

Now we will enter the time of the Medo-Persian empire. But, just for 1 chapter tonight and then we'll go back to Belshazzar's reign in Babylon for chapters 7-8. After that, we will be back in the Persian empire. Chapter 6+, some think, ends the 1st part of the book.

While the whole book stands to glorify our God and King as the Sovereign LORD of all creation, the one who builds up nations and kings and takes them down again, the one who IS in control even while kings and emperors think that they are the ones who control man's destiny.

These first 6 chapters are dealing with Kings and men; Pagan kings and Jewish men. The narratives are exciting and full of tension and emotion.

Visions of Daniel are not there to show the future – they are to reveal the character of the True and Living God – it is His future, it is His plan and it is greater than the simple movement of nations and kingdoms. It is to reveal the Plan of establishing His everlasting Kingdom whose greatness is not shared with any other – because there will be no others. This Everlasting Kingdom has a King – the Messiah, the Seed of Eve and Savior of the world.

(Daniel 6:1 NKJV) It pleased **Darius** to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom;

It's not too long after the death of Belshazzar that the Medes/Persians took over – perhaps even hours...

There's a lot of discussion about who this man is. Regardless of who he is, he is the king. The division of the empire was evidently a common practice with the Persians. These were called 'princes' elsewhere (Esther)

What's weird is that the next 2 chapters (7/8) are during the reign of Belshazzar and then chapter 9 begins in the 1st year of Darius. Again, I think the placement is thematic because it's not chronological.

Daniel is probably 70-80 years old by now.

(Daniel 6:2 NKJV) and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel *was* one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.

The governors were 'emirs' or 'presidents' as the word is in Chaldean. The word 'one' implies that Daniel was set over the other two. This makes sense because under Belshazzar, he was "third in line" and I'm sure his reputation preceded him.

The governor's main job was to ensure that all the provinces would pay their tributes (taxes) to the king.

(Daniel 6:3 NKJV) Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

Daniel, the man of faith, the man of God who never desired to do anything that would tarnish his God's reputation, excelled (as he always did). He did his job so well that this king was also thinking about promoting him to the highest level of the government.

(Daniel 6:4 NKJV) So the governors and satraps sought to find *some* charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he *was* faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.

These weaklings were envious of Daniel's very apparent acceptance by the king. Perhaps these men were upset because Daniel, being a Jewish captive, had more responsibility and even favor from the king.

Doing your best is not always welcomed by others. For example, at my last job, when new union employees were hired they started out doing a great job, doing extra work showing ambition so that they could better themselves. But their peers did not appreciate being shown up. Many times, the older union workers would do only what was required by their contract and nothing more. The newbies were "spoken to" and then they too just settled into a "just do the minimum". The existing union members didn't want anyone doing more than they did and therefore making them look bad.

Daniel was blameless (without fault or error, i.e., not sinless) and a man of great integrity. Perhaps the others were embezzling monies that were to go to the king or taking bribes (pure conjecture on my part but not without precedent!).

(Daniel 6:5 NKJV) Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God."

Daniel's reputation preceded him! They knew that he was loyal to his God and strove to do as God commanded. I'm not sure what the Jewish religious leaders taught about the Law because being outside the "Land" and with no Temple, things had to be done very differently. It may have been like it was after the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 70AD. The rabbi's taught that instead of sacrifice, the people could have atonement thru prayer, giving and repentance. In Babylon, the Jews solely on the mercy of God and the Promises He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Today, the Jews must also fall on the mercy, grace and promises of God. The problem is, those were all wrapped up in the Messiah's life, death and resurrection, and they refuse to believe.

I thought it strange that they thought that they knew enough about Daniel's God that they could find something with which to charge him. However, just being a

devout Jew who was known to always prayer to his God was enough...

(Daniel 6:6 NKJV) So these governors and satraps + before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever!

The Hebrew word for "thronged" means to assemble tumultuously or into today's parlance, they were in an unruly mob.

These men made a big scene in coming to the king. All pomp and circumstance, no substance!

(Daniel 6:7 NKJV) **All the governors** of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

All the governors – all but Daniel...so they start out with a lie and it continues from here.

They wanted the king to decree that no one should pray to any god or exalt any man for 30 days. The penalty was being thrown into a pit of lions. They presumably wanted to ensure that the king gain the respect due to him as the new King over the former Babylonian empire. All peoples were to pray only to him as if he were their god.

cast into the den of lions: This form of punishment was apparently the preferred method of the Persians. The Babylonian's used fire.

