**Believers in Babylon Series**

**“The Lions’ Den”**

**Daniel 6.1-28**

**Preaching Prelude**

Our current series is entitled “Believers in Babylon – living as exiles is a strange land.” As believers in Christ we must remember that this world is not our home. (Heb.13.14) We are foreigners and strangers living in exile. Together we have learned that God has woven Babylon throughout the pages of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, and uses it symbolically as the kingdom of this world that is in rebellion to God. (Gen.11.2-4; Dan.1.1-2; IPt.1.1a, 2.11, 5.13; Rev.17-18)

In this series we are looking at the book of Daniel, as a divine manual that gives us insights on how to live as exiles in our own Babylon. Today we come to Daniel chapter six where Daniel is thrown into the loins den. Today we will discover another example of how God rescues us from danger and brings deliverance for those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Our call to worship this morning is taken from Darius’ decree at the end of chapter six. Hear now the Word of God as the Lord calls us to worship.

**Call to Worship**

*“Our God is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end.* *He rescues and He saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.”* (Daniel 6.26-27)

**Scripture Reading**

*It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom,****2****with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.****3****Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.****4****At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.****5****Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”*

***6****So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever!****7****The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den.*

***8****Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”****9****So King Darius put the decree in writing.* ***10****Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.****11****Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.****12****So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”**The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”*

***13****Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.”****14****When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.* ***15****Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”* ***16****So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”* ***17****A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed.****18****Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.*

***19****At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den.****20****When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”* ***21****Daniel answered, “May the king live forever!****22****My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”* ***23****The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.* ***24****At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.*

***25****Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:**“May you prosper greatly!* ***26****“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.**“For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.* ***27****He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.  
He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”* ***28****So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

**Introduction**

Daniel is now in his eighties and has lived a magnificent life. As a boy Daniel taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire, along with other exiles to be trained as a skilled officials in Nebuchadnezzar’s golden kingdom. (1.1-4) Over seventy years have passed since those early days recorded in chapter one. Daniel has served the Lord faithfully through the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s successors, the fall of Babylon, and the rise of the Persian Empire.

Last week in chapter five we saw that the Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire and take control of the capital city, the great Babylon. Decades earlier Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar that the inferior “kingdom of silver” would arise and now that day had finally come. (2.39)

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The Persian Empire covered a massive amount of territory ranging from India westward to Greece and southward into Egypt. The kingdom of Babylonia was a small segment of the territory that was controlled by the Persians. Cyrus, the King of Persia, had conquered Babylonia and it’s great capital city and he appointed Darius the Mede to govern the kingdom of Babylonia. (1.21; 5.31; 6.28)

*It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.*(6.1-2)

Daniel had survived the collapse of the Babylonian Empire and had risen to the higher ranks of the Persian government that now controlled Babylonia under Darius. Being a good administrator, Darius appointed one hundred and twenty governors to govern the one hundred and twenty provinces of Babylonian. Three administrators, one of whom was Daniel, oversaw these governors, or *satraps* as the Persians called them. One would assume that these administrators oversaw forty governors/provinces and report directly to Darius. These administrators were required to maintain civil obedience and be accountable for financial reports from taxation. A person in this position needed to be capable, honest, and familiar with the territory of Babylonia. These qualifications distinguished Daniel above the others.

*Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*(6.3)

**Distinguished**

Once again Daniel’s exceptional abilities and godly character made him stand above the others. Daniel is an elder statesman, well into his eighties, and he has conducted himself in this fashion for his entire life. As a result, Daniel once again is being considered for the top position in government. (1.20; 2.48-49; 5.30)

What distinguished Daniel from the others? We know that God had given Daniel the gifts of illumination, insights, and wisdom, which gave him the *ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems.* (5.10-12) But beyond these spiritual gifts, Daniel had a “Christian Worldview” concerning work, his job, and who he was ultimately serving.

Often people want to divide things into two camps – either spiritual or secular. These people say that the work of a pastor, “now that’s spiritual, but I just work at the bank, teach school, or work construction that’s secular.” But this is the wrong way to look at your life. Our entire life is to be dedicated to Christ. Remember that Jeremiah’s prophecy to the exiles told them to be faithful in the ordinary things of life. The Prophet Jeremiah told the exiles to build houses, plant garden, enjoy food, get married, and start a family. (Jer.29.4-5) These are normal things of life – not spiritually spectacular but spiritual nevertheless. As I said the first sermon in this series, many people think that we can only glorify God by becoming a Billy Graham or Mother Teresa but here we see that God seeks to be glorified in the normal everyday things of life. As the Apostle taught us, *“Whether, you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.”* (ICor.10.31) Brothers and sisters, we will find peace in Babylon if we seek to bring pleasure to God in the normal everyday things of life like doing home maintenance, caring for our yards, loving our spouses, enjoying our families, and working our jobs.

In reference to our employment the Bible teaches believers to work in sincerity of heart, as to Christ, not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God. We do our jobs with good will, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord. (Eph.6.5-8) Whatever we do, we are called by God to do our work with all of our hearts, as for the Lord rather than men, knowing that from the Lord we will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord we serve. (Col.3.23-24) And I believe this was Daniel’s perspective.

