

“FEAR GOD MORE THAN LIONS”
Lessons From Babylon Series #6
Daniel 6:1-10 March 13 & 14, 2021

We’ve gotten to the last chapter of our series, Lessons From Babylon. This weekend and next weekend we’ll be looking at Daniel 6 and wrapping up our study of building character in the midst of a Babylonian world. The more I look at these six chapters and study about Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and the leaders that they have to deal with, the more I see an absolute correlation to what is taking place in our United States today. Each of the lessons we’ve learned so far has encouraged us to stand strong in our faith in Jesus Christ despite pressures put upon us by governmental leaders. We need to be people of character and integrity, respecting the authority given to these folks, but refusing to bow to any other person, but standing strong in our obedience to the commands of God.

Last week we ended with the demise of King Belshazzar after he mocked God. Darius the Mede seized the royal power as he invaded and successfully overthrew the Babylonian leaders as they had gathered to drink wine and have a feast in the palace of the king.

Now, many have tried to dispel the authority of the Old Testament book of Daniel on this account, since there is no King Darius of the Medes and Persians before King Cyrus took control. There is record of King Nebuchadnezzar, King Nabonidus, his son, and King Belshazzar, his grandson, being in power in Babylon, but most historians state that Cyrus was the conqueror of the Babylonian Empire. However, history has shown that often people had multiple names, much like we’ve seen Daniel Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah being called Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So, too, Darius is the throne name for the Median king who overthrew the city of Babylon and its regions.

In an article in Bible Archaeology, January 8, 2016, Steven Anderson says, “The thesis that I argue in my 2014 Ph.D. dissertation and published book entitled *Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal* ... is that Cyrus shared power with a Median king until about two years **after** the fall of Babylon. This Median king is called Cyaxares (II) by the Greek historian Xenophon, but is known by his throne name Darius in the book of Daniel. Cyrus did not make a hostile conquest of Media, [he] did not dethrone the

last Median king, and [he] did not become the highest regent in the Medo-Persian Empire until after the fall of Babylon. Cyrus was Darius's co-regent, the hereditary king of the realm of Persia, the crown prince of Media, and the commander of the Medo-Persian army—yet it was still Darius who was officially recognized as the highest power in the realm. Darius (Cyxares II) died naturally within two years after the fall of Babylon, and as he had no male heir and Cyrus had married his daughter, Cyrus inherited his position upon his death and united the Median and Persian kingdoms in a single throne.”¹

So Darius, “...*who was then sixty-two years old...*” (Dan. 5:31), became the king of Babylon. And as he began his administration, he established leaders in 120 provinces that he divided the empire into. He appointed a governor, or ruler, over each province, and established “presidents” over those governors to make sure that they did not damage the king or rip-off the government during its transition. And then, over all of these governors and presidents, he established Daniel as the chief of the presidents.

Somehow Darius heard of Daniel and established that he was very capable of ruling over the empire. He was not a Babylonian, so there would not have been any animosity about being ruled by a Median king. And since Daniel had been involved in the leadership of Babylon for such a long time under Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus and Belshazzar, he was considered to be a very capable and conscientious statesman. So once more, Daniel is in a very prominent position within the government. In our system today, he would be similar to the Secretary of State, and everything of any importance would pass through his office (Dan. 6:3).

We're not told how long he was in this position before the other governors and presidents began to look for a way to get rid of him, but at some point they conspired to find some way to remove him from office. Much like the Democrats tried multiple times to impeach President Trump, these lower ranking leaders did their best to dig up dirt on Daniel so that they could provide a reason to have him removed from office. But “*Daniel was reliable and did not do anything wrong or dishonest*” (Dan. 6:4). He looked out over these regional leaders, keeping a close eye on them so that they could not embezzle

¹ (Steven Anderson, TruthOnlyBible.com, *Darius the Mede: A Solution to His Identity*, January 8, 2016)

funds from the treasury, or somehow pad their own pockets with governmental funds. Psalm 11:2 describes their actions well, “...*the wicked have drawn their bows and aimed their arrows to shoot from the shadows at good men.*”

I can almost hear their conversations: “Man, if it weren’t for Daniel keeping such a close eye on us, we would have access to all we want. We could vote our own increase in salary, we could vote out our own multimillion dollar projects, we could vote on funding programs that would efficiently be funneled back into our own pockets, but this president stands in our way. We’ve got to get rid of Daniel so that we can begin to have things our own way and change all the rules to keep us set up for years to come!” (Don’t we hear the same arguments coming from our own congress even today?)

They may have put together a special investigation team to try to get something on Daniel. Perhaps they could get him for some under-the-table deals with another country. Perhaps they could get him on money laundering. Perhaps, even, maybe they could get him for putting a relative into a position of power unfairly or without proper qualifications. But nothing could be found on him. He was righteous in ALL his ways.