The Persian religion has its roots in Zoroastrianism a religion that was mainly dualistic – a Good spirit vs and Evil Spirit. One of the symbols of the Good spirit was fire. Therefore, it would have been sacrilegious to use fire to kill people.

(Daniel 6:8 NKJV) Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

The king assumed that all his leaders were behind the request. So, he wrote and signed the decree. The **phrase "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter"** declared that even the king could not change his mind later! This is the same situation that Ahasuerus was in during the time of Esther and Haman (Esther 1:19, 8:8).

(Daniel 6:9 NKJV) Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Suppose the law of our land were proclaimed, 'No man shall pray during the month of December, on pain of death' - how many of us would pray? That was a rhetorical question from Spurgeon. Even back then his conclusion was quite

negative. Many would not pray because many do not pray even without a threat.

I think his criticism must be aimed at public or corporate prayer for how else would anyone know that you prayed? Yes, the Persians probably did not go to a temple during this time. Even though many believe that the Jewish synagogue was created during the Babylonian captivity, there's no consistent proof.

But the lack of a building shouldn't stop someone from praying as we see in the next verse.

(Daniel 6:10 NKJV) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. **And in his upper room**, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

Daniel learns that the decree was signed. So, he does what he always did – pray. He did this consistently at 9am, 12 and 3pm. He went to the upper room of his house and knelt to pray. He knelt at a window that faced towards Jerusalem. He had been doing this since his early days of captivity.

The upper room of a home was typical back then. It was used for prayer because they were normally constructed with many windows that would allow a breeze come through. We saw this several times during Jesus's time on earth.

Facing Jerusalem (and therefore the Temple) was also common. In 1st Kings 8 Solomon dedicated the Temple and said after prophesying that the people of God will go astray and be sent to a distant country:

(1 Kings 8:48) and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their **land** which You gave to their fathers, the **city** which You have chosen and the **temple** which I have built for Your name:

Kneeling was also common. It signified submission to the Most High God because ultimately, He is the one in control!

Solomon did it (2 Chronicles 6:13), Jesus did it (Luke 22:41), Stephen did it (Acts 7:60), Peter did it (Act 9:40), Paul and many he met did as well (Acts 20:36, Acts 21:5).

Motive?

The question naturally arises, "Did Daniel do this on purpose, to be seen as being defiant and to test the king". No. Daniel did what Daniel always did – he prayed, at a window facing the Holy City and, on his knees, he petitioned His God. And, he did this act of faith he had in his God, knowing that it was against the king's decree. Yes, he was disobedient to the decree of his king,

but Daniel served a greater King!

I think equally important, Daniel had that kind of relationship with God that praying 3 times a day was a pleasure and not a burden! It wasn't a rote act with pre-written liturgical prayers that were repeated over and over each day. No, this is a man who loves his God and he knew His God listened and would be pleased.

(Daniel 6:11 NKJV) Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

Aha! Their plan worked! The word "assembled" is the same as in verse 6: unruly mob

(Daniel 6:12 NKJV) And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "**Have you not signed a decree** that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

They took it to the king and reminded him of the decree.

(Daniel 6:13 NKJV) So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

Daniel the Jew is still praying to his God – and he does it 3 times a day! So, King Darius, what are you going to do about it?

(Daniel 6:14 NKJV) And the king, when he heard *these* words, was **greatly displeased with himself**, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Darius was between a rock and a hard-place. He was truly upset because he valued Daniel so much. He thought all day of a way to deliver Daniel from the sentence of death that he himself imposed!

(Daniel 6:15 NKJV) Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that *it is* the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

And for the third and final time, the word "approached" is the same as in vs 6 and 11 - unruly mob

The men returned to remind the king that his hands were tied and that he was the one who tied them!

The Jew must go!

(Daniel 6:16 NKJV) So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast *him* into the den of lions. *But* the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "**Your** God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."

Darius was not a believer in Daniel's God but he has respect for all Gods and knows from stories that Daniel and his friends were highly favored by Him and protected as well. He knew for sure that Daniel was a faithful servant and could say with confidence "He will deliver you".

