

Lesson 15

Last week we started looking at Chapter 6 in which Daniel is threatened with death for his faithfulness to God.

When we ended, we had just read verses 13-17, in which the trap was sprung by Daniel's accusers, and King Darius reluctantly had Daniel put into a den of hungry lions.

Why do I say reluctantly? Because the law of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed once it had been established. Darius wanted to spare Daniel, but he could not.

Let's read again verses 16-17.

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.

In verse 16, Darius seems to know something about God. Where did that knowledge come from?

As we discussed before, the most likely identity of King Darius is either that he was King Cyrus or that he was a Median co-regent with the Persian King (or perhaps Crown Prince) Cyrus.

If Darius was Cyrus, then we have our answer. We know that Cyrus knew quite a lot about God, and, in fact, Isaiah had mentioned Cyrus by name before Cyrus was even born! Here is what Cyrus was saying at about this same time.

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.

If Cyrus and Darius were different kings, then perhaps Cyrus told Darius about God. Darius, at least, would have been familiar with the decree found in the book of Ezra.

Also, perhaps Darius had already been around Daniel long enough to learn about God. 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. And I suspect you couldn't be around Daniel for very long without hearing about God!

After being reminded of his own decree, Darius finally resigns himself to carrying it out. But, still concerned, Darius goes with Daniel to the pit, into which Daniel the faithful octogenarian is cast.

The verb in verse 16 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 Darius was confident that God would deliver Daniel. (We often talk about the faith of Daniel, but the faith of Darius in verse 16 is also impressive!)

Notice also the reference in verse 16 to Daniel serving God continually. Daniel had already made quite an impression on this king! And I suspect that Daniel's impression on the king had strengthened considerably once the king knew that Daniel was willing to face death rather than be faithless to God. Once the world knows that fact about a person, then or now, the world also knows that it has no power over that person.

Luke 12:4 - And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

The pit is closed and sealed by Darius and by 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 give the lions a little help!

Daniel 6:18-19

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick 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.

The king returns to his palace very troubled. He eats no food, he enjoys no entertainment, and he is not able to sleep.

Do you think the conspirators may have been worried by the king's reactions? They should have been! I suspect they were starting to sweat.

Darius had suffered through a very bad and sleepless night because of his worry about Daniel, but Darius is about to discover that his night had been much more difficult than Daniel's night!

Very early in the morning, Darius runs to the den of lions to check on Daniel.

Again, we should picture the scene. King Darius and his entourage hurrying down to the den of lions early in the morning, likely with the king leading the way. And Daniel's accusers perhaps nervously looking on to see if their plan had worked, and perhaps by this time already regretting that plan.

Daniel 6:20-22

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? 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.

In verse 20, the king calls out to Daniel in a "lamentable voice." Darius is really worried about Daniel, and it seems in verse 20 from his tone of voice that perhaps he has given up hope.

But he calls out to Daniel and says, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

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 is giving God an opportunity to show his power to a pagan ruler.

How does God work in this world? In large manner, the answer to that question has not changed since the days of Daniel. God works in this world through his faithful people. Yes, we are seeing God work through a miracle here in Daniel 6, but we also see God working through the actions of Daniel here. And today? We are the body of Christ. Just as we operate with our body, so does Christ. And Jesus

has given us our marching orders in the Great Commission!

And you know what? Jesus is not the only one today who works through his faithful followers. Satan also works through the actions of those who faithfully follow him, and we see his workers in this scene as well.

And once again, we are called upon to visualize an incredible scene!

Can you imagine the king's relief when Daniel answered? Can you imagine the accusers' reaction when Daniel answered? And what were the lions thinking!

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 in verse 22 that this was proof of his innocence.

But was Daniel innocent? Daniel had violated the law of the land, but Daniel had not violated the law of God, and that meant Daniel was innocent no matter what men might say about him. As Daniel says in verse 22, "**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 before God and those who violate the law of the land are innocent. But that should be expected in any society such as our own in which everything is becoming reversed - in which evil is called good and good is called evil.

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).

But the most common view and perhaps the most likely option is that, while the fourth person in the fiery furnace may have been Christ, the deliverer here was just an angel in the ordinary sense. But we don't know for sure.

In any event, it is wonderful to picture eighty year old Daniel sitting in that lion's den all night talking to that angel while being stared at by a pride of hungry lions!

And perhaps it is an encouragement to us to know that those are not the only lions whose mouths were ever shut by God! God is still shutting mouths today!

Isaiah 52:15 - **The kings shall shut their mouths at him** [Christ]: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider

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 don't have to just imagine the king's reaction when he hears Daniel's cheerful voice call to him from the lions' den. Verse 23 tells us that the king was exceedingly glad. He was overjoyed.

Darius brings Daniel out and looks him over. Not a scratch is found on Daniel. Verse 23 tells us that "no manner of hurt was found upon him."