But what a great compliment to get from your enemies – that despite their search, nothing improper or shady or even questionable could be found on us. Rare is the one who can equal or even surpass the righteousness of Daniel. “...*but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, because he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.*”⁵ Then these men said, “*We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him regarding the law of his God.*”

While they would have been glad to have found anything that they could have accused Daniel of, they came up empty. There was simply no evidence of any impropriety, no receiving any bribes, no connections with the Mafia, no associations with Antifa, not even a membership in the National Rifle Association.

What a tremendous testimony of a truthful, honest, godly man of integrity! It had been

established in his life as a young man way back in Jerusalem, and it came with him to Babylon as a captive for him to demonstrate before all the people of the kind of life that God desired all of us to have. People knew they could not buy him out, nor would he compromise on his principles one bit.

Throughout his life, he lived according to the commandments of the Lord God Almighty, and now that he was old, he was not going to start changing his ways. So all they can do is to cook up a scheme to trap Daniel because of his faith. I'd be willing to bet a lawyer advised them about a solution to the situation. "Gentlemen, I think I might have a solution of how to get rid of this old Hebrew. It is well known that he will not serve any god except the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

Oh, that we would all live in such a way that no one would have to ask us if we love the God of the Bible. All they would have to do is to look at the way that we live, the way we speak, the way we conduct ourselves and the way that we related to others, and without asking us if we are followers of Jesus, they can tell immediately. These men knew exactly the faith traditions of Daniel and that he worshipped none other than the God of the Bible – the God of the Hebrews, the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, the God who led out His people from the hand of slavery in Egypt through the Red sea into the Promised Land. They didn't have to ask Daniel because he lived his faith like everyday clothing.

So it is decided among them, in Daniel's absence, of course, to get King Darius to sign a decree *"that for thirty days no one be permitted to request anything from any god or from any man except from Your Majesty. Anyone who violates this order is to be thrown into a pit filled with lions"* (Dan. 6:7). They knew that Daniel would not go for such a decree. They knew that he would never comply with the demand. He had already established his routine of praying to Almighty God three times a day at a window facing Jerusalem. And these enemies knew very well that he would never break that ritual communion with God.

They worked hard to make this decree that Darius was to issue to everyone in the Babylonian Empire air-tight and unalterable. They wrote it so precisely according to the laws of the Medes and

Persians, that once King Darius signed it into law, there was no changing it, no modifying it, and no escaping the consequences of breaking it. That way they would have Daniel in the lion's den by the end of the first week, where he would be taken out by all of the hungry lions in the den. Certainly there would be no possible replay of the fiery furnace incident. Lions make quick ends to whatever is given to them, and hungry lions will not hesitate to pounce upon a man put into their presence.

So having their plan laid out, they approach the king. As they approached him, they sang accolades to him, "*King Darius, may your Majesty live forever!*" (Dan. 6:6). It is typical that when people approach with sweet, smooth, silky words of praise, they are usually up to something that is no good. Behind the flattering words lies intentions for taking advantage of the moment for their own interest. But often with many inflated and complimentary statements favorable to the listener's ego, people become persuaded to listen to even the most extraordinary proposals presented to them. And if they are told that they will be remembered forever for their greatness and generosity, then they will be led to agree to almost anything.

Well that was their intention, to get King Darius to be so overwhelmed with sweet-talking that he would sign the petition and then they would have their man. And what person in power today wouldn't go for having every person in their country look only to them for their every want and wish and desire? You sugarcoat the worst of plans with enough complimentary praise and smooth talk, and it is received as the best news ever. Just look at how we're told the importance of wearing two masks, now, and you'll begin to understand how Darius might have been convinced. "Oh, it's for the good of the nation. It's to protect your family and friends. You have to think of others before yourself." If one mask isn't enough, well, let's just get everyone to add another, and another, and another – for the sake of safety, you know. Oh, just comply with this decree and watch the people praise you for being so considerate to them. Think of the people you'll be protecting! The more bologna we hear, the more we begin to believe what we're being told.

Anyway, King Darius is convinced that this is a good plan that these plotters were presenting to

him, and he signed the decree and sealed it with his seal. He was so pleased to grant the request of “*the supervisors, governors, lieutenant governors and the other officials*” (Dan. 6:7) that he had no thought of his chief supervisor, Daniel, and they were not about to remind him. Once the decree was signed, it was instantly made law. Of course, Daniel didn’t know anything about it, and they didn’t bother to mention that little detail. But according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, once the law was signed and sealed, it was no one who could change it, not even the king, himself.

D. L. Moody puts it this way, “If you touch a man’s vanity, he will do almost anything, and Darius was like most of the human race. They touched his vanity by intimating that this [edict] would make him great. He thought it was a very wise suggestion and agreed with them.

“It was not only Daniel they were thus going to get out of the way, but also every conscientious Jew. There was not a true Jew in the whole of that wide empire who would bow down and worship Darius, and these men knew that. So they were going to sweep away in one stroke all the Jews who were true to their faith. They hated them.”² And that would have included Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, other leaders of Jewish descent serving in Babylon.