Brothers and sisters, this Christian Worldview is essential for living for the glory of God in our Babylon. We are called by God to lead disciplined lives, work as unto the Lord, and earn our own living. (IIThes.3.7-13) In these things we should never grow weary. Believers in Christ should be the hardest workers and the most trusted. We might not have the same abilities but every believer should have the same distinguishable character that sets them apart.

But Daniel associates were not happy about Darius plan to set Daniel over the whole kingdom. *At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”* (6.4-5)

**Deception**

The action of these government officials goes far beyond being jealous. Their decision to design a plan that would lead to Daniel’s death shows that Daniel was their only target. Maybe they have been involved in some sort of corruption and they knew they would be found out if Daniel were the grand overseer of the proviences. They must design a plan that would lead to Daniel’s death not just impeachment. They knew that Daniel was either corrupt or negligent. But they also were familiar with Daniel’s devotion to his God so they must try to discredit him religious grounds. To do this, they found it necessary to deceive Darius.

It is important to recognize that even if we live and work for the glory of God there will be times when things will not go well for us. The Bible tells us, *if you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.*(IPt.4.14-16) If we should suffer for what is right, God’s Word says we are blessed. We should not be intimidated or troubled but rather sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. We should seek to maintain a good conscience knowing that those who revile our good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (IPt.3.13-17) This is exactly what will happen in chapter six.

A delegation of these officials came to Darius, representing all the government officials. By Darius’ response after being told that Daniel had disobeyed the decree, it is obvious that their deception led Darius to conclude that even Daniel agreed to their proposal. (6.13-14)

**Decree**

This delegation of high government officials asked Darius to issue an edict and enforce a decree that stated if anyone prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to Darius himself, would be thrown into the loins’ den. They insisted that decree would be put in writing in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. *So King Darius put the decree in writing.* (6.6-9)

It is important for us to understand some key components about this decree if we want to go beyond the normal children’s Sunday School class.

First, one of the first acts of Cyrus the king of Persia after he defeated Babylon was to liberate the exiles and their vessels of worship that Nebuchadnezzar had taken captive. (Ezra 1.1-11) Cyrus allowed and financed the exiles return to Jerusalem and allowed them to begin the rebuilding of the temple. Cyrus’ governmental philosophy was the exact opposite of Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus thought Nebuchadnezzar’s philosophy of captivity would lead to civil unrest and rebellion. “Why not let them go home and worship their own gods? I control the whole territory anyway.”

So Darius’ decree in chapter six was not an attempt to make himself a god or to be worshipped as a god. That would have been directly opposed to Persian government policy. Remember that Darius was trying to centralize the region of Babylon that had been placed under his control. This was the reason he appointed the hundred and twenty governors, the three administrators overseeing the governors, and his plan to appoint Daniel over the entire kingdom. (6.1-3)

Darius was all about centralize government. This decree gave him the opportunity to centralize everything through him for thirty days so he could get a handle on all the affairs of Babylonia before he turned the government over to Daniel. Of course, this group of officials knew that Darius would like their proposal because it fit into his centralize governmental philosophy. By Darius’ remorseful response he never thought about their proposal from a spiritual point of view. (6.16, 18, 20) It never crossed his mind that this would be damaging to Daniel.

But for Daniel the decree had spiritual implications. For Daniel, Darius had set himself as the mediator between Daniel and God and for Daniel that was not going to work. As we saw in chapter one Daniel could say “yes” to a lot of things in Babylon but the one thing he was not going to do was to compromise his covenant love to God. And now decades later, Daniel could serve faithfully in the Persian government but he was not going to compromise his devotion to God by going through a human mediator.

*Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.* (6.10)

**Devotion**

Daniel’s actions were not out of defiance to Darius or his decree. His actions were simply out of a heart of love and devotion to God. Daniel believed that no-one and no-thing was going to come in-between him and God. And this is what Darius’ decree had done. This type of spiritual devotion is key for believer’s survival in Babylon.

For Daniel his acts of devotion were habitually part of his life. Three times a day he would bow his knees to God, give thanks, and ask God for help. This was so predictably part of Daniel’s life that his adversaries could count on it and set up a spying station. (6.11) Daniel’s posture of prayer is something any of us could incorporate into our lives and we should.

But there is one element of Daniel’s devotion that is often omitted. Verse ten reads *he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem.* (6.10) God could have inspired verse ten to read, *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room and three times a day, got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.*

My point is that it is not by accident that God inspired the words *where the windows opened toward Jerusalem* to be written in the text. These words were written for a reason to make a point. The point is that these words underscore the depth of Daniel’s devotion to God.

Let me explain. Although Jerusalem is a physical city with tremendous biblical history, the Bible uses Jerusalem in a theological or spiritual sense to identify God’s Kingdom. Although the city of Jerusalem had been in ruins during most of Daniel’s life, the city symbolized the greatest of God’s Kingdom and the reign of God in this world and the world to come.

