

## Daniel in the Lion's Den

The inspired Psalmist wrote of the opposition that Christ would experience, in terms of a lion roaring against him: “they gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion” (Psa. 22:13). This “lion” was the embodiment of the Jewish authorities who sought his destruction as lions devour their prey, but their intentions were foiled as Messiah was delivered out of the pit of death, and escaped their clutches. We see these things foreshadowed in our reading for the day, Daniel chapter 6, where the prophet Daniel was cast into the lion's den, and was subsequently delivered out of it. Daniel was a *type*, or pattern of greater things to come in the experiences of our Master, and we would do well to consider his example of consistent faithfulness; a righteousness which delivered him out of adversity.

Daniel chapter 6 describes how that the presidents and princes sought occasion against Daniel, out of jealousy for his position. We are told that Daniel had “an excellent spirit” in him, which induced the king to set him over the whole realm as chief among them. There was such a spirit in our Lord Jesus Christ, described in Romans chapter 1 and verse 4, as “the spirit of holiness”. It was because of the excellent spirit of holiness that dwelt in Jesus that God was “well pleased” in him, and purposed to set him over the whole kingdom to be established in the not too distant future. And like Joseph's brethren of old time, the Jews envied Christ, as Pilate recognized: “he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Mat. 27:18). They sought his destruction, just as the enemies of Daniel had designs to bring him into condemnation and death.

But the same “excellent spirit” that was in Messiah must also be found in us. This is the apostle's testimony: “now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). We must then give avid attention to the examples of the faithful men of old, to emulate their spirit and show forth the same trust and confidence in Yahweh our redeemer. If we have the spirit that Christ had, then we will be raised up to live and reign with him in the kingdom to come.

Returning to Daniel chapter 6, we find that the adversaries “could find *none occasion nor fault*; forasmuch as he was faithful, *neither was there any error or fault* found in him” (Dan. 6:4). Again, we see a parallel with our Messiah - as the repentant thief expressed it: “this man hath done nothing amiss” (Lu. 23:41). So Mark informs us: “the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none” (Mark. 14:55). What a spirit of true holiness this is! Can it be said of us, as with Daniel, that there is no “fault”, or “error” in our doings? Certainly this is something for us to aim towards, as we seek to develop the spirit of Christ. The Jews rose up in a similar fashion towards the Apostle Paul, making false claims to have him condemned. But he pointed out that: “neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me” (Acts 24:13). They could find no fault in him, and so sought to make up accusations, which they could not prove. However, being unable to find personal faults in Paul, they instead directed their attention to the ministry of the Gospel that he preached. So Paul continued: “but this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). They accused Paul of heresy, and on those grounds sought to have him condemned.

In a similar way, Daniel's adversaries sought occasion against his religion, and the things that he stood for. They said "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Dan. 6:5). Here, the issues widened: no longer was it simply a personal issue to do with Daniel, in these matters they involved Daniel's God, and His law. The events that followed dealt with issues of life and death, and whether Daniel's God was able to save His Prophet from the hands of wicked men. And these things find an obvious parallel in the life of our Master: in rejecting him, they rejected his God, and denied His power to save.

Our circumstance is again similar. Just as Daniel, as a Jew amongst Gentiles maintained his personal integrity, so must we, as Christ's brethren amongst unbelievers: "... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ***having your behaviour honest among the Gentiles*** that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Though they might raise up false accusations against us, we must give them no grounds for the things that they might claim – and it might be that when Christ comes, our good works will be a witness to them of the righteousness of Christ, leading them to accept him, and glorify God in that day. This is an aspect of things that perhaps we don't often consider: when Christ comes, there will be a mortal population who submit to his reign – and these may partly be as a consequence of our witnessing to them before he comes. Seeing world events being played out just as Bible Prophecy indicates, particularly in connection with Israel, there will be a powerful witness to the truth of the things that we have told them about before that time comes.

