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**A1414 – April 6, 2014 – Daniel 6:1-28**  
**The Lion's Den**

If you'll open your Bible to Daniel 6 you'll find the most well-known story in the book, Daniel in the Lion's Den. I'll be hard pressed to cast any new light on this event but it's my hope that you will enjoy hearing it as I see it. The parallel story is Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace. In both chapters believers are faced with a crisis situation and respond in faith, committing civil disobedience and entrusting the results to God who supernaturally protects them. The major purpose of these chapters is to teach us that the *modus vivendi* during the reigns of oppressive Gentile kingdoms is faith, God delivers only through faith.

As far as the historical background is concerned, the Babylonian kingdom had just fallen to Persia in 539BC. The handwriting was on the wall, quite literally, in Belshazzar's feast. It was not so wise of him to have a drunken party with vessels from the Lord's house when Cyrus' armies, commanded by one Ugbaru, was surrounding the city walls. Yet that is what Belshazzar did. He was a typical arrogant Gentile. Arrogance being the distinguishing characteristic of Gentile rulers. So this God had written a message on the wall to Belshazzar which Daniel interpreted to mean the days of your kingdom have been numbered, you Belshazzar have been weighed and found wanting and the kingdom is now being divided and given over to the Medes and Persians. At that very moment Cyrus' armies had already diverted the Euphrates River, made their way under the arched gateways into the city and were on their way to the banquet hall. Belshazzar's last act, ironically, was clothing Daniel in purple, putting a gold necklace around his neck and making him triumvir in the kingdom behind only him and his father. But seeing that Belshazzar was killed and his father had already been defeated and routed to Borsippa, never to return, Daniel was the highest ranking official on the last night of the Babylonian kingdom. I take it this is one of the

greatest examples of God exalting the humble. Daniel had entered Babylon as a young captive Hebrew slave but he went out the highest ranking official in the entire kingdom.

When we come to Dan 6 we come to a crisis event in the life of Daniel. It occurred around 538/537BC, the king now is Darius the Mede. He's a controversial figure in history because he's not mentioned in the Nabonidus Chronicles, the chief document that explains what happened the night Babylon was defeated. Daniel says that he was the son of Ahasuerus and of Median descent. John Whitcomb and other famous scholars like William F Albright and Robert Dick Wilson held that this Darius the Mede was one known as Gubaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle and that he continued to govern for 14 years. It was not uncommon for ancient rulers to have multiple names. Seeing as we accept the word of God for what it is, the word of God and not the word of men, we accept the Scriptural account as the standard by which all secular histories must be judged.

With that clarified let's look at Dan 6:1, remembering that Daniel was an old man at this time, in his early 80's, he has just interpreted the handwriting on the wall and been promoted in Babylon. Somehow he survived the Medo-Persian invasion that night and is now going to be brought into the Medo-Persian government. Daniel had political skill or wisdom and this is why the Jews thought of Daniel, not as chiefly among the prophets, but chiefly among the writings. This is why anyone going into politics or thinking about politics should evaluate Daniel. Daniel was a believer in politics and he shows us how to maintain your composure in the arrogant world of politics.

Verse 1, **It seemed good to Darius, also known as Gubaru, to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, 2and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.** The main goal, right off the bat, was to secure the kingdom so that Cyrus would not **suffer loss**. Whenever you have a kingdom shift it is a very dangerous time and many newly acquired assets can be lost and so Darius is an excellent servant to Cyrus so he's trying to consolidate the kingdom and get a security system in place. His strategy is to set up **three commissioners**, one of which was Daniel, over **120 satraps**.

The **commissioners** were the most trustworthy men. Probably two of them were lifelong friends of Darius. Daniel was chosen to serve with these two men. Why was Daniel chosen to such a prestigious position? Two reasons. First, he had just translated the mysterious handwriting on the wall which pronounced that the Babylonian kingdom was being divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. If a governmental official had the guts to pass that information on to the higher authorities then he must be an honest official. Second, Daniel's name would have been found in the royal court records of Babylon for the last 65 years. Daniel was unique in that he had a working knowledge of the kingdom, the people, the culture and the language. He would be an indispensable asset to Darius. Further, he was 80 years old so not a threat. Darius therefore made him one of three top advisors. They were placed over **120 satraps**. The word **satraps** means "kingdom protectors," so these men were trained in protecting the assets of the king and they were spread throughout the kingdom under the **three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one)**. That's the political situation.