By faith Jerusalem was the focal point of the messianic hope in the coming Christ. Jerusalem symbolized the kingdom of God past, present, and future. To pray *where the windows opened toward Jerusalem* gave Daniel the daily opportunity to realign himself with God’s direction for the world and to renew himself with God’s purposes and values. For Daniel praying *where the windows opened toward Jerusalem* was not as much to let his prayers out, as it was to let God in.

Daniel’s prayer life was not escapism out of the daily grind Persian politics but rather a divine appointment for kingdom advancement. His daily prayer was the means of bringing the power and presence of God into his immediate circumstances. As much as Daniel’s posture for prayer consisted of bowing his knees three times a day, Daniel’s passion for prayer consisted of praying that God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Mt.6.10) This is where Daniel would pray for God to send His messianic meteor to destroy the kingdoms of this world. (2.44-45) This is where Daniel would regain the perspective that the Son of Man is sitting on His glorious throne. (7.13-14) As he knelt down glazing out of those windows opened towards Jerusalem, Daniel could pray, “Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.” (Rev.22.20) To survive in Babylon we need both the posture and passion of prayer.

**Darius’ Distress**

The officials had all the evidence they needed to convict Daniel and they came to Darius. *When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.* (6.14) Darius knew that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed so reluctantly he gave orders for Daniel to cast into the lion’s den. *Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.* (6.18)

Some have found Darius’ distress over Daniel similar to Pilate’s distress over Jesus. Both rulers knew that the victims were innocence and both rulers did everything in their power to free the accused. Daniel, like Jesus, accepted the verdict of this earthly ruler knowing that the real power and authority lies with God. Brothers and sisters, we need that kind of faith as we dwell in Babylon.

As Daniel was casted into the lions’ den Darius said, *“May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”* (6.16b) Isn’t amazing how God will use tragedy to work faith in a person heart?

**Daniel’s Deliverance**

*At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den.* *When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”*(6.19-20)Darius was preparing for the worst but hoping for the best.

*Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”**The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.* (6.20-23)

Just as the flames of the furnace were not able to even bring the smell of fire upon Daniel’s friends in chapter three, the loins were not permitted to touch Daniel. It appears that Darius suffered more than Daniel. I believe Daniel had a great night’s sleep. The angel of the Lord was with him and the lions came down with divine lockjaw. I wonder if Daniel made himself comfortable by using a lion for a pillow. But Darius had not slept all night. The most powerful man in Babylon was powerless to deliver Daniel and maybe that’s the point. God wants us all to see our weaknesses, admit we are powerless, and surrender ourselves to His Lordship, His power, and His strength.

Yes, Daniel was delivered from the loins’ den but Darius was delivered from the bondage of this world. God enabled Darius to cast off the bondage of this world that says that things can’t change – you know the law of the Mede and Persians. But how many of you know that God changes things. God is in the change business. God had worked in Darius’ heart and he accepts the living God who rescues and saves, performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. Yes, Daniel being delivered from the lions’ den gets all the press, and rightfully so, but the rest of the story is that a pagan ruler comes to know the living God. So, which story of deliverance speaks to you today? Are you Darius who needs a divine change in your life? Or, are you Daniel who needs God to shut the mouths of lions? God can do both and He is here today to do both. He is here to change you heart and He is here today to work miracles on your behalf.

**Closing Thought**

No wonder the story of Daniel and the lions’ den has been one of the most popular stories for thousands of years. There are so many lessons to learn and so many characters to latch on to. The faith of Daniel, Darius’ confession, and the deception of the government officials all have part in this divine drama.

But the main character is God. The One who called and molded Daniel into the man of faith who gave faithful witness to the glory of God for decades. The One who changed Darius’ heart to make a clear confession of faith. The One who spoiled the deceptive plan by shutting the mouths of lions. God is the main character in this divine drama!

This same God continued to play out His divine drama and centuries later He will send a child to be exiled to a foreign land to live His life for His glory. For decades this faithful Servant will live an exemplary life without corruption. But eventually a plot by deceptive leaders will be played out to put this innocence Servant of God to death. He will be casted into a tomb and a large stone will be rolled against the entrance of that tomb and a seal will be place on it to secure it. A frantic dash will be made early the next morning to the entrance of that tomb to the overwhelming discovery of a miraculous life in the place of a certain and inescapable death and an angel will say, “He is not here, He has risen!” God had lifted His Servant out of the tomb. And from that day, forgiveness of sins has been proclaimed in His name to all nations.

The name of that Holy Servant is Jesus Christ the One who has fulfilled God’s divine drama of redemption. *And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.* (Dan.7.14)

Surrender your life to the One who shuts the mouths of lions.

Surrender your life to the One who changes our hearts.

Surrender your life to the One who has fulfilled all of things for the glory of God.

**Call to Prayer**

*Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled but sanctify Christ as Lord of your heart.* (IPt.3.14b-15a)

**Benediction**

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*