

The Book of Daniel

“And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”

(Daniel 1:20 ESV)

“but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.” (Daniel 2:28 ESV)

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:2–3 ESV)

Faithful in the Lion’s Den

Feb 16, 2020

Daniel Chapter 6

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Introduction:

Good morning Church, please turn with me to Daniel Chapter 6. As you turn to the text I would like to take an opportunity to consider some historical setting. In terms of the flow of History our narrative today follows immediately after the fall of Babylon – and as we will see Daniel has outlived an empire. Nebuchadnezzar is dead, Belshazar is dead and their kingdom has conquered. Human Kingdoms never last do they? It’s one of the points in Daniel 2 and Nebuchadnezzar’ dream. Only the Lord’s Kingdom will last, His stone will shatter all earthy Kingdoms and fill the earth. Having just visited the ROM last week, these thoughts are fresh in my mind. We saw all kinds of statues [some taking years to complete] commemorating what are now nameless people. It reminds me of the classic poem Ozymandias that describes the fate of all human kingdoms. Ozymandias is the Greek rendering for Ramesses II, and this poem was written in 1817 in response new artifacts from Egypt being brought to the Royal Museum in London.

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.¹

¹ By [PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY](#)

Accessed via <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias> Feb 12, 2020

Nothing of human hands survives. Our legacy unattached to the Kingdom of God is non-existent. We will leave nothing. Time will eat everything. This is existential crisis! This is existential truth. The best of humankind, the most powerful of men, will be dust unremembered if they are not located in the only permanent Kingdom. That is a Key Lesson from History and the Book of Daniel as a whole.

So in Daniel 6 we find the golden head Babylon is fallen, the Persians are in accent. We have a new King named Darius, who many scholars equate with Cyrus the Persian. Simply a second name for the same King. Just like Ozymandias and Ramesses are the same person. Other scholars suggest Darius is a General who had immediate control over Babylon after it fell. Archeological evidence at this time is inconclusive as to which theory holds. I prefer the first option. And it coincides nicely with what we do know from historical evidence and Biblical witness. Namely that Cyrus the Persian was favourable disposed to the Jews in particular, and liberated many of them. This fact is the mentioned in Ezra 1:2

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” Ezra 1:2

I think it is fascinating to imagine that in the narrative we see today in Daniel, very likely we have recorded Cyrus the Persian's, that is Darius the Mede's first interaction with the Living God.

And Daniel is positioned once again to give God glory. We have a long text today so we will take it in chunks. I'll hit pause every once and a while to summarize what we are seeing.

I see four movements: Jealousy and Persecution, The response of a faithful believer, A miraculous Deliverance, and finally Vindication and Judgement. So let's read the Word of the Lord:

Jealousy and Persecution

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, **but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.** Daniel 6:1-4

So we have a new King and old Daniel is still there, “distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him.” His integrity, his knowledge, his insights, his connections, his intelligences **all his gifts pointing toward his God who gave him a spirit of excellence!** But this incites jealousy in his competitors. I wonder, Christian have you felt that? It is a fact of living in a fallen world. Persecution will come if you are righteous and excellent! (Joke of Bill and Ted?). Paul reminds Timothy of this in 2 Tim 3:12

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”
2 Timothy 3:12

And Jesus says this is actually a good thing in God's economy, it is a mark you are a true believer!

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”
(Matthew 5:10)

If you are persecuted for righteousness, you have the Kingdom, you are saved! Just notice that is persecution for **righteousness**, that is devotion to the LORD. Not persecution for being offensive or harsh or a jerk. That would be on your head. Not persecution for demanding a pagan society follow our ethics. The apostle Paul says we judge those inside the Church not those outside.² Instead, Daniel is hated by the world for his devotion to God! May it be so with us!

⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." ⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement^a to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction. Daniel 6:5-9

It's interesting to note the differences in governance between Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Assyria was heavy handed. They with the Babylonians believed the best way to peace was to crush and relocate subjugated peoples. That's how Israel ended up in exile in the first place. But the Medo-Persians had a more tolerant manner. They were more like a tossed salad, in effect saying "you believe what you will so long as your final allegiance lies to us. Go pray to your Gods (the Persians even sent Israelites back to their land), but pay your taxes and follow your King and all will be well." So instead of a megalomaniac like Nebuchadnezzar demanding worship as a demi-God, we have a thoughtful Persian king ruling a wide empire, wishing to consolidate power over many races and cultures. And he is baited into a test of allegiance by his advisors. (veggi tales song?). This test of allegiance very similar to Chapter 3 isn't it. I can imagine the satraps, "King sir, you have a large kingdom now, with many different cultures and people. You need to offer a test to see where there allegiances lie. You need to see who you can trust." And so a temporary edict of exclusive petitioning to Darius alone is passed by the King without the knowledge this is really political intrigue and plotting designed to murder Daniel. Getting back to our text we see how a faithful believer responds to this test of allegiance.

A faithful believer

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

² 1 Cor 5

¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. Daniel 6:10-18

Notice how repentant the King is! He labored till the sun went down. Kingdom duties were on pause, meals, women and all enticements all on hold! Darius realized he has been played and was about to lose one of his most valuable assets due to political intrigue. And he is fuming. He is desperate to rescue Daniel, but he can't. The die has been cast.

BUT WHAT KINGS CANNOT DO GOD CAN, and next we see the miraculous deliverance.

The Miraculous Deliverance

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. Daniel 6:19-23

I love this part of the narrative! Darius gets it. He says, "Daniel, did you fight off the Lions?!" No! No, he says, "has your God whom you serve day and night continually, been able to deliver you from the Lions?" To his credit, Darius sees as we should see, Only God can save from this desperate situation. And God has indeed miraculously saved.

Vindication and Judgement

²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. Daniel 6:24

Yikes! Harsh! Wives and Children in the pit. It is harsh. And it is the way of the world. Darius is not a Christian friend. Notice the Bible neither commends or condemns this action. It simply reports what happened. This is how retribution works in a dog eat dog world. This is evolution without God. The strongest survive by crushing their rivals, or in this case those who have betrayed the King. It is a terrible reality of a sin filled world.

I do find it very notable though that Daniel's excellence translates to some level of protection. Notice that when the King disposes of all of the malicious rivals, it insulates Daniel from further persecution. All this because Daniel made himself indispensable. Remember how the King mourned and labored to reverse the sentence! Oh, would it not be glorious if that were said of us? That our government or our employers would

labor all day, and mourn all night to reverse a law that persecutes us because we are valuable to our families, neighborhoods, cities, and country! That does commend itself to holy living and working hard!

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. [equally well translated Darius, that is Cyrus the Persian]
Daniel 6:25-28

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

So now that we have walked through the text at tree level, it’s time to back up and get a forest view of the lessons this familiar text teaches. Listen to what Tremper Longman III says about Daniel’s life: “This historical narrative of the Old Testament was written not simply for remembrance, but also to serve as a paradigm for future behaviour. The narratives of Daniel, in particular, are shaped to serve as **life examples** for later generations of God’s people.”³

So we’re supposed to remember this story – but more than that, we are supposed to be instructed by this story. THIS IS HISTORY THAT TEACHES.⁴ AND THE LIFE OF AND STORY DANIEL IN PARTICULAR COMMENDS 4 POINTS IT WOULD SERVE A CHRISTIAN WELL TO REMEMBER:

1. Remember God knows how to upend the plans of the enemy

So what do we see in this text? I think we see a great story of reversal. Accusers come and God is able to deliver Daniel from persecution. Not only that, he takes what evil intent there is and turns it into good. Realize this Church, that the schemes of satraps to kill Daniel actually served to introduce the Glory of the Lord to Darius, listen to what Darius says about God:

“He is the Living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders” Daniel 6:26b-27a

And remember that same Darius, that is Cyrus the Persian is the King who then sends Ezra to rebuild a temple to the living God on the Medo-Persians bank role! I love what Joyce Baldwin says here:

“there can never be an emperor so mighty that he is not under the control of the only God; not only will his end come when God sees fit, but meanwhile he will serve God’s purposes”⁵

³ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel* in The NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 165.

⁴ Direct quote from Pastor Paul Carter’s sermon Feb 16, 2020.