Well, I can tell you that the world today does not have any love of Christians either. We’ve seen how people of faith are put to the “religious test” and persecuted as they strive to live and work and govern according to their faith. Supreme Court justices have gone through much anguish at their approval hearings because they dare bring their faith with them into the office. And many others who stand up for their true Christian faith are belittled, ridiculed and slandered because the world hates us, too. Bernie Sanders went so far as to say that if anyone professes to be a Christian, and dares live that faith, they are not fit to be in leadership of any kind.

You see, if we live for the world, like the world, and do our best to live in such a way as to escape persecution, it doesn’t say much about our Christian faith. If the world were to begin convicting people for their faith, would you have enough evidence against you to have them come after you?

² (D. L. Moody, *Daniel: Man of God*, [Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, Revised Edition, 2018] pg. 57)

Would your life demonstrate such faith and obedience to the commandments of the Lord God that others could easily point you out as being guilty of being a follower of Jesus Christ? Or would you seek to blend in enough to conceal the fact that you had made a commitment to being a follower of Jesus?

Daniel let it be known that he followed and worshipped only the One, True God. People knew that he would not vacillate away from his faith. He had lived it so long and had been blessed by God so much that for him there was no other way. They knew that if caught violating this new law of King Darius that he would not deny God just for his own convenience. He would stand strong.

So imagine the news he gets from an aid telling him about the new law signed by the king. “King Darius signed a decree that if any man shall call upon any other god in his kingdom for thirty days, he shall be thrown to the lions. Their objective is to cast you into the den. Now if you can only leave for a little time, if you will just flee Babylon for thirty days, it will be better for you and the public. You are the chief secretary and treasurer; in fact, you are the principle member of the government. You are an important man and can do as you please. You should get out of Babylon now. Or, if you decide to stay in Babylon, do not let anyone catch you on your knees. In any case, do not pray at the window that faces Jerusalem, as you have been doing for the last fifty years. If you pray, close that window, draw a curtain over it, shut the door, and stop up every crevice. People are sure to be listening around your house.”³ In other words, “hide your faith, conceal your worship, and become afraid of what might happen to you if you keep worshipping God.”

So many people today are ashamed to be found praying on their knees. A husband will quickly jump up and make it look like he was doing something completely different. A wife will make excuses for the reason for her being on her knees. Young men and women don't dare to be found praying on their knees by their roommates at college. And heaven forbid that teachers be found out praying at school, or coaches praying after games, or business leaders praying in their offices or before meetings.

So few men today demonstrate the courage to be seen praying today. Moral courage is needed to

³ (D. L. Moody, *Daniel: Man of God*, pg. 59)

be determined to be seen worshipping our Holy and Awesome God in Jesus' name. And the result is that thousands have been lost because we wimp out on standing strong and true to our faith in the Lord Jesus. If we fail to live our faith, then we are bowing to the demands of the enemies of God because by hiding our faith, they win and we lose. We're cowards shrinking before the ugliness of the world because we're afraid of what it might cost us, or what they might say, or what they might think.

But what does Daniel, this man of God, do upon hearing about the new law of King Darius?

“When Daniel learned that the order had been signed, he went home. In an upstairs room of his house there were windows that faced toward Jerusalem. There, just as he had always done, he knelt down at the open windows and prayed to God three times a day” (Dan. 6:10).

Take note of this people. Daniel, the busiest man in the kingdom, took time out from his day, three times each day, to turn to God and seek His presence and guidance. While some say they are too busy to pray, the busier you get, the more you NEED to pray. If you are too busy to pray, then you have too much business than God ever intended you to have. Take time to pray and allow God to guide you in your decisions, to influence the way that you relate to people, and to open up opportunities that you never saw before. God can do that, but you have to give Him the chance to give it to you. And it happens when we pray. Instead of losing time when we pray, God grants us clear thinking and collected minds when we turn to Him. When we pray, God directs all our ways so that they fall into place and come together more efficiently.

Daniel went to the Lord in prayer, lifting up the king and all those who were seeking his demise. He took time to discover the direction that God was calling him to go. He was not afraid of what man could do to him. He feared more of what might happen to him if he abandoned God. Lions didn't worry him. Distancing himself from God or losing trust in God was what mattered the most.

Oh, if only we feared God more than we feared lions today. Oh, that we would practice our faith in Jesus Christ no matter who is watching, or what might happen to us, because we never know who might be watching, and who might gain new strength by our example. May people take the time to

listen to our prayers, to notice that we hold God above all else, and that we are willing to obey the commands of Jesus more than any other person, for then, we will begin to live like Daniel, and then we might begin to change the world. Let's pray.

Father, it is so easy for us to be more afraid of our world than to live out our faith and trust in You. It is so hard for us to really trust that You can direct us and protect us as we boldly live differently than the rest of the world. Yet, You have called us to be Your witnesses to the world. Give us the courage to be like Daniel and faithfully follow You, no matter what we might face, no matter what the danger may be. Our world needs to see that there is a God who can guide and direct and protect and provide. So give us encouragement to live for You, every day of our life, in Jesus' Name. AMEN.