

Rescued from the Lion's Mouth
Daniel 6: 1-28
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The 2nd, Psalm - which by category is a Messianic Psalm, opens with a rhetorical question, followed by the Psalmists reply. The question : "Why do the nation rage and the peoples plot in vain?" And the answer: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and and cast away their cords from us.'"

And then we have those famous lines by the Psalmist, which give us great insight into our Lord's attitude to these things: : He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then He will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury saying, "As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."

In these six verses we have two of the great truths of the ages. We have on the one hand the attitude of fallen humanity in general and of fallen, pagan, unbelieving rulers specifically, toward the Lord and toward His rule, while on the other hand, we have the Lord's attitude toward fallen rulers, proud and boastful in their imagined authority and power - and yet, subject to the decree of the Lord and helpless to hinder His plan - stop His program - and throw off his rule and control over them. Here is a picture of the conflict of the ages, along with it's sure outcome.

And what we must realize is, what Psalm 2 reveals in principle, Daniel illustrates practically.

Thus far in Daniel we have been studying in the first half of Daniel's book. And these opening chapters three insights into the the world where we find ourselves.

We saw in chapter 2, and we will see once again in chapter 7, the historic unfolding of the four major world empires where the Imperial authority and power of fallen, pagan humanity vests; and we see in these two chapters their ultimate overthrow by the Lord from heaven (2: 34, 44; 7: 13, 14, 27).

Between chapters 2 and 7, there are four chapters where we see clearly how the fallen world in general and ruling powers in particular attempt to compel we who trust in, worship and walk after the one true God to assimilate into their fallen system, and pray to their idols, and give allegiance to them and their kingdom - and how by faith, God's people avoid this and how these attempts fail.

And we also see the relation of these rulers to God Almighty, and how ultimately He is in control - raises up rulers; humbles rulers; and foils their plans, while at the same caring for and delivering his people while giving them great hope.

Chapter 3 shows us how to God the Lord belong deliverances from death (Psalm 68: 19,20);

Chapter 4 shows us how God the Lord raises up rulers, judges them while they reign and even has the power to humble them by causing them to loose their minds, only to restore them again to power.

Chapter 5 shows how the Lord God judges and removes rulers;

Then we come to chapter 6 - which we will look at tonight, and which contains yet another story of a deliverance from death. But, chapter six contains much more. For chapter six illustrates the principle that he who rolls a stone against another shall himself be crushed by it; and he who digs a pit for another to fall into will fall into it himself.

Chapter six opens in the first year of Darius/Cyrus (vs. 1), who was king of the Medo-Persian Empire which conquered and replaced the Babylonian power in 539 BC.

By this time, Daniel has served under a number of pagan kings - Nebuchadnezzar, Evil Merodach, Neriglissar, Labashi Marduk, Nabonidus and Belshazzar - and now, advanced in years, another king has come to power and Daniel is STILL serving in government of the empire. And in fact, verse 2 tells us that Daniel was one of three presidents over 120 satraps who oversaw the whole kingdom.

In this role, Daniel once again became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, and vs. 3 tells us why that was. Daniel had an excellent spirit - so that, like Joseph many, many centuries before Him, the king planned

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to promote him and give him authority over the whole kingdom. These three opening verses set the stage for the scene that unfolds in the rest of this sixth chapter.

From here, chapter six breaks down into four parts. First we have a **conspiracy**, then we have a **crisis**, then we have a **climax** and finally, we have a conclusion to the climax.

The Conspiracy is found in vv. 4 - 9 - as Daniels adversaries set themselves against God by setting themselves against His servant Daniel; this led to a crisis

The Crisis is found on vv. 10-13;

The Crisis **intensifies** and the tension rises in vv. 14-18 - but it is clear from what the king says, as he is forced to enforce a penalty against Daniel that he doesn't want to enforce that first, Daniel's faith in his god has made an impression on Darius; and second, that Darius has some idea that Daniel's God has the ability to deliver him (v. 16b);

Verse 16 ends with Daniel in the den of lions - Daniel, now an old man - put into the den of lions, shut in with this den of lions, and locked away with the den of lions, not for an hour, not for two, not for a few but all night - and v. 17 shows us that this sentence was serious. Nothing could be changed for Daniel, we are told at the end of v. 17. So Daniel is in crisis.