That's what God does! He takes the schemes of the enemy and reverses them! No ruler or Law can defy God's purpose. Amen? And isn't that the point of Daniel in general? It is to remind a persecuted and downtrodden people that GOD STILL SITS ON THE ONLY THRONE THAT REALLY MATTERS IN THE UNIVERSE. HE IS WORKING THE LONG GAME. He has a plan to rescue his people and nothing will thwart that plan! We need to hear that today! He is over all Kings and Kingdoms. As Proverbs reminds us

"The king's heart [READ ANY HUMAN GOVERNMENT] is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." Proverbs 21:1

And this truth comes out of the pagan Darius's own mouth too as we just read.

God's Kingdom is above any human Kingdom! Notice how Darius words are so reminiscent of the words of a humbled Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:3

"His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation."
Daniel 4:3

Which incidentally is almost a word for word quote from Psalm 145 of David:

"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations."
Psalm 145:13

AND This is the consistent message of Daniel to the believer. God is Large and in Charge. He is working the long game. **Even in persecution. Even when his people are in exile.** Even when you are about to be eaten my lions. He orders, ordains and controls events. He is the ultimate King.

Secondly,

2. **Remember not to hide your light**

Notice again Daniels response to being set-up.

"¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." Daniel 6:10

I think Calvin helps clarify Daniel's actions:

"for although Daniel did not send for the Chaldeans by the sound of trumpet whenever he wished to pray, yet he framed his prayers and his vows in his couch as usual, and did not pretend to be forgetful of piety when he saw his faith put to the test"⁶ – Calvin

There it is. Not flouting resistance in a showy manner. He didn't mock or insult the government. He certainly did not invite persecution or martyrdom, but he did not compromise either. Daniel did not hide his light.

⁵ Tyndale OT commentary on Daniel

⁶ Calvin's Commentaries. Accessed through Olive Tree Bible Software

There are two ditches here. Foolishness, and Cowardice. This is admittedly difficult principal to articulate. The Bible does not commend foolishness and placing yourself at careless or undo risk. In that way we don't invite persecution. What the Bible does say is this:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” Matthew 16:24-26

So we don't shrink back either. Consider John Bunyan who continued to preach because it was God's will. Threats of prison did not stop him, just like it didn't stop Daniel from his worship. So when it comes to the laws and threats of man and the duty to God, we must choose to never hide our light.

Thirdly the story of Daniel reminds us that faithful habits matter.

3. Remember Faithful habits matter.

What habits do we observe in Daniel's life that prepared him for the test of the Lion's Den? Simply this. HE WAS FAITHFUL IN THE BASICS.

Remember all the way back to Chapter 1

“But Daniel **resolved** that he would not defile himself with the King's food” Daniel 1:8

He resolved himself to be distinctive and Set apart

And in Chapter 2: He lead a prayer group to “seek mercy from the God of Heaven”.

He resolved to be faithful in prayer.

And throughout the book, how many times does Daniel say things amounting to, “Not I, but there is a God in Heaven.”

He resolved to give all glory to God.

And what about the interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar dream or the writing on the wall. I'm not sure I'd like to be that critical of an absolute monarch! And yet Daniel was consistently faithful and courageous!

He resolved to be faithful in speaking God's Word, even if it put him at risk.

And so it should come as no surprize that at 80 plus years of age, Daniel's life of habitual prayer and worship are not abandoned due to the threat and obvious trap. Calvin notes:
“We must undergo all dangers whenever the worship of God is at stake”⁷

Amen.

And so we see **He resolved to be faithful in worship!**

⁷ Calvin's Commentary. Accessed through Olive Tree Bible Software.

I would simply submit that Daniel could undergo “all dangers” because HE WAS HABITUALLY FAITHFUL IN THE BASICS.

“but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful,” Daniel 6:4

What a testimony, those words are from the lips of his enemies! Oh that you and I could live likewise!

Faithful in holiness

Faithful in worship and giving God glory.

Faithful in speaking God’s unadulterated Word.

Faithful in trusting his God, even unto the threat of death with the Lions.

