

LESSON 20

Last week, we ended with the pack of accusers having just reminded the king of his decree and the penalty for disobeying that decree. Verse 13 is where their trap will finally spring shut, as they inform the king about Daniel's disobedience to his decree.

Daniel 6:13-17

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 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. 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and

they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Notice the statement in verse 13 tying Daniel to the captivity of Judah. They are telling the king that Daniel is not one of us — likely to plant the idea that Daniel is disloyal.

The charge made against Daniel is similar to the charge made against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego:

Daniel 3:12 — *There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.*

Likewise, verse 13 charges Daniel with having no regard for the king.

This was a false charge both times. It was not true that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego paid no need to the king, and it was not true that Daniel did not regard the king. They just did not give their ultimate loyalty to any earthly king — that belonged only to God.

But Darius' response is not what the conspirators had hoped for! Yes, Darius becomes very upset (as they had hoped), but (unlike Nebuchadnezzar with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) Darius does not become upset with Daniel or Daniel's prayers. Instead, he becomes upset with himself (verse 14) when he suddenly realizes the real reason for the decree. He had been duped by Daniel's enemies, and I am sure he now regretted not having discussed the matter with Daniel personally. Darius was likely more angry at himself than with anyone else.

Verse 14 tells us that the king labored to deliver Daniel until the sun went down. What did the king do? He likely called the lawyers! What they needed was a loophole! (Why only until the sun went down? Well, lawyers do charge by the hour...) Perhaps swift justice was also required by Persian law.

Darius no doubt respected Daniel for his loyalty to his God, and he tried to save his life. But there was nothing he could do. Providing Daniel with armor, or feeding the lions ahead of time would have undermined the law of the Medes and the Persians. A miracle was Daniel's only hope.

How did Darius know so much about God? He may have learned from Cyrus. (And, as we discussed, he may have been Cyrus!)

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.*

Cyrus seems to have known a lot about God! Perhaps he told Darius about God as well. Darius, at least, would have been familiar with the decree found in the book of Ezra.

He may have heard about God from Daniel. We already know that Daniel had become a very trusted advisor, and as such Daniel must have spoken to Darius about God — just as he had years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar.

In verse 15, Darius is again reminded of his decree, and finally he resigns himself to carrying it out. But, still concerned, Darius goes with Daniel to the pit, where Daniel the octogenarian is thrown in.

Verse 16 tells us that Darius said, “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.” The verb used there could be translated as either “he *will* deliver thee” or “he *may* deliver thee.” In any event, Darius certainly hopes that God will deliver Daniel, and perhaps he was confident that he would. (We often talk about the faith of Daniel, but the faith of Darius is also impressive!)

Notice also the reference in verse 16 to Daniel serving God continually. Daniel had made quite an impression on this king!

The pit is closed and sealed by Darius and the others who are present. Seals of this sort have been found. They consist of a cylinder that is rolled across a clay tablet. Why was the pit sealed? Darius may have been concerned that Daniel’s enemies might decide to give the lions a little help.

Daniel 6:18-20

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living

God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

The king returned to the palace very troubled. Notice that Darius and Pilate share some similarities. Both were forced by circumstances against their will to put someone to death who did not deserve it. But Darius seems to have been much more concerned about his decision than Pilate was. Darius certainly never washed his hands of Daniel's blood.

The king ate no food, enjoyed no entertainment, and could not sleep. As soon as it was light, he ran to the pit to check on Daniel. Do you think the conspirators may have been worried by the king's reactions? They should have been! I think they were starting to sweat.

Darius refers to Daniel as the servant of the living God. To Darius, this test would determine whether or not Daniel's God was living. Once again, Daniel's faithfulness to God would give God an opportunity to show his power to a pagan ruler.

We often pray (as we should) that God will give us opportunities — but we can also give opportunities to God. God works through his church, and our activity (such as proclaiming the word of God) creates opportunities for God to show his power and wisdom to the world.

Darius had had a very bad night, and he is about to discover that his night had been much more difficult than Daniel's!

Daniel 6:21-22

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me:

forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

Can you imagine the king's relief when Daniel answered? Can you imagine the conspirators' reaction?

Daniel calls out and tells the king that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. He also reminds the king that this was proof of his innocence.

But was Daniel innocent? Yes, he had violated the law of the land. But he had not violated the law of God, and that meant he was innocent. In verse 22, Daniel says that "before him (God), innocency was found in me." We too may be approaching a time when those who obey the law of the land are guilty and those who violate the law of the land are innocent. But that should be expected in any society in which everything is reversed — in which evil is called good and good is called evil.

Isaiah 5:20 — *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

Verse 22 may give us a clue as to who the fourth person was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Daniel says he was delivered by an angel, but again the word angel could simply mean a divine messenger, and, as before, some believe that we have yet another Christophany (as we discussed earlier).

It is wonderful to picture eighty year old Daniel sitting in that lion's den all night speaking with that angel! Again, we should note that this was a miracle. As I mentioned before, there are many who deny the miracles in the Bible and try to explain them away. Their strained attempts to believe the Bible yet remove the miracles it contains would be laughable if they were not so sad. For example, read what John Crossan had to say about the resurrection of Lazarus in his book *Jesus: A Revolution-*

ary Biography: “While I do not think this event ever did or could happen, I think it is absolutely true. Let me explain.” That quote is then followed by pages of mumbo-jumbo and double speak. How ridiculous!

