years in public office.

- *Darius is a title*

The term Darius is an honorable title which means "holder of the scepter" and at least 5 rulers of the Medo-Persian empire are referred to by this name. Cyrus is the actual name of the ruler who took over Babylon and set the captives of Israel free.

- *Daniel on top one again*

Daniel 6:1 It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom,

Daniel 6:2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.

Daniel 6:3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

The wisdom and grace which God had endowed Daniel with had not diminished with his age, but had grown evident to the new king in a relatively short time as he proceeded to set up his administration.

- *Fellow bureaucrats get jealous*

Word got out that the king was contemplating to appoint Daniel to be the boss, the prime minister. Daniel having the blessing of God and much experience in Government certainly was very useful to the king especially in this the first year in setting up a new empire. Jealousy and envy with a smattering of anti-semitism prompted the colleagues of Daniel to figure out a way to thwart the purpose of the king toward Daniel.

Daniel 6:4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

Because Daniel had the favor of God upon him he also had the wrath of Satan directed at him and as usual Satan had no problem finding willing servants. Neither Daniel's enemies nor God found corruption in this humble servant of the Lord most High. This spiritual warfare was in the background and is about to erupt in a very open manifestation of evil.

- *Attack through religion*

Daniel 6:5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

Daniel 6:6 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever!

Daniel 6:7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den.

Daniel 6:8 Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered--in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

- *Conspiracy to massage the king's ego*

Never underestimate the power of flattery and praise to achieve results with persons of high position. The phrase "live forever" in v6 is a common saying still current in the middle east wishing the recipient "many days".

- *Worship of the king*

Worshiping the leader of a nation sounds strange to our ears here in the USA, but it was very common in many ancient cultures. Even in modern times the adulation of Hitler or of the Japanese emperor certainly may be construed as a form of worship.

- *Why in writing?*

Daniel 6:9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold had absolute power with no apparent limitation, but in accordance with the lessening of power, glory and value of silver, the Persian rulers had the limitation of some sort of basic law, a constitution placed on them.

Daniel 5:19 Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled.

If a law was formally put in writing, the Persian constitution forbade its repeal. Since the conspirators knew that the king liked Daniel enough to make him prime minister they knew they had to make sure that the matter was put into writing rather than just a simple verbal command which the king could rescind. The book of Esther (Esther 1:19) also speaks of a similar legal limitation.

- *Daniel does not change his habit of prayer*

Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Daniel simply continued what he had been doing previously all his life. He did not close the window or go and pray in hiding, neither did he flout his faith by shouting his prayers through the open window.

- *Toward Jerusalem and the Land*

The Jews were commanded to pray and as they did face in the direction of their homeland and Jerusalem. This may be where the Moslems got their mandate to face Mecca.

2 Chronicles 6:38 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name;

2 Chronicles 6:39 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.

Psalms 5:7 But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple.

Psalms 28:2 Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.

He prayed toward Jerusalem even though at this time Jerusalem was in ruin. Devout Jews throughout the centuries prayed and yet today pray in the direction of Jerusalem. An important component of his prayer was the giving of thanks.

- *Three times a day*

The pattern of praying three times a day was not special to Daniel, but was a common practice for faithful Jews.

Psalms 55:17 Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

- *Kneeling in prayer*

The physical posture of kneeling is not a law we are required to obey, but was common practice in the old and new testament. There are groups today that mandate kneeling for prayer. I believe however that it is the humility of spirit pictured by the act of kneeling as we present our needs, thanks and praise to God that is important here.

Luke 22:41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed,

Acts 7:59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Acts 7:60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 9:40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

Acts 20:36 When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.

Acts 21:5 But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray.

I have knelt down to pray when faced with super-important decisions or very strongly felt needs. I remember as a young man, the time my mother had cancer and I knelt in the basement of our San Francisco house and cried aloud to God, so much so, that the sound carried through all the furnace pipes and my Aunt came down to see what was troubling me. God did indeed heal my Mom right then of the cancer she had when she was in her 50s. She went home to be with the Lord in her 97th year.

- *God hears us anytime*

Unlike the Moslems who must observe a ritual of prayer, we now are told to pray in truth and in spirit and can do so any time and anywhere. I often pray when driving, and did so extensively when I was still commuting between the SF Bay Area and southern Oregon.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit [and truth], for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

- *The accusers went to check up on Daniel*

Daniel 6:11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.

Daniel 6:12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands--in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

Daniel 6:13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day."

