

Lessons from Daniel 6

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Freedom of conscience and religious liberty are constantly threatened in this world. Again and again there are persecution, imprisonment, and killing of people for their religious convictions. Daniel 6 describes such a situation. This chapter is the last chapter in the historical part of the book of Daniel; it deals with the time of the Medes and Persians. From chapter 7 on we will encounter the prophetic part of the book.

I. Discussion of the Chapter

A. The Historical Background

vv. 1–3 Under the Medes and Persians Daniel quickly rose high in rank. *What could the phrase “because an excellent spirit was in him” mean?*

- Wisdom, insight, knowledge
- Faithfulness and reliability
- Excellent administration and wise leadership
- Knowledge of God and knowledge of human nature

B. Intrigues of the Satraps

vv. 4–5 Intrigues happened constantly at royal courts and still happen today in governments and business. Daniel also became a target. He was being spied on. Result: it was found that he was innocent and righteous in every respect. His only vulnerability was his religion. Thus Daniel is a remarkable example for believers.

vv. 4–8 *How are the governors and satraps in verses 4–8 depicted?*

- Envious, ambitious, egotistic
- They wanted to get rid of Daniel.
- They were cruel and ready to kill anyone who would interfere with their interests.
- They flattered the king and obtained a law that was able to harm Daniel.
- They were hypocritical and conniving.
- They were not interested in whether or not a person was innocent.
- They used Daniel’s different religion to turn against him.

How would we characterize the king?

- He was flattered.
- He did not notice that the proposed decree was directed against Daniel, and may have been quite naïve at this point.
- Because the law of the Medes and Persians was considered to be unchangeable, by creating a new law the king got Daniel and himself in trouble.
- He was an absolute ruler who may not have cared much about human life.

v. 9 The decree was signed.

C. Daniel’s Reaction

v. 10 *What do we learn from Daniel’s prayer life in the Book of Daniel (chapters 2, 6, and 9)?*

- For Daniel, praying was a necessity. He prayed regularly.
- Even under difficult circumstances Daniel turned to God in prayer with faith.
- For Daniel it was more important to pray than to live.
- Daniel’s prayer consisted of petition, praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and intercession.
- He experienced marvelous fulfillments of prayer.
- In spite of his many duties and all the stress that he may have had, he made time for prayer.
- Prayer may have been the key to his success.

- Daniel prayed regularly and retreated to a special place at specific times.
- Why did Daniel continue to pray in such a way that he could be seen?*
- It would have been a denial of his faith not to continue praying in the same way he did before.
 - It would have recognized the king as the highest authority and lord.
 - His connection to God was important to him, especially in a crisis.
 - A secret refusal to obey orders would still have been a refusal to obey orders. He had nothing to hide.

Daniel was most likely more than eighty years old. How does old age relate to faithfulness to God?

- One can be faithful to God regardless of age. The temptations encountered by young people and the frailty of old age do not justify unfaithfulness.
- Daniel had already experienced God's interventions. They may have helped him to stand on God's side in the greatest crisis of his life.

D. The Governors before the King

- vv. 11–13 After Daniel was spied out, he was accused. With the designation “prisoner” Daniel was degraded and made suspect as a rebel.
- v. 14 Finally the king was able to notice the intrigue. He tried to save Daniel.
- v. 15 The governors pressured the king to have Daniel executed, arguing with the indissolubility of the law.

E. Daniel and then the Governors in the Lions' Den

- vv. 16, 20 *What do these verses reveal about Daniel?*
- Daniel was highly esteemed by the king.
 - The king recognized Daniel as a servant of God and expected from this God's help and Daniel's salvation.
 - The king did not feel that Daniel's faith was a crime against his kingdom. Indirectly he praised him for his religion.
 - Daniel did not serve God sporadically but constantly.
- v. 17 The verdict was executed. Sealing had a double purpose: (1) The king wanted to prevent Daniel from being killed in a manner other than by lions. (2) The administrators of the kingdom wanted to prevent the king from saving Daniel.
- v. 18 The king was stricken with sorrow.
- vv. 19–20 Darius hoped that God would save His servant through a miracle. In some way, Darius recognized God.
- vv. 21–22 *Daniel was alive and turned to the king. Why did Daniel claim to be innocent only after his salvation?*
- If he had claimed innocence before his execution, it could have been interpreted as fear and cowardice.
 - It would not have helped anyway because he had transgressed the law.
 - Attempts to justify oneself in such a situation create more problems. Jesus did not justify himself either.
- Daniel attributed his salvation to God.
- v. 23 His trust was rewarded. He was able to leave the lions' den, because the law did not demand death but the lions' den.
- Why did God allow Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den and not save him right away?*
- Possible answers:
- It should help the king to get to know the true God.
 - Maybe God wanted to let Daniel have a new experience of His power.
 - It happened so that we would be encouraged (1 Cor 10:6).

vv. 19–24 The liberation of Daniel from the lions’ den was at the same time of his enemies’ doom. This topic is also found in Rev 13–18: God’s people are about to be killed (Rev 13:15); however, symbolic Babylon is being judged (Rev 18:6–7).

F. Darius’ Confession and Decree

vv. 25–28 Daniel’s God was made known in the Persian Empire. To some extent, Darius acknowledged this God. Daniel had a high position with the Medes and Persians.

II. Application

- Religious liberty is an important right. It is indirectly mentioned in the Old and New Testaments (see Acts 5:29). In many countries it is one of the basic human rights.
- However, religious liberty was and is seldom granted (as seen in human history from ancient Rome to the present). It is limited or non-existent in many countries.
- According to the book of Revelation religious liberty and personal freedom will again be threatened, and humanity will experience a situation similar to Daniel 6. This chapter provides guidelines for Christian behavior.
- Some of us still enjoy liberty. Therefore we can freely pray (6:10), serve God and fellow humans (6:16, 20), witness about God (6:22), and study Scripture (9:2). We should take advantage of this situation.

Conclusion

The Lord does not leave His people alone, even at the end of time when they have to go through “lions’ dens” and suffer the loss of religious liberty. They remain faithful in prayer and witnessing.

1/16