This one phrase "He will deliver you" hit me hard. Would I have the faith and confidence in God to know that His deliverance is certain? What strikes me strangely is that this is coming from a pagan king! And, unlike him, I have the entire Bible, filled with stories of His grace and mercy and mighty acts of deliverance. I have eye-witness accounts of His Greatest Act – the salvation of the world. **So what's my excuse?** There is none. It's just incumbent upon me to fully surrender those doubts and remember that the greatest deliverance was **freely and graciously** given to **me** nearly 30 years ago.

(Daniel 6:17 NKJV) Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

This is reminiscent of the burial of Jesus. The seals were placed on the stone to ensure that Daniel's friends would not come and rescue him. No one would dare break these seals. And like those Roman soldiers, the threat of death was real.

(Daniel 6:18 NKJV) Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.

The king couldn't eat, drink nor be entertained because of his worry over Daniel and his inability to do anything about it. He couldn't even sleep...

Was he fasting for religious reasons? Probably not, but he had a lot of respect and affection towards Daniel and the thought of him being mauled to death was upsetting his stomach!

(Daniel 6:19 NKJV) Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. **(20)** And when he came to the den, he cried out with a **lamenting voice to Daniel**. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has **your** God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Unable to contain himself any longer, the king cries out in anguish, "Daniel are you ok? Have you been delivered from the lions?"

(Daniel 6:21 NKJV) Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!

Daniel always had respect for the kings under whom he served!

(Daniel 6:22 NKJV) My God sent **His angel** and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

Before God: God First, then the king...

Yes! God sent an angel to keep the lion's mouths sealed shut. They didn't cause him any harm – because, our God found him innocent! Daniel's declaration that he did no wrong before the king was true. He was an honest governor and always a man of integrity; he also knew that it was right to obey God over man

Who's this angel? Some say the Angel of the LORD (i.e., Jesus) and some say Michael who had been assigned to protect the children of Israel. Since it's not said, it's not important enough to even speculate.

(Daniel 6:23 NKJV) Now the king was exceedingly 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 injury whatever was found on him, **because he believed in his God.**

Daniel was preserved through *faith*. Though his cause was righteous and the accusations were true, I don't think it was his **righteousness** that protected him from the lions. It was his **relationship** with his living God founded on deep abiding faith, and maintained by prayer.

Remember, a lion was slain by Samson, and another by David; but the most remarkable instance of stopping the mouths of lions, was in the den, into which Daniel was cast; Could this also be a picture of our victory over the real "lion" of our lives?

1 Peter 5:6-9 NKJV Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, (7) casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (8) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (9) Resist him, **steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

James 4:7 NKJV Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

(Daniel 6:24 NKJV) And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

Yuk. But, completely consistent with Persian law. The Torah (The Law) expresses forbids executing whole families.

(Daniel 6:25 NKJV) Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

Darius writes to the all the peoples in the Persian empire. Much like Nebuchadnezzar before him.

(Daniel 6:26 NKJV) I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must* tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He *is* the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion *shall endure* to the end. (27) He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

While “the God of Daniel” is not his god, he understands His power. He calls Him the living God who is steadfast forever – noting that He is not fickle as the pagan gods seem to be (fickle only in the sense that the pagan’s thought these non-gods were not like Daniel’s God).

He also declares that Daniel’s God is a deliverer and a rescuer who works signs and wonders in heaven and earth. He acknowledges His eternal kingdom, one that cannot be destroyed.

Does he believe? Yes and No. He can say these things because of Daniel. Daniel proved to him as he did Belshazzar before him and Nebuchadnezzar before him that His God stood alone in power, might, wisdom, knowledge and while there were kingdoms before and some after, God’s kingdom is all of creation, space and time.

(Daniel 6:28 NKJV) So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Which is because Daniel honored His God always and God honored him.

Why did God allow Daniel to go through all of this? Why did God allow Shadrack, Meshack and Abed-Nego to go through the fiery furnace? Did they need a test of their faith and loyalty?

I don’t think so because their lives were examples of the faith they had in their Awesome God. I believe this is another “Job” thing. Job had the honor and privilege of glorifying God to the one who chose to try to steal His Glory – Satan.

Daniel and his friends were chosen, not to test their faith, but to use it to glorify their God even in their captivity, through fire and through the mouths of hangry lions.

They were chosen to demonstrate not only His power and might, His dominion and control of creation, but to show pagan kings that their God is the only True and Living God who is able to rescue even both the small and the great, the humble and meek but He will resist the proud and bring them low, some to destruction as with Pharaoh and some to praise, extol and honor the King of heaven, as with Nebuchadnezzar.