

Sent: Wednesday, April 06, 2016 10:03 AM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Daniel 6

Last nite, we covered the familiar story of Daniel being delivered from the lion's den--a story most of us remember distinctly from our days in Sunday school! Daniel is now in his 80's and still trusting and honoring God, while serving--with great distinction--a succession of rulers in the great city of Babylon. With the slaying of Belshazzar, and the fall of the Babylonian empire, it's now 539 BC, and Darius the Mede has established a new system of governmental hierarchy that replaces the absolute monarchy with constitutional law--the "law of the Medes and Persians"! And true to form, Daniel is being considered for the number two position of power in the reorganized kingdom, because of his "extraordinary spirit" and faithful service! And thus the plot thickens!

The two commissioners (the third one being Daniel), and 120 "satraps, and all the high officials of the provinces" conspire together (supposedly!) in devising a scheme to get rid of Daniel--in part, apparently, because he stands in the way of their greed and zest for power, but perhaps more so because he's viewed as an "exile from Judah"! Sounds a little anti-Semitic! But, after being unable to link Daniel with even the slightest bit of negligence or corruption, they tricked Darius into signing a law that forbade anyone from praying to another "god," besides Darius, for a period of 30 days, under the penalty of being thrown into the lion's den! They were out to get Daniel, knowing of his unswerving faith in the God of Israel--and Darius foolishly signed the law that provided the loophole for that scheme to be achieved, perhaps thinking that it might bring about greater allegiance to his new regime! It was now a law of the Medes and Persians that couldn't be rescinded!

Even though he was aware of the new law, Daniel continued to do what he had been doing three times every day, for the past 60 or so years--opening the windows of his house, facing Jerusalem, and "praying and giving thanks before his God"! This was a practice encouraged by Solomon many years before when he dedicated the temple of Jerusalem as a "dwelling place for God," asking that the "God of Israel listen to the supplications of His servant and of His people when they prayed to this place!" (I Kings 8:28-30) Daniel was a man who sought after God above anything else, was totally faithful, and believed in the power of prayer!

And so Daniel was charged with violating the law, much to the dismay of Darius, the king, who found himself stuck with no choice but to have him cast into the den of lions! Well, you know the rest of the story!

Daniel survived, and was "delivered" by the God of Heaven, much to the relief of Darius, the king! "God had sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions, and they didn't harm him," according to Daniel's testimony! Daniel 6:23 adds that he was rescued "because he had trusted in his God!" And so, those who conspired against him were the ones who actually ended up getting fed to the lions! And Daniel went on to "enjoy success in the reign of Darius--and in the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia!" (Dan. 6:28)! And he even lived to see the day when God "would stir the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make a decree to allow the Jews to return to Judah--to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and to restore the "sacred vessels," among other things (see Ezra 1)--all of which would be setting the stage for the eventual coming of Jesus Christ and God's plan for redemption not only for Israel, but for the whole world!

And so, last nite, we learned something more about the importance about being faithful to God in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, about the power of prayer--and about the sovereignty of God! The lesson also raised the question about whether we can always be confident that if we just believe enough, and pray enough, and have faith enough, we too can be "rescued and delivered" from the "lions' dens" of our lives. And the answer, of course, is clearly "no"! The great chapter in the Bible on faith (Hebrews 11) provides a lot of great stories--including a reference to Daniel--about how through faith men of God accomplished some amazing things! But it also ends (in vs. 35-39) with many other examples of those, with great faith, who suffered and died "having not received what was promised!" But the good news is that God "provided something better for them!" This life is not the end! There's so much more! And so this is the real and ultimate hope that we have as believers and followers of Christ!

Another interesting thing about last nite's lesson, as noted by Wiersbe, was to see another pagan ruler--this time Darius, the Mede--recognizing and making a decree (these guys were really into making decrees!) that "in all the dominion of his kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel! And he offered a reason every bit as theologically correct as anything written by Moses, or David, or Paul! And this is what he concluded:

"For He is the living God and enduring forever; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed! And His kingdom will be forever! He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders, in heaven and on earth; Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions!"

How ironic, as Wiersbe notes, that the Jews, who were supposed to be witnesses to the Gentiles of the true and living God, were being witnessed to by the Gentiles! And we need to take the implications of this one to heart as well!

And so the amazing story of Daniel--and God's sovereign plan for the ages--continues, as we move on to Daniel 7!

Have a great week, men!

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