Why had Daniel survived? Verse 23 answers that question - "because he believed in his God."

Daniel was delivered because Daniel was faithful to God. And Daniel rightly takes his place in the great roll call of faith, along with his three friends:

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.

Do you mean Daniel stopped the lions' mouths? I thought verse 22 said that God shut the lions' mouths by sending an angel. So who was it? God or Daniel?

The inspired answer is that it was both! Daniel 6:22 says that God did it, and Hebrews 11:33 says that Daniel did it. How do we explain that?

Matthew 9:22 - "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Matthew 17:20 - "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Ephesians 6:16 - "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

1 John 5:4 - "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

God shut the lions' mouths, and Daniel shut the lions' mouths. How? Faith is how. That is the answer the Bible gives to that question.

Paul knew all about that. In 2 Timothy 4:18, Paul wrote: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Paul was following Daniel's example!

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. We should all aspire to be Daniel! God needs more Daniels!

And yes God delivered Daniel from death, but even if the lions had killed Daniel (as they would later kill many faithful Christians under the Roman persecution), that would not mean that God had failed to deliver Daniel.

God was going to deliver Daniel one way or another - that was certain! Either Daniel would be delivered from death or Daniel would be delivered through death. Either way Daniel would have been delivered.

Colossians 1:13 - Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Hebrews 2:14-15 - That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

We have already been delivered from the power of this world! And if we remain faithful unto death,

then we will receive the promised crown of life .

Revelation 2:10 - Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The question here was not **whether** God would deliver Daniel. The question was **how** God would deliver Daniel. Daniel's deliverance was never in doubt.

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 earlier accusers in Daniel 3:8. They had not falsely accused Daniel of praying (that part was true), 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 den of lions. And they were killed by the lions before they reached the bottom of the pit. (These lions seem to have been in a foul mood for some reason, maybe because they had been forced to just stare at their dinner all night!)

What was their crime? They had lied to the king, and they had tried to deprive the king of his most trusted advisor. And worse, they had made the king look like a fool by establishing a law that he immediately regretted.

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

And Daniel's reaction? He did not object. God has told us that vengeance belongs to him - and perhaps the lesson here is that we should not get in God's way when God takes that vengeance!

Romans 12:19 - Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

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 just as Nebuchadnezzar did earlier in Daniel 3:29 and 4:34.

We have seen many royal decrees so far in this book. In fact, it seems that making decrees 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 now had a new understanding of God, and it shows in his decree.

It was now clear to all that God was alive and that God was working 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 Jerusalem 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 after having not died, while Jesus emerged from the tomb after having died. God spared Daniel, but God did not spare his own son.

So much in the Old Testament points straight to the cross and the resurrection. We can see comparisons with Joseph in the pit, with Isaac on the altar, with Jonah in the fish, and with Daniel in the lions' den. Don't ever let anyone tell you that the rejection of Christ came as a surprise to God. It did not. And no one who reads the Old Testament could ever think otherwise.

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, the law had a 30 day time limit, and we aren't sure of the exact timing of these events within those thirty days.

Second, after these events, there were likely not too many people lining up to accuse Daniel of anything.

And third, 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.

And this event may have been viewed as less of a torture and more of what is called an ordeal. Its purpose may have been to determine guilt rather than to punish guilt. That may be indicated by Daniel's statement in verse 22 - "forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me."

But for whatever reason, we know that Daniel continued to pray, and we know that Daniel 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.

As for Darius and Cyrus in verse 28, we talked about this verse when we looked at Darius the Mede earlier. Either verse 28 is explaining that Daniel prospered while both Darius and Cyrus were reigning (one as king of Medo-Persia, and the other as crown prince of Medo-Persia and hereditary king Persia), or verse 28 is explaining that Darius and Cyrus are in fact the same person (the reign of

Darius, even the reign of Cyrus).

With the end of Chapter 6, we have reached the end of the historical narrative part of the book, and we are about to begin the part of the book that shows us the visions that Daniel received from God.

Chapter 7

Daniel 7 is also one of the most important chapters in the Bible.

Why? Because of verse 13.

Daniel 7:13 - "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven."

That phrase, Son of Man, occurs 84 times in the New Testament and is the Messianic title most commonly used by Christ to speak of himself. For example:

- The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
- But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.
- Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.
- The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.
- For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.
- And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.
- For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.

- The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.
- Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
- There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

And those are just a few examples, all from Matthew.

Each time that phrase "Son of Man" is used it points us back to this incredibly beautiful Chapter 7 of Daniel.

Of all the Messianic titles in the Old Testament it was this one that Jesus used most often. And what does that fact say about those today who would attack the historical veracity of Daniel? It tells us that their attack does not end with Daniel; they are attacking Christ and his Messianic claims.

In Chapters 7-12, we will be reading about Daniel's dreams and visions from God, and much of the language we see will be what is called apocalyptic language. We have already seen some examples of this language in the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, but we are about to see a great deal more of it.

