

The Book of Daniel

- I. Introduction to the Book
- II. Comment and Commentary on the Book.

Part One: The Life and Ministry of Daniel (and friends) in Babylon (1:1-6:28)

- A. The Emergence of Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's Court, 1:1-21
- B. The First Perplexing Dream of Nebuchadnezzar, 2:1-49
- C. The Protective Mercies of God-followers in Exile, 3:1-30
- D. The Testimony through Humbling of a Mighty Conqueror, 4:1-37
- E. The Belshazzar and the Eclipse of the Babylonian Empire, 5:1-31
- F. The Preservation of Exiles that Walk with Integrity, 6:1-28

Chapter 6 Lesson: That if God is pleased to do so, the people of God will be delivered from the caprices of predators and dreadful circumstances, of those who prioritize obedience to the rules of God more than the rules of men when they conflict. When coupled with the story of the three Hebrews consigned to a fiery death (chapter 3), all who live in "exile," in an unfriendly and aversive culture, should be encouraged that we are secure from the jealousy and evil plotting of those who would prevent us from the worship of the true God.

- 1. The attempt to discredit Daniel professionally, vv. 1-3
 - a. The context: the administrative structure of the empire, vv. 1-2
 - 1) The appointment of governors, v. 1
It appears that Darius the Mede set about organizing his expanding empire almost immediately by appointing regional governors in the provinces (the word "satrap" means literally means "protector of the kingdom".)
 - 2) The appointment of three commissioners over the governors, v. 2
Over the governors, the king appointed three administrators. Their duties would likely include overseeing the collection of taxes ("that the king might not suffer loss"). Thus, the three were guardians against thievery.
 - b. The success of Daniel and planned appointment, v. 3
Daniel, who rose to a high position under Nebuchadnezzar and more than likely known to Darius through the Belshazzar episode, not only was granted the office of commissioner, but distinguished himself in the king's service for his administrative ability and personal integrity above the other two commissioners "he possessed an extraordinary spirit". So adept was Daniel that word got out that Darius was going to appoint him to the head of his kingdom, subordinating the commissioners to him.
- 2. The plans to discredit Daniel, vv. 4-13
Jealousy and malice have many origins. Access to large sums of money without accountability has led many to abuse their office (A non-Persian in the highest office could bring out the worst of nationalistic rivalry and prejudice. Whatever the sordid motives, the commissioners sought to discredit and disqualify Daniel from such a high office).
 - a) On the basis of dereliction of duties, v. 4
The initial approach was to search for failure in his personal exercise of the duties of his office. On moral grounds and professional proficiency, they could find no warrant for his disqualification ("...he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was found to be in him").
 - b) On the basis of his religious convictions, v. 5

The second tact was to trap him by the tricking the king into creating a law that they knew Daniel would not obey because of his religious convictions (“...the law of his God”).

- c) The formulation of a strategy, vv. 6-9
 - (1) The appeal to Darius for a religious law, vv. 6-7
Appealing to the king’s idealization of his office, the king perceiving himself a god-figure, the perpetrators of Daniel’s demise asked for a statute, thirty days in length, that prayers be made only to the king and none other. Flattery is often the handmaid of tragedy. The plan was unanimously agreed upon by the nation’s appointed political officials, but the object was the destruction of one man.
 - (2) The securing of a religious law, vv. 8-9
The officials appealed to the king, and he authorized it into law, a law that could not be revoked (“the Law of the Medes and Persians”). Sadly, the king trusted his officials that they only had his best interests in mind having devised a way to honor him and unify his empire religiously. The punishment for violation would be a den of hungry lions.
- d) The application of the strategy, vv. 10-15
 - (1) The knowledge of Daniel’s prayer-life, v. 10
Daniel’s adversaries thought that they had a sure plan to get rid of the aged official. Daniel was not a secret disciple of faith; people knew his spiritual disciplines (he prayed and praised God three times daily, opening a window toward the Holy city to pray [“...as he had been doing previously”]). The origin of the tradition of praying while facing Jerusalem seems to have emerged from Solomon’s prayer in the dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8:35, 38; esp. 44, 48). His devotion would be steadfast unto death (unlike the three in the fiery furnace, chapter 3, who refused to sin in worshipping the gods, Daniel was about to be punished for not sinning against his God). They thought they had an impeccable plan!!
 - (2) The witness to Daniel’s disobedience, v. 11
To support their claim with eyewitnesses, some of the officials observed him in prayer.
 - (3) The appeal to Darius for justice, vv. 12-13
 - (a) The appeal to the law, v. 12a
With evidence through eyewitness, the plotters cleverly approached the king with a series of questions about the prayer-law-statute he had enacted (the crime and the punishment).
 - (b) The confirmation of the king, v. 12b
Since it was irrevocable, being “a law of the Medes and Persians,” the king validated the law.
 - (c) The application to Daniel, v. 13
The animosity of the accusers is evident in how they characterized Daniel (“...one of the exiles from Judah”), the implication being that he was not one of them. He has flaunted the king’s person and decree (“...pays not attention to you, O King”)!
 - (d) The consternation of the king, v. 14
The king’s reaction was emotional distress, compassion, and the attempt to rescue Daniel throughout the rest of the day, but to no avail. Likely, Darius realized that it was about a plot to remove his most trusted official.
 - (e) The climatic appeal of the accusers, v. 15
Later that day (“then”), the plotters reminded the king that a “law of the Medes and Persian” was inviolate. Daniel was doomed!
- 3. The execution of the plot to eliminate Daniel, vv. 16-18
 - a) The king’s order, v. 16a

The king ordered Daniel to be cast into the den of lions (Persians caged wild lions to facilitate a terrifying death, the ultimate capital punishment).

b) The king's compassion, v. 16b

The scene was dripping with irony: the blood thirsty officials on the brink of the elimination of a foe and the king, compassionate and encouraging ("May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you"). Some unbelievers have more compassion and faith than God's people [the issue is not faith, but the object of faith that delivers]. The king was hoping for the best for the man so important to him.

c) The execution site secured, v. 17

To eliminate any possibility of rescue from the den, a stone was placed over the entrance and sealed with the king's and nobles' signet rings. Soft clay was pressed over the chains that secured the stone, with signet rings pressed into it to harden. There was simply no possibility of escape.

d) The king's anxiety, v. 18

The king had a dreadful night as evidenced by his refusal of entertainment, not eating, nor ability to sleep.