Daniel 6:23

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

We can only imagine the king’s reaction when he hears Daniel’s cheerful voice call to him from the lions’ den! Verse 23 says he was exceedingly glad. He was overjoyed. Darius brings Daniel out and looks him over. Not a scratch is found on him (“no manner of hurt was found upon him”).

How had Daniel survived? Daniel was delivered because Daniel was faithful to God. He rightly takes his place in the roll call of faith:

Hebrews 11:32-34 — *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, **stopped the mouths of lions**, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

Daniel is a wonderful example of someone who absolutely refused to compromise with the world throughout his entire life but instead remained loyal and true to God despite the earthly consequences and despite living in an evil pagan nation.

Daniel 6:24

24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

The word “accused” in verse 24 means falsely accused. It literally means those who “had eaten his pieces.” The same word was used of the accusers in Daniel 3:8. They had not falsely accused Daniel of praying, but they had falsely accused him of being disloyal to the king.

Without any trial or hearing, Darius has Daniel’s accusers and their families paraded past Daniel and thrown into the pit. They were killed before they reached the bottom of the pit. (These lions seem to have been in a foul mood for some reason, perhaps because they had been forced to just stare at their dinner all night!)

And Daniel’s reaction? He did not object. God has said that he will judge — and we should not get in the way when he does!

What was their crime? They had lied to the king, and they had tried to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor.

While Darius' actions may seem arbitrary and unjust to us, we must keep in mind that ancient despots did not follow the law of Moses!

Deuteronomy 24:16 — *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*

In fact, even the Jews did not always follow the law of Moses. In 2 Kings 10:11, for example, we read that Jehu killed everyone in the house of Ahab in Jezreel.

Why were their families killed as well? Probably to teach everyone a lesson and to minimize the chance of revenge. Darius wanted Daniel to be a secure prime minister.

Daniel 6:25-27

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders

in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Darius makes a public proclamation as Nebuchadnezzar had done in Daniel 3:29 and 4:34. The king makes a decree in verse 26. How many decrees have we seen so far in this book? It seems that is all these kings know how to do — but whose decrees have mattered? Not theirs, but God's. And that is a good lesson for us today as we see our government making decrees that are opposed to God and his word.

This decree, however, was a good decree. As with Nebuchadnezzar, Darius had a new understanding of God, and it shows in his decree. It was clear to all that God was alive and that he worked in history to bring about justice and to further the welfare of his people. In fact, while this was going on, his people were, as promised, returning to the Holy Land under Zerubbabel.

Why did God allow all of this to happen to Daniel? Why not just thwart the evil plan right from the start? Why instead did God wait to deliver Daniel only after he had been cast into the lions' den? One answer is the same answer we have seen earlier in this book — God wanted to show his power to these pagan rulers.

But there may be another reason at work here. If we use early Christian art as a basis, then Christians have long viewed Daniel's emergence from that lions' den as typological of Jesus' death and resurrection. Both Daniel and Jesus faced false accusations from religious leaders. Both were accused of disloyalty to the king. Both Daniel and Jesus were arrested shortly after prayer. Pilate and Darius both sought to release their prisoner, but, in the end, both Daniel and Jesus were turned over to the executioners. But here is where we have a big difference: Daniel emerged from the lions' den without having died, whereas Jesus emerged from the tomb having died. God spared Daniel, just as he spared Isaac, but God did not spare his own son.

Daniel 6:28**28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius,
and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

Wait! How could Daniel prosper if this unalterable law was still in effect? How could that unchangeable law be changed and replaced with this new decree?

First, we don't know the timing. So we can't be sure when one ended and the other started.

But, second, and more importantly, Daniel had been vindicated by his trial. There was an ancient Babylonian custom that a victim would be pardoned if he were tortured and had not died by the following day.

Also, this event may have been less of a torture and more of what is called an ordeal. That is, its purpose may have been to *determine* guilt rather than to *punish* guilt. This may be indicated by Daniel's statement in verse 22 — “forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me.”

For whatever reason, we know that Daniel continued to pray, and we know that he was not thrown back to the lions because verse 28 says that he prospered. Daniel's usefulness to the king continued, and he prospered as he had during the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

This verse does not mean that Cyrus followed Darius as some suggest. Instead it states (correctly) that Darius and Cyrus ruled simultaneously (if they were different people). As we suggested earlier, it could be the case that Darius and Cyrus are the same person. If that is true, then this verse is saying: “during the reign of Darius, even (namely) the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” That is, Daniel is telling the reader that Darius the Mede is the same person as Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel also continued to pray and study his Bible. The visions in Chapters 10 and 12 were given to him during the third year of Cyrus. The visions in Chapters 9 and 11 came during the first year of Darius' reign. The book was probably written shortly after these visions were revealed, which perhaps puts its date of authorship around 532 BC (about seven years after the Persians took over in 539 BC).