

Lesson 160 (96) – Daniel and the Lions

Theme

Daniel continues to show his faithfulness to God...and God blesses Daniel by providing for him yet another way of escape from the wrath of kings and men. As Walton & Walton (2010) note, “God is able to deliver his faithful people from the persecution of even powerful people. God’s kingdom is greater than any earthly kingdom, and his kingdom is greater than that of any human king” (p. 251).

We’ve seen these truths on every page within Daniel’s narrative. Kings have changed (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius), yet God has maintained his steady hand and has remained faithful to his people...and to Daniel.

Text

Daniel 6

Daniel 6:1-3 (Daniel’s Promotion)

Much like the faithfulness of Joseph and his later appointment to high office...so was Daniel’s faithfulness rewarded when a third king, King Darius appointed Daniel head over all the Satraps (or commissioners).

These verses not only note the reward for Daniel’s faithfulness, they set the stage for future betrayal and conspiracies at the hands of those underneath his leadership. In addition, we learn that the king highly regarded Daniel...which helps us understand verses such as 14, 19, and following.

Daniel 6:4-9 (The Conspiracy to Entrap Daniel)

With the stage set, the men underneath Daniel began to conspire against Daniel. According to Constable, “The text does not say why the other officials wanted to get rid of Daniel. Perhaps his integrity made it difficult for them to get away with graft and political corruption. Maybe since he was quite old they wanted to eliminate him so someone from a younger generation could take his place” (2012, p. 67).

Knowing the Medo-Persian law, the men agreed to have the king sign an edict that would forbid anyone worshiping another god or person for 30 days – except King Darius. Penalty, under Persian law was death by lions. Filled with pride, King Darius quickly signed this law without consulting Daniel or any other high ranking officials.

The stage was now set and the plan put into motion.

Daniel 6:10-15 (Daniel’s Faithfulness to YHWH)

The satraps and presidents knew Daniel would remain faithful. Constable adds, “The new decree did not deter Daniel from continuing to pray for the welfare of the city where God had sent them into exile, and for the Jews’ return from exile. That this was the subject of his praying, among other things, including thanksgiving (v. 10), seems clear since Daniel possessed a copy of Jeremiah’s prophecy (9:2; cf. Jer. 29:1, 7, 10). Jeremiah had written that God had promised to hear such prayers, if they were sincere and wholehearted, to restore the fortunes of the Jews, and to re-gather them to the Promised Land (Jer. 29:12-14)” (2012, p.68).

Knowing Daniel’s prayer habits, they now seek to find him “in the act” so they can notify King Darius of Daniel’s violation of the newly signed edict. This they do...and King Darius, though troubled, must comply with the law. Though he tried (unlike the anger Nebuchadnezzar had for Daniel’s three friends), nothing could stop the punishment Daniel would face. In fact, Daniel’s accusers made sure to remind the king that the edict must stand firm and that Daniel must be punished.

Daniel 6:16-18 (Daniel in the Lions' Den)

With nothing left to do, King Darius had Daniel placed in the lions' den and placed a stone over the opening. A seal was placed on the stone to ensure no one would tamper with the stone in attempts to free Daniel. Verse 16 has an interesting phrase uttered by the King. Since he realizes that there is nothing he, or anyone on earth, can do for him, he states, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" (v. 16). Walvoord (1971, p. 140) adds, "Observable in this assurance of Darius is the deep impression that Daniel's personal piety and faithfulness to God had made upon the king and that this impression had brought about Darius' own conviction that Daniel's God would come to his rescue in Daniel's extremity."

Thus, the king returns to his palace and endures a night of fasting with the joys of being a king eschewed – such as entertainment, choice food and drink, and sleep.

Daniel 6:19-24 (Daniel's Deliverance)

The next day, we find King Darius racing to the lion's den to determine Daniel's fate. He cries out to the other side of the stone and hears a calm voice from Daniel. Daniel records the provision an angel provided and that he was safe from harm – due in part from his faithfulness to God and his committed faithfulness to King Darius.