However, in verse 3 Daniel begins to stand out among his peers. **Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit.** The king was impressed with Daniel. To say Daniel had **an extraordinary spirit** was the Aramaic way of saying his attitude was stellar, his work ethic was outstanding. In short, there was no one else in Darius' administration that was assuring the success of his kingdom as Daniel so **the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.** Now this is what causes the problem. Daniel was getting the job done. We don't know what the other commissioners and satraps were doing but we know that Daniel was **distinguishing himself.** So the king reasoned he could stabilize the kingdom more efficiently if he promoted Daniel to second in command, second only to himself. However, this creates political friction. The other commissioners don't like this because in politics the name of the game is to move up the ladder and they're not moving up the ladder, they're moving down the ladder, Daniel is moving up the ladder. Keep in mind that Daniel isn't even a Mede or a Persian, he's a Jew and an old Jew at that. So you can imagine the kind of talk going on behind his back. These men are going to hatch a plot to send this 80 year old Jew into retirement.

Verse 4, **Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs.**

Now this is always the tactic, find some dirt. Try running for office sometime and see what dirt they pull up on you. They're going to dig everything up; no rock will be left unturned. Here they're digging, certainly this Jew blew it at some point in governmental affairs; **but** the report is **they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.**

Daniel was squeaky clean and I'm sure he knew from the get go he had to be squeaky clean if he was going to survive as a believer in Gentile administrations. So he's been meticulous, he's been scrupulous with the books; there's no dirt, **no ground of accusation.** And you have to look at this and admire the wisdom and character of Daniel. The guy knew the political game, he knew about climbing the ladder, he knew the best policy was to recognize the authority and serve him with complete reliability. That's the Christian way and that what he's done, he's carried out the desires of every king he has served under flawlessly, he crossed all his t's and dotted all his i's, so when the digging started they can't find a thing. He was the kind of person that annoys every other nitwit that doesn't want to do the job with integrity.

Verse 5, **Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."** This is the political machinations turning. They've got to get him on some other grounds than how he's carrying out **government affairs.** You can tell from the plan that they've been watching Daniel. They've had their eye on him and apparently what they keyed in on was his religious habits. So they plan to set the law of the Medes and the Persians against **the law of Daniel's God.** This is what they're going to do to us in this country too. Establish laws that they know we can't keep in good conscience. Eventually this is coming. Daniel teaches us how to handle it.

In verse 6 they hatch a conspiracy, **Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king.** Now I keep calling it a conspiracy because the Hebrew word for **agreement** means "conspiracy," they **came to the king** to conspire **and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!"** That's the standard greeting in all these kingdoms, but it is in a way, kissing up. What it means is may your dynasty never end.

So they say this and then watch what they say, **All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together.** Now that in itself would be a thing. How did you get all the rulers in the kingdom together? They're scattered all around the kingdom. So it smacks of a lie on the face but what did Hitler say about lies? When you tell a lie tell it big, make it simple, say it over and over and guess what? People will believe it. Obviously this is a lie because Daniel wasn't involved. Daniel was the target. Here's the lie, we all consulted **together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions den** or pit, it was a pit carved down in the earth, maybe a modified cave. What they're suggesting with this flattering legal proposal is a temporary injunction. Surely this is harmless and it would benefit the king. So the king would be the one who put it into law. They are very clever. So they tell him, **establish a statute...enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, be cast into the lions den.** Now, that a person would be prayed to would be to consider that man a god. So this proposition by his administrators would have flattered him; that for a period of **thirty days** he would be considered a god to whom all prayers in his kingdom would be addressed, implying he was the sole benefactor of the well-being of the entire kingdom.