What is apocalyptic language?

Apocalyptic language is composed of symbols that are often lurid in color, violent in tone, and easily remembered. They strike the imagination and grab hold of the mind. Such language is found in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and even sometimes in the gospels and epistles.

What is the purpose of apocalyptic language?

It denotes conflict and victory and judgment. It is used when God judges and smites an oppressor and vindicates his people. It is used to describe times of crisis and judgment.

Why does God use apocalyptic language?

I think the reason God uses such language is because of its emotional impact. Apocalyptic books have

been called oil paintings from God. The vivid and violent language conveys emotional images while also conveying historical facts - just as a painting can convey emotions and facts.

Of course, each word of apocalyptic language is inspired, just as with the historical narrative sections, but that inspired language uses vivid symbols to convey emotional imagery. Numbers 12:8 reminds us that God does not always speak clearly, but sometimes uses dark language. Perhaps such language is reserved for times of conflict and judgment.

How do we interpret apocalyptic language?

First, we need to pay particular attention to numbers and periods of time. They have symbolic meanings that must be deduced from the evidence.

- Three is the symbolic number for God.
- Four is the symbolic number for the earth or the creation.
- Twelve is the symbolic number for God's people.
- Ten is the symbolic number for completeness.
- Seven is the symbolic number for perfection.
- Six is the symbolic number for imperfection.
- Eight is the symbolic number for renewal.

These numbers can be combined. For example, how could we denote divine perfection? By combining the divine number three with seven, the number of perfection - and that might give us 777. So how then could we denote someone who thought he was divine, but who fell hopelessly short of divine perfection - not 777, but 666.

Sometimes numbers are raised to powers (squared or cubed) to add emphasis. For example, if ten means completeness, then 1000 means complete completeness! So if we found that someone was bound for 1000 years or someone reigned for 1000 years, then that would mean that that binding or that reign would be absolutely and totally complete.

As another example, how could we denote ALL of God's people? We could start with twelve for God's people under the Old Testament, and then another twelve for God's people under the New Testament. Then we could use ten to denote completeness, and then raise it to the third power either to emphasize it or perhaps even to denote that these are God's people (with three denoting God). What would we then have? Twelve times twelve times ten to the third power, or 144,000.

If seven denotes perfection, how could we denote imperfection? We have already seen one way - we would use six as something that falls hopelessly short of seven. But we could also use a broken seven to denote imperfection - and a broken seven is three and a half, which is a figure that is often used for that purpose.

Why these numbers? Why not some other numbers?

The answer to that question is that the figurative meaning of these numbers comes from their literal meaning! Why three for God? The trinity. Why four for earth? The four directions and the four seasons. Why twelve for God's people? The twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles. Why ten for complete? Ten fingers. Why seven for perfect? The seven days of the creation week. Why eight for renewal? The eighth day is the start of a new week.

In fact, sometimes the literal usage may arise from the figurative usage. For example, why are there four earthly kingdoms between the time of Babylon and the time of Rome? God could easily have used only three kingdoms or five or more kingdoms. Why four? Is it because of the use of four to denote the world? That is, these kingdoms are earthly kingdoms as opposed to the eternal heavenly kingdom.

And why did the captivity last 70 years? Is it because 70 also denoted the perfect and complete period of time in which they could learn the lesson that God wanted to teach them?

There are some guidelines we should follow in interpreting apocalyptic language.

(1) Apocalyptic language always has historical significance, so we must study history to interpret it properly.

(2) We should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise. The usual approach to scripture is to understand a passage literally unless we are forced to do otherwise. How could we ever be forced to not understand a passage literally? In Matthew 5:30, Jesus told us to cut off our right hand if it offends us. Was this a literal command or should we interpret it figuratively?

This usual rule of interpretation is reversed for apocalyptic language - we should understand apocalyptic language figuratively unless we are forced (or at least have a very good reason) to do otherwise.

(3) Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects. (There are many judgments in the Bible, but the same language is used to describe each - Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Edom. Jerusalem, Rome, the world.)

(4) Dissimilarity of language does not prove distinctness of subjects. (Sometimes the Bible views the same thing from different angles, and thus uses different language to describe the same thing.)

(5) Easy to understand scriptures should be used to understand harder passages. The Bible is its own best commentary. This basic principle of hermeneutics should be used whenever we study the Bible. We should be very wary of any interpretation of apocalyptic language that conflicts with easier passages found elsewhere.

(6) The time frame is crucial in properly understanding apocalyptic language. Why? Because often the same language is used to describe different judgments or events, and so the time frame lets us know which judgment or event is in view.

(7) Sometimes in Daniel, just as later in Revelation, we will be given an inspired explanation about the meaning of a symbol. That explanation is, of course, the correct explanation. It sounds simple, but you might be surprised how often commentaries disagree with God's own commentary!

#daniel