Learning of his safety, the king removes Daniel and, under the law of retaliation, the king takes Daniel's accusers (and their families) and places them in the very same den of lions. Unlike the safety Daniel enjoyed, the lions quickly broke every bone – even before the bodies could touch the den's floor.

Daniel 6:25-28 (Darius' Decree and Praise of YHWH)

As we have seen in previous examples in the book of Daniel, when earthly kings see God, they pronounce his goodness and declare the greatness of the God of Israel. This time is no exception. Thus, upon seeing God's greatness over man, beast, and kingdom...Darius praises the God of Israel and removes his previous edict to allow God's people freedom to worship him.

Conclusion

The book of Daniel is a powerful narrative that speaks of God's faithfulness, offers hope to the exiled Jew, and shows that believers are often confronted with a testing that demands action. Dyer & Merrill (2001, p. 703) gives the following three points:

"In times of testing believers need to remain faithful to God. Sometimes this will require:

- *Wisdom* to seek a creative compromise that enables the believer to meet society's expectations without violating his or her beliefs (1:8-14).
- *Courage* to be willing to stand up for one's beliefs when no compromise is possible (3:15-18).
- *Personal discipline* to develop a lifestyle of faithfulness so the right response to a test will come 'naturally' (6:10)."239

Catechisms

Questions 1-5

1. Who made you?
God made me (Gn 1:26, 27; 2:7; Ec 12:1; Acts 17:24-29).
2. What else did God make?
God made all things (Gn 1, esp. verses 1, 31; Acts 14:15; Rm 11:36; Col 1:16).

3. Why did God make you and all things?
For his own glory (Ps 19:1; Jer 9:23, 24; Rv 4:11; 4:15).
4. How can you glorify God?
By loving him and doing what he commands (Ec 12:13; Mk 12:29-31; In 15:8-10; 1 Cor 10:31).
5. Why ought you to glorify God?
Because he made me and takes care of me (Rm 11:36; Rv 4:11; cf. Dan 4:39).

Questions 5-10

6. Are there more gods than one?
There is only one God (Deut 6:4; Jer 10:10; Mk 12:29; Acts 17:22-31).
7. In how many persons does this one God exist?
In three persons (Mt 3:16, 17; Jn 5:23; 10:30; 14:9, 10; 15:26; 16:13-15; 1 In 5:20, 2 In 9; Rv 1:4, 5)
8. Who are they?
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20, 21)
9. Who is God?
God is a Spirit, and does not have a body like men (Jn 4:24; 2 Cor 3:17; 1 Tim 1:17).
10. Where is God?
God is everywhere (Ps 139:7-12; Jer 23:23,24; Acts 17:27,28).

Questions 11-15

11. Can you see God?
A. No. I cannot see God, but he always sees me (Ex 33:20; Jn 1:18; 1 Tim 6:16; Ps 139 esp. vv. 1-5; Pr 5:21; Hb 4:12, 13).
12. Does God know all things?
A. Yes. Nothing can be hidden from God (1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 16:9; Lk 12:6, 7; Rm 2:16).
13. Can God do all things?
A. Yes. God can do all his holy will (Ps 147:5; Jer 32:17; Dan 4:34, 35; Eph 1:11).
14. Where do you learn how to love and obey God?
A. In the Bible alone (Job 11:7; Ps 119:104; Is 8:20; Mt 22:29; 2 Tim 3:15-17).
15. Who wrote the bible?
A. Holy men who were taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:20, 21; Acts 1:16; 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:10, 11).

Questions 16 and 17

16. Who were our first parents?
A. Adam and Eve (Gn 2:18-25; 3:20; 5:1, 2; Acts 17:26; 1 Tim 2:13).
17. Of what were our first parents made?
A. God made the body of Adam out of the ground, and formed Eve from the body of Adam (Gn 2:7; 21-23; 3:19; Ps 103:14).

Craft

Daniel in the Lions' Den