And Faithful in prayer

Isn’t remarkable that Daniel is trapped due to prayer? If there is one thing the Devil hates its prayer. And you know Satan had a hand in the satraps plan! Satan knows God responds to prayer.

Satan knows prayer right sizes the petitioner – we know our place when we pray effectively. Satan knows God loves to hear the prayer of the saints – Those prayers are worship and sweet incense before him.

Should we then be surprised the author of lies and death would try to condemn Daniel on the practice of prayer? Not surprising at all. AND SATANS TACTICS HAVE NOT CHANGED! And so I ask:

How is he discouraging your prayer life? Is he using shame of past sin? Then repent and move on, all the more need for prayer. Or has Satan convinced you God isn’t listening? That prayer is futile? Is he distracting you with worldly cares to rob you of time in the prayer closet?

We must see that the power in Daniel’s life was in large part a result of prayer. If we want that same power, we need to develop those same habits and be faithful in the basics. Holy living, Courageous proclamation, Sustained worship, and earnest daily Prayer.

Fourthly and finally the story of the Lion’s Den has to remind us that God is able!

4. Remember that God is Able.

God is able. He is able to rescue from the Lion’s Den and silence the mouth of persecutors. See that in the text today! At times God will intervene in human lives supernaturally to rescue his people. Is that not a message for a persecuted church? God can and does bring abrupt end to persecution. God can and does rescue his saints from certain death. Our text today says that plainly, just like in the story of Ester, just like the story the Exodus. “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” God delights in rescue! That is what I am saying.

Here’s what I’m not saying. I’m not saying that God will deliver every time in this life. That does not match our experience nor does it fit the testimony of scripture itself. Think about Peter and John at the close of John’s Gospel. Jesus basically tells Peter he will be martyred, he won’t be rescued from his Lion’s Den. And Peter replies, “well what about this John?” And Jesus answers,

“If it is MY WILL that he remain until I come, what is that to you. YOU FOLLOW ME!”

John 21:22

There are times in this life where we may be thrown to the Lion's and not delivered. And we shouldn't be looking over our shoulders to see what other Christians experience might be, asking "why me and not him." Jesus says, YOU FOLLOW ME. A hard Word, I know Church. But a Word straight from the Bible, Amen? So if our experience is more like the martyrs in Hebrew 11 in that we are "stoned, sawed in two and killed by the sword" then that is what God has ordained. The point Jesus is making is, in this life God may ordain that some are rescued from Lion's dens. Or God may ordain some to suffer in it. It is HIS prerogative! Just remember He has THE PLAN. HE KNOWS HOW TO WORK ALL THINGS FOR OUR GOOD. So the story of Daniel is not that God will universally rescue his people from all pits in this life.

What the story of Daniel DOES pre-figure, IS THAT GOD WILL UNIVERSALLY RESCUE HIS PEOPLE FROM THE PIT OF SIN AND DEATH. Daniel being rescued from the Lion's den IS A SYMBOL of our release from death and hell. That is how early Christians understood it. It is a story that ANTICIPATES the Gospel.

GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER FROM SIN AND DEATH AND HE DOES IT BY SILENCING THE ACCUSER. That's another way in which the Daniel narrative pre-figures the Gospel. Just like Daniel, we have an accuser. His name is Satan. And just like the satraps in Daniel 6 wanted Daniel dead, so Satan wants us dead. But we are to take heart because God rescues us from the accuser and silences him forever, just like he rescued Daniel and silenced his accuser!

Revelation 12:10 says:

"Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the **accuser of our brothers has been thrown down**, who accuses them day and night before our God." Revelation 12:10

If we know and love Jesus, God silences and throws down Satan on our behalf.

So take heart Church. When stone is being rolled before the entrance to the lion's den, it's not over yet. It's not over yet! God may yet deliver you in this life, don't give up hope. And if he doesn't in the here and now, there is the more glorious truth. God will certainly save his elect in the coming judgment every person will face. He will forever silence the accuser, as the Apostle Paul says:

"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Romans 8:33-34

And verse 37

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39

God is Able to rescue, He is able to definitively save. Nothing can separate us! His glorious promises shall never fail.

And This is the signed, sealed and delivered, Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God! Amen