Verse 8, **“Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.”** Once the king put this into law, it was law and there was no one who could change it, not even the king, the king himself would be bound by the law. In verse 9 Darius takes the bait. **Therefore King Darius drew up the document, that is, the injunction.** Now it's law. And notice verse 10, **Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed,** meaning he got the memo, at this point do you think Daniel knew what was going on? Sure he did. He knew someone had his number. But it doesn't really matter because he had a decision to make; is he going to obey the law of the Medes and the Persians or is he going to obey the law of God which says, thou shalt have no other gods before Me? In other words, is he going to go along with the status quo or commit civil disobedience?

Let's review the principles of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience occurs under the fourth divine institution, human government. Why was human government given? To curb the effects of sin in the world. Rom 13 says there is no authority but that which is designated by God. So human government is a divinely authorized institution. On the other hand we find instances like this where the law of a human government contradicts the law of God. What do we do in these situations? Do we disobey human governments? Or do we always obey the government's wishes?

There are two issues, both illustrated in Scripture, where I think you are justified in committing civil disobedience. The first issue has to do with the sacredness of innocent human life. If the government says you are going to be involved in genocide, euthanasia or abortion, the innocent taking of human life, then you have a responsibility to commit civil disobedience. Remember the Hebrew midwives who were told to kill all the little baby boys as they were being born? What did they say to Pharaoh? Sorry, we can't do that because we fear the King of the universe more than we fear you. So issue one is the destruction of innocent human life. We should never be involved in that, it's murder, destruction of the image of God.

The second issue has to do with worship. If the government comes along and says here is how you must worship, who you must worship or when you must worship, then we have a responsibility to commit civil disobedience. Remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they were commanded to bow down and worship the golden image? How did they respond? Nebuchadnezzar, they said, sorry, we'd rather be cast in the fiery furnace. If our God decides to save us so be it, but if not we're still not going to bow down to your phony idol. So issue two is when the government starts to dictate in the area of worship then you have an obligation to say no, I can't do that.

Now the third thing is that if you decide to commit civil disobedience over one of these two issues understand you should always respect the authority. You should not mouth off, you should not offend them; you should simply state your position respectfully because you are respecting the office under the fourth divine institution. The second thing is to be praying, praying for the authority so that this thing might be peacefully resolved. There's no reason to start a war with the government, that's never gone well for anyone; it's only left a path of destruction in its wake.

And finally, be prepared to take the consequences of your choice. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thought about the consequences and made their decision accordingly, they would rather be thrown in the fiery furnace and burned alive than to bow down to that phony idol. So always thoughtfully consider the consequences and be ready to accept them if you decide to commit civil disobedience.

Now we see Daniel faced with the same type of situation his three friends were faced with years before. He's received a memo, the contents of which relate to issue two, the government dictating in the area of worship. And if you were this man you can imagine what thoughts must have gone through his mind. I don't know many people that want to die by being mauled to death by lions. It's not a good way to go. So what were his options? He could just drop his prayer life for thirty days and obey the new law. But then he wouldn't be trusting God to take care of him. He could keep on praying but do it in secret for thirty days and that way he would obey the law. But apparently he reasoned that he would not be trusting God. Or he might have been able to take a vacation for thirty days. That way he would be outside the realm of the law and he'd be fine praying. But I'm convinced this wouldn't accomplish one of the primary purposes of Daniel which was to be a witness for the God of Israel. Daniel was always witnessing to people and so he was openly evangelistic, he didn't hide in a box and have a private religious life so as not to offend people, he had a public religious life. In fact we would say he didn't arbitrarily separate religion from politics, it was his religion that provided the absolutes that made him a great politician. That was his witness. So if he quit praying what would that do to his witness? It would blow it. And this man wanted to win people to the Lord. He would not compromise his testimony. It's moments like this that the testimony is seen. So verse 10, fully conscious of the law, fully conscious of the penalty for violating the law **he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem);** Jews from the time of Solomon always prayed toward Jerusalem. Why? Because God dwelled in the Temple in Jerusalem. And notice what he did, **and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.** So he broke the law. He did not change his practice, the emphasis is he continued. Why? To continue to be a



testimony to the God of Israel before these men, that they might come to believe in his God. Consistency is key to a great witness.