4. The deliverance of Daniel from death, vv. 19-23

a) The king's haste to the den, v. 19

"At the break of the day," Darius' troubled soul could wait no longer to learn the fate of Daniel.

b) The King's inquiry, v. 20

"Troubled," the king cried out to Daniel in anguish and hope. Darius acknowledged that Daniel worshiped "the living God," though the statement may or may not suggested his spiritual state. That is simply not the point of the narrative; it was to demonstrate that God protects His children in their "exile."

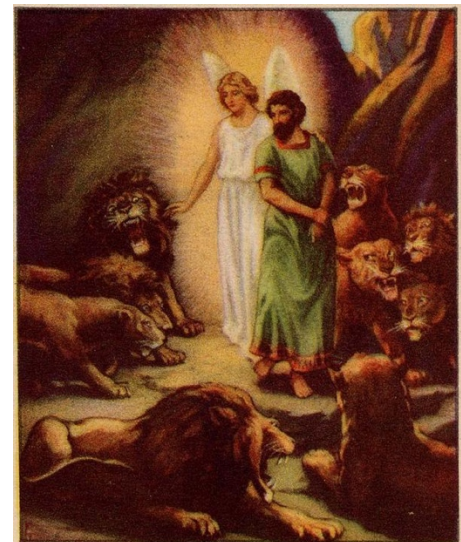
c) Daniel's reply to the king, vv. 21-22

Daniel acknowledged that His God sent a protective angel, and no harm was done. He, then, asserted that the accusations against him were fabrications ("I have committed no crime"). Scholars seem to be confident in their conclusion that the angel was none other than the preincarnate Jesus Christ. What an evening Daniel must have enjoyed!

d) The order to have Daniel released, v. 23a

e) The cause of Daniel's deliverance, v. 23b

The text provides a lesson for all of us "exiles." The way of deliverance, whatever the manner, is "because he had trusted in his" God.



5. The judgment of Daniel's accusers, v. 24

The accusers became the accused, and their immediate destiny was the den of hungry lions that devoured them before they could descend to the bottom of the den. Though seemingly cruel to us, it was the custom among the Medo-Persians that the immediate family of the guilty would share in the punishment. That Daniel alone was cast into the den suggests that he was not married and had no children (I take it that he was celibate, or an involuntary eunuch).

6. The recognition of Daniel's God by Darius, vv. 25-27

- a) The announcement of the King, v. 25
The king then published a universal decree that all should “fear and tremble” before the God of Daniel (Notice: he did not claim that he embraced the God of Daniel, but that all should honor Him).
- b) The reasons for the King’s announcement, vv. 26-27
 - (1) That the God of Daniel is a king who rules over a kingdom that will endure forever. He alone is the living God (v. 26)!
 - (2) That the God of Daniel is mighty by performing miracles, as evidenced by Daniel’s rescue (v. 27)!
- 7. The continued prosperity of Daniel, v. 28
Thus ends the story of the life of Daniel in exile; he lived under Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in the Babylonian Empire (deported in 605) and the Medo-Persian period under Darius the Mede, dying in the early reign of Cyrus, the monarch that allowed the ancient people to return to their homeland (539) and erect a new Temple in Jerusalem (begun in 536, completed in 516 [exactly seventy years after its destruction as predicted]). Daniel died an aged man (80’s), faithful to the very end of life.

Thoughts:

1. The conspirators that sought to bring Daniel down is a reality in every age that many innocents experience. The power of greed for money or place, jealousy of others’ advancement, and quest to be number one is endemic. Why do you think that is so? What does it tell use about human nature? Why do people resent the success of others? Why is it easier to weep with those that weep than celebrate an accomplishment, advancement, raise with those who do so?
2. Daniel is a grand example to us who are believers in God, that they can do well in a pagan world. The tools we have at our disposal are moral integrity, discipline, hard work, and care for others above ourselves. That coupled with competence in professional deportment and skill, fulfilling our duties and obligations, are the keys to career success. It may not save you from capricious, greedy incumbents. But, it will be honoring to God. Here the narrative about Daniel: “no negligence or corruption was found in him,” “He had trusted in his God,” “I committed no crime.” Daniel is a model for all of us (you and me)!
3. The strongest means of witnessing for the God we serve is living before people with care, honesty, and selflessness in life-choices and professional demeanor. “Darius” may be in your office or workplace watching you. What are they seeing? Darius, the highest authority in the land had only accolades for Daniel and grew to care deeply for him (though the king could be duped into falsity by his own pride).
4. The experience of Daniel, and that of the three in the furnace, create a wonderful lesson for us. The three when confronted with judgment declared that either in death or rescue, God would protect his faithful one from ultimate destruction, seeing God’s will of greater value than death if it be God’s will. Let us strive to be wrongly judged for the way we live!
5. Do you live your life in the reality that God always directs our path, both negatively and positively, to accomplish His will through you whether it is pain or bliss? Have we not all realized retrospectively that pain and disappointment was God’s way to blessing?