They remind the king with a question whether he did indeed sign such a law and get an affirmative answer. The accusers also cast a slur on Daniel -- "He is one of those Jews" a non-conformist who placed his God above your decree and ignores your command.

- *The king knew they had him in a corner*

Daniel 6:14 (NIV) When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

Daniel 6:14 (KJV) Then the king, when he heard [these] words, was sore displeased with himself, and set [his] heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

He called on his legal advisers to find a loophole so he could get out of the position he had been boxed into by these clever enemies of Daniel. He blamed himself for allowing these jealous conspirators to trick him into giving such an unjust decree against one of his most faithful administrators.

- *The accusers press the king*

Daniel 6:15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

After a full day of trying to legally save Daniel the accusers assemble before the king to once again remind him of the law and demand that the punishment for violating it be carried out.

- *A reluctant command*

Daniel 6:16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

With no way out, the king gives the order to throw Daniel into the lion's den. He knew of Daniel's righteous ways and that Daniel's God, unlike all the other gods, had power to rescue. Surely he heard the story of the fiery furnace and likely knew that those rescued on that occasion were also Jews who worshiped the same God as Daniel.

- *Serves God continually*

What a witness of Daniel this observation of the king is. Do the unbelievers around us know that we serve our God, the Lord Jesus continually? What a model Daniel is for us to emulate!

- *Daniel "not in the ministry"*

Daniel was a government official and was not a priest or ecclesiastical professional and yet the king and Daniel's enemies alike were very much aware that his walk with God made all the difference.

- *A stone and seal*

Daniel 6:17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.

The sealing took both the ring of the king and those of the nobles, showing yet again that the king did not have absolute power, but it was shared with others. The seal, the stone and the death by law are pre-shadowing the death of Jesus and the later rescue from the lion's den a picture of resurrection.

- *A sleepless, troubled king*

Daniel 6:18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

The unhappy king comes home from the office with no stomach for food or entertainment. He spent the whole night fasting and hoping.

- *The king's hope is realized*

Daniel 6:19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den.

Daniel 6:20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

Early in the morning the king who cares very much about Daniel runs to the den and with much emotion in his voice called a question to Daniel. The king calls God "the living god" in sharp contrast to the idols who are dead objects of worship throughout his kingdom.

- *Is God able?*

Any of the idol gods who were only human fabrications might have had the desire to save Daniel, but the king asks whether this "living God" of Daniel has enough power to overcome hungry lions. We tend to say God can do anything, but will he? The king thought that a good god ought to want to save Daniel whom he considered a good man, but did Daniel's God have sufficient power?

- *Fasting lions*

Daniel 6:21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever!

Daniel 6:22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

Daniel 6:23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

The king had been unable to eat and so it was also with the lions. The overjoyed king hears Daniel's voice say truth about Daniel that the king was convinced of before this whole episode began - namely that Daniel is a righteous man. Like any ruler, he is accompanied by the Persian version of the secret service whom he orders to lift Daniel out of the den. The king and those around him examined Daniel and there was not a scratch on him.

- *The hungry lions get a meal at last*

Daniel 6:24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

- *Strong term for slander*

In some ancient languages there is an expression for what we call slander which is "to eat the pieces of a man"

- *The families are wiped out*

The custom of taking out of the entire family of evildoers was found in many cultures and God himself does this on occasion. He wiped out everybody in the pre-flood world except Noah and his family and incinerated Sodom and Gomorrah but saved Lot and his daughters.

Numbers 16:31 As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart

Numbers 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions.

Numbers 16:33 They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.

- *The law of Moses is more lenient*

In the case of open rebellion God takes drastic action himself, but he has not permitted this to human justice systems acting on His behalf.

Deuteronomy 24:16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

- *Another decree*

Similar to Nebuchadnezzar, Darius is impressed by the power of and majesty of Daniels God.

Daniel 6:25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly!

Daniel 6:26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.

Daniel 6:27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

Daniel 6:28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- *Still, it's only Daniel's God*

He does not however make Daniel's God his own and praise Him directly such as Nebuchadnezzar did. He knows about the greatness of Daniel's God and commands his subject to acknowledge that also, but never calls on or worships the God of Daniel.

- *God must be personal*

In our day also, there are those who have Christian parents other relatives and friends and admire them and even respect their religion but never get to know the One personally who makes these people examples they may even try to emulate. In Nebuchadnezzar the desire to know the God that Daniel portrayed came to fruition but it appears that this did not happen in Darius' case. Our goal should be to live in dependence of our Lord in such a way that as many as possible will see that we have a relationship with God and that they too will desire this.