We also might observe Daniel's posture is **kneeling** which signified reverence for God. And he starts **praying and giving thanks**. The word for **praying** here is the same one used in vv 7 and 12 for petition and that has to do with the nation Israel and their restoration to the land, but the word **giving thanks** is interesting because it means to "show favor." Daniel is asking God to show him favor in his civil disobedience. He doesn't know how God is going to work this out, he's just praying that He will show him grace in this hour of trial so he can be a testimony. If you have to commit civil disobedience, you better be praying.

So Daniel is praying and asking for favor in his upper chamber looking toward Jerusalem and guess who's watching? Verse 11, **Then these men came by conspiracy and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God**. So they caught him red-handed, Daniel made a petition to someone besides King Darius. That's all they needed to retire this old fogey. Verse 12, **Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?"** The king replied, **"The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."** Here they're making sure this is all on the record and everyone is clear on the law and nothing can change the law before they announce who broke the law. Once that was clear they make the accusation in verse 13. **Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."** Now those are heavy charges but the first thing I find it interesting is they did not refer to **Daniel** as one of the commissioners but as **one of the measly exiles from Judah**. I think we're to detect anti-Semitism in there. I think many Gentiles hate it when Jews advance in any field. They also charge Daniel with paying **no attention** to Darius, which is nonsense, **or to the injunction which** he drew up, because he **keeps** praying to his God three times a day. And that he did, he consciously broke the law.



Now you can see from the king's response in verse 14 that he loved Daniel. This man had been ministered to by Daniel in such remarkable ways over the short time that he already loved him. And what does love do? Love sets out to save so he sets out to save Daniel. Verse 14, **Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.** In other words he spent the whole day trying to find a legal loophole, some way to get Daniel out of this, but he couldn't find a thing. Then, verse 15, **these men came by conspiracy** again, apparently at the end of the day, so after the king has spent the whole day trying to get Daniel off the hook they came back **and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."** So the king has been had. I think it's at this point that he had put all the pieces together and recognized these men plotted against Daniel and used him as an instrument. So he isn't too happy with them and in fact later on we're going to find out he was furious at them. But it's true, once the law went into effect even the king couldn't change it. So verse 16, **Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions den.**

Now we won't go into these dens for the sake of time, suffice it to say, it was an underground cave near the king's palace in the royal gardens which had been modified to house lions. So **Daniel is cast in** and look what the king says, **The king spoke and said to Daniel, "your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."** Now it's quite remarkable that the king would admit this and it shows you Daniel had spoken to the king about his God. He may have even shared with the king about what His God had done for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. We don't know. But what we do know is that it is quite an admission on the part of the king that Daniel's God can do something that he himself was powerless to do. So Darius admitted that God is sovereign over all kings and kingdoms and is able to deliver according to His will.

Verse 17, **A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of the nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.** The significance of the seal, like the seal of the Holy Spirit, was that it was illegal to break the seal unless everyone whose signet ring was stamped on

the seal agreed. So they sealed the stone door and the wall with some clay with their signet rings pressed into the clay and nobody could open it on pain of death. Verse 18, **Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.** This is very unusual activity for a king. King's typically had a lavish dinner and entertainment every night. But He was so disturbed by the prospect of Daniel in the lions' den that he didn't eat, he didn't drink and he didn't take any entertainment, all typical luxuries of a king to take his mind off of the day's events. Instead he just lay in his bed, completely disturbed, unable to sleep, only able to think about Daniel in the lion's den. He may have been praying, we're not told, but it's possible.

Verse 19, at first light **the king arose at dawn, at the break of the day,** the sun was just breaking over the horizon and he arose **and went in haste to the lions' den.** You picture this man almost frantic for Daniel's life, a life he could not preserve but whom he admitted Daniel's God could preserve.