BUT so is the king. Notice v. 18. The king fasted and was up all night with concern for Daniel.

If we read between the lines a bit, we can imagine the dynamic - the atmosphere was electric this particular night around the palace.

While Daniel has been sealed away to his fate, and while the King is in his palace and his chamber writing his hands, refusing to eat and unable to sleep with concern for Daniel, **the conspirators** who tricked the king into making the law that they knew Daniel couldn't and wouldn't obey were most likely filled with rejoicing - and they may well have been quite pleased at their shrewdness - and how they had come up with a plan - a plan that appeared to be fool proof that had enabled them to rid themselves of their rival, and to do so in such a way that the very king himself was the one who carried out the sentence that did away with this Daniel.

So, what happens?

The Conclusion - and this conclusion has two parts:

When we come to verse 19 - our critical situation is about to resolve. Verse 20 says the King came near the den and called out to Daniel in anguish - and Daniel answers from within the den and proclaims God's great deliverance (vv. 21-22).

Did you notice how Daniel, when writing this portion, transitioned from the Crisis to the Conclusion? The transitional verse is v. 19. Then, at break of day, the king arose and went to the den of lions.

After a night of fasting the King went to the Lions den;

After a night of anguish the king went to the lions den;

After a night where sleep left him the king went to the lions den;

After a night of worry for Daniel - and perhaps anxiety that he, the king had been played by some of his nobles the king went to the lions den - and he cried out in a tone of anguish! When did it happen?

At break of day. After darkness. After darkness light springs forth and after night, day springs forth - and anxiety gives way to pure joy - because God has delivered Daniel from the den of lions. This is the first part of the conclusion.

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The second comes right here - for right here, we have a reversal of our situation. And here is what I mean. The King suddenly moves from anguish to delight - and the other presidents and satraps suddenly move from joy to anguish - because Daniel is still alive. And what a reversal we have.

From the king being filled with anxiety and Daniel being in the den of lions, we see the king filled with joy, Daniel being freed from the lions den AND his adversaries being filled with anguish, and being thrown into the den of lions - but not just them but each of their families.

And once again, a pagan king is found blessing Almighty God (vv. 26-27).

From this sixth chapter we learn three powerful lessons which apply to us as we live our lives in a world still fallen. Lessons that surely were pressed home on Daniels fellow exiles in Babylon and Medo-Persia during the captivity.

1st, In the midst of our enemies, our Lord prospers and delivers his people (v. 28- which is a pattern in chapter 1, 3, 5 and 6);

2nd, the Lord judges His enemies - in this life but also in the next - and often the penalty exacted upon the enemies of the Lord is severe and much broader than we might expect (vv. 24) - and this should be a warning to the wicked to beware of our holy God and repent before him while there is still time; further, this story assures us that if we are living righteous lives in faith in the Lord and Jesus Christ His son, he cares for us the same(see 2 Thess. 1).

We see one other truth illustrated here though - for this story like others before it gives us a clear illustration of one of the Lords ways - in confounding his enemies while bringing his plans to pass - and the greatest historical examples this way of the Lord is found in the betrayal, death and final resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me show you what I mean.

Look with me to 1 Cor. 2.

Jesus Christ is the spotless lamb of God.

Rulers betrayed him and authorities killed him.

The spiritual rulers of this age rejoiced at His death - for they did not know what they were doing;

But the Lord won the victory when he rose from the dead - coming out of the tomb like Daniel out of the den of lions - confounding the enemies of God, delighting the friends of God and bringing glory to God!!

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ - for he alone is worthy of all our allegiance and praise - and Daniel chapter six illustrates this way of God as well as the victory of His Christ.