### ***THE EXCLUSION OF PRAYER***

The way in which the prophet's adversaries brought him into condemnation, was by instigating a law that appealed to the pride of the king. They sought to establish: "a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions" (Dan. 6:7). This effectively excluded prayers to Yahweh. It became illegal to pray before the God of the universe, and only petitions to an idol-king were permitted. Daniel's response to this is most instructive:

"when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

There are a number of exhortational points that come out from this verse: we are told of that which Daniel did habitually. He made a point of praying "three times a day" kneeling upon his knees. The Psalmist similarly endorsed this practice: "Evening, and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psa. 55:17). This is a good habit that we would do well to emulate: we should pray not simply when we have a specific need, or circumstance to petition our Father about, but rather we should constantly pray by way of giving praise whenever opportunity allows. We tend to eat morning, noon and evening as a matter of course: how much more should we pray at these times?

Another point is that Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem. We learn later in his prophecy that he was familiar with the writings of Jeremiah, who spoke of a return to the land after a 70 year period of servitude in Babylon. Daniel's heart was in Jerusalem: he doubtless prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, the place where Yahweh had chosen for his name to dwell. After the manner described by Solomon (see 1 Kings 8), he prayed facing the city whose restoration he sought for.

We have some idea as to the content of Daniel's prayer in the Psalms that he would have been intimately acquainted with:

"O Yahweh my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: ***Lest he tear my soul like a lion***, rending it in pieces while there is none to deliver" (Psa. 7:1-2).

"I sought Yahweh ***and he heard me***, and delivered me from all my fears ... this poor man cried, ***and Yahweh heard him***, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa. 34:4,6).

Daniel trusted in Yahweh's deliverance out of the den of lions – but interestingly, so did the Gentile king Darius: "the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee" (Dan. 6:16). Notice the certainty in these words: "he ***will*** deliver thee". He recognized that Daniel's service to his God was done "continually," and constantly. Again, we can do no better than to emulate Daniel's constancy in prayer, worship, and manner of life. All of these things demonstrate an excellent spirit in which God will be well pleased.

Returning to Psalm 34, cited above, the passage continues:

"the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7).

And so it was that Yahweh sent his Angel to redeem his prophet. Previously, Yahweh had sent his Angel to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3:28), and now he was sent again to save Daniel. So the prophet told the king who came to see what had befallen him: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Dan. 6:22).

### ***THE LORD JESUS CHRIST***

In Daniel being placed into the den of lions, and his subsequent deliverance, we can see a number of parallels with the circumstances of the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel 6 speaks of how a stone was rolled over the entrance to the pit:

"a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel." (Dan. 6:17).

Similarly, the Gospel record describes how the grave of Messiah was secured:

“they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch” (Mat. 27:66).

Daniel 6 records how:

“Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions” (Dan. 6:19).

And similarly, the Gospel record describes those who went to the opened tomb of Messiah:

“now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre ...” (Lu. 24:1).

Just as Daniel was delivered by the Angel being sent, we have a number of occasions where the angels are said to have come to minister to the Lord. Psalm 91 seems to be appropriate here:

“he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psa. 91:11)

And just as Daniel was saved out of the Lion’s den, even so our Lord was saved from the pit of death:

“in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared...” (Heb. 5:7).

### ***OUR OWN SALVATION***

The prophet Daniel was placed under an unchangeable law of death. He was to be cast into the den of lions, from which there was no escape. But although the law was carried out to its conclusion, God saved Daniel by sending his angel to shut the mouths of the lions. That which was to cause death was rendered powerless by God. Even so, we are all under the law of sin and death, which brings certain condemnation to all who are affected by it. But by the raising up of Messiah out from the grave, we see the means by which that unchangeable law becomes nullified. True, if the Master remains away, we shall all die. The law will operate to its conclusion. But we, like Christ can be raised up again to a newness of life. These are the principles that we come together to memorialize each week in the bread and in the wine: the great declaration of God’s Righteousness in the offering up of His Son. And as we seek to emulate our Master, we can take heed to the Type of Daniel, and his deliverance from the lion’s den.

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