Verse 20, **When he had come near the den to Daniel,** so he's not there yet but he started crying out **with a troubled voice.** And **the king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve been able to deliver you from the lions?"**

All he needed was a word, he couldn't see down in the den because it was first light, but if he could just get a word. Verse 21, **Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!"** Now that moment must have been a fantastic relief for the king. His heart was in total anxiety until these words were uttered and then the marvel of Daniel's God and what indeed had transpired through the night came into clear focus; his God had the power over the most ferocious jungle animal, the fiercest animal on earth. Who could shut the mouths of these terrifying beasts? Answer, verse 22, **My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.**" God had sent His angel, we are not told whether this is a regular angel or the angel of YHWH, but just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were accompanied by one like a Son of Man in the fiery furnace so Daniel was accompanied by the one and the same angel of YHWH who **shut the lions' mouths.** And what is the basis of Daniel's deliverance? That he **was found innocent before God,** Daniel had done nothing to disobey God, he had rather committed civil disobedience in order to obey God. And further he adds, **and also toward you, O king, I**

**have committed no crime**, meaning he had done nothing hurtful to the king.

Verse 23, **Then the king was very pleased**, he was delighted, **and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den**. Not through the sealed door on the side for this would have broken the law, but up through the open air portion. God always leaves a way of escape and this one was easily found. Daniel had served the penalty, the law stated he must be cast in the lion's den, not that he must be eaten by the lions. **So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him**. A thorough examination was done and just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were found to be completely unharmed by the fire, so Daniel was found completely unharmed by the lions. And the reason stated very simply is **because he had trusted in his God**. Trust in God is always the way of deliverance, whether it be physical deliverance or spiritual deliverance. God only delivers by faith because whatsoever is not of faith is sin and God cannot bless sin. So then we are to learn that the only way to live is by faith, by trusting Him. Daniel had been a witness to salvation by faith.

Verse 24, **The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones**. Why the wives and children? Persian custom. It was to have a preventative effect on criminal activity. In this case their maliciousness got the best of them. The Hebrew word **malicious** means "chewed into pieces." They had metaphorically tried to chew Daniel into pieces but they were the ones who got literally chewed into pieces. Daniel's enemies were destroyed. Such is a picture of the end of God's enemies.

Verse 25, **Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: all his kingdom, "May your peace abound!"** And with those kinds of malicious characters out of the way peace could abound. Verse 26, **I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever**. Did Darius believe? We don't know. Certainly he made a

very strong assertion of the sovereignty of God over kings and kingdoms. But Nebuchadnezzar had done the same in Dan 2. In any case, verse 27, **“He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”** So he did recognize truth about God. Verse 28, **So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.** What’s the lesson there? God exalts those who humble themselves before Him. God rescued Daniel.

In conclusion, Daniel was taken into the Medo-Persian kingdom as one of the top three men under Darius, also known as Gubaru. His work was stellar and as a result the king wanted to exalt him second only to himself. This caused the power lust of his other rulers to conspire against Daniel in order to destroy him. Since his political reputation was above reproach they tried to pit Daniel’s religious practices against a proposed law on pain of death. When the law crossed Daniel’s desk he decided to commit civil disobedience to be a witness to others and put his trust in God. As a consequence he was caught and cast into the lions’ den. But God sent His angel to seal shut the mouths of the lions and preserve Daniel alive. The king in haste drew him out the next morning and immediately cast all the malicious rulers along with their families in the den of hungry lions. Not one of them reached the floor before they were overpowered. Finally King Darius drew up a decree that all men in his kingdom fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, the God who rules forever and is over all and who delivers through faith.

What can we learn from this chapter? There are many things but chief among them all is that God delivers through faith, not by works. All salvation is by faith whether it is from physical dangers like Daniel and his three friends faced, or spiritual danger like every human being faces. Salvation is always by grace through faith. Are you meeting your crisis situations by faith? Second, the principles of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is suggested when it is an issue of the sacredness of human life or worship. In such cases we must respect the offices of those in authority and pray for them. Having considered the consequences we must be ready to accept them if we decide to commit civil disobedience. Are you prepared to commit civil disobedience if the circumstances demand it? Third, the chapter reveals Daniel’s intense desire to evangelize others. He had a living faith and people knew. And when it came down to his life vs their salvation, he would always put his life on the

line for their salvation. He didn't do it just to spite the government. He did it as an opportunity to evangelize others. Fourth, this chapter reveals that God is sovereign over all. He is the living God who is sovereign over all nations and nations are to recognize that He is sovereign and He does whatever he wishes. He delivers and rescues and does signs and wonders as Darius observed, even delivering Daniel from the power of the lions.

[Back To The Top](#)

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