

As you’re turning to Daniel chapter 6, I want to show you a verse we read a couple of weeks ago back in Daniel chapter 4, when Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of his dream about the massive tree. (You’ll remember, Nebuchadnezzar would end up eating grass because of his arrogance and pride, thinking that he was the source of his power, success and prominence.)

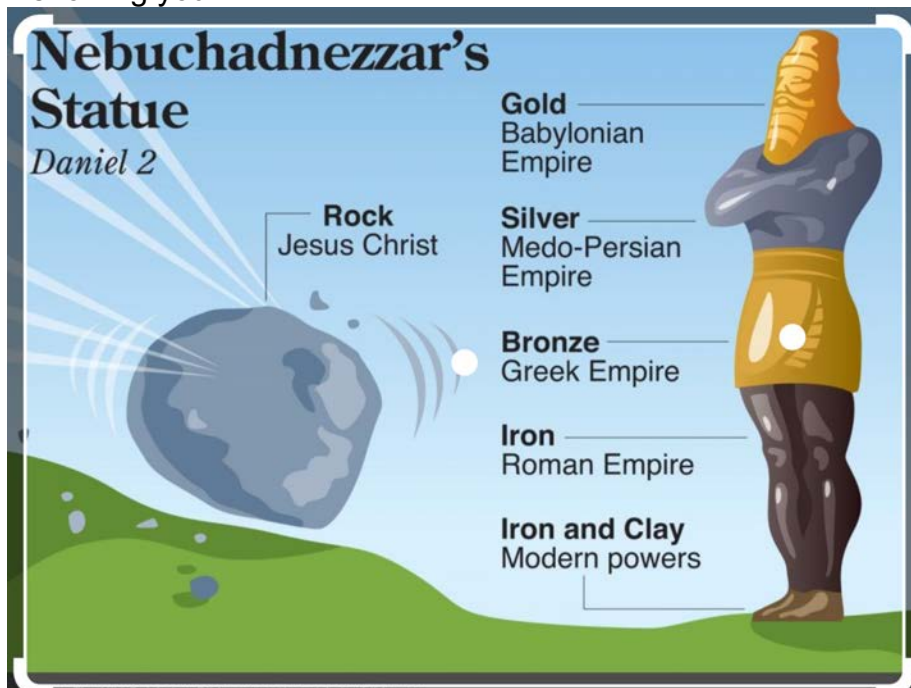
**Daniel 4:17**

*17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’*

God rules in history. Never forget that. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this the hard way...nations come and nations go, even potentially our own nation. But God’s plan for this world will not be thwarted. Everything is going to occur right on schedule. You see, He stands outside of time. He sees all of time as one single snapshot. He sees all of history from beginning to end (as the Alpha and Omega). And the reason I tell you this is to remind you that God’s people will also go through the rise and fall of nations. We’re not immune to the decisions and policies of bad leaders and bad governments. Yet, in the midst of pagan regimes, we see God’s people who are in the midst of those regimes.

Just like Daniel. Daniel, the young man who was hauled from his homeland as a teenager to a pagan country...and yet, God prospered him in the administration of multiple pagan kinds (3 to this point) and as we arrive to chapter 6 of the book this bears his name, and we see Daniel is still around... He has ridden through the ebbs and flows of the pagan leaders of this nation and he’s still here and by now, he’s an old man...he’s in his mid-to-late 80’s.

Babylon has fallen...we saw this last week. The head of gold has been crushed. Remember the statue we’ve been showing you?



You’ll remember, this statue came from the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had which depicts the fall of the Gentile kingdoms, leading up to the return of the rock, Jesus Christ. So, as we saw last week, Babylon has fallen and Medes and Persians entered the city without firing a shot...coming into the

city as if in a Trojan Horse, by way of the Euphrates River, as Belshazzar partied. But, the handwriting was on the wall... **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius the Mede had taken over and we come to...

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### **Daniel 6:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup> and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.<sup>3</sup> Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

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Now **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius the Mede, as noted in verse 1, is a shadowy-type of figure. Some scholars have said that he is actually Cyrus the Persian...but, that makes no sense to me, since he's called, **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius the Mede. Others say he was most likely the man Cyrus placed in authority over Babylon and could have been a military commander or General. Nonetheless, Darius cleans house and begins to set-up a new administration. Think of the change of power between Republicans and Democrats when a new President is elected. However, one man remained...Daniel. He was still in a position of authority, as one of the top three in the kingdom...and ultimately, became to be known as the most distinguished of all the officials... So much so, that **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius was going to place him as the #1 administrator over the whole kingdom and that's where the problem emerged. Jealousy...back-biting, power-politics.

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### **Daniel 6:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. <sup>5</sup> Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." <sup>6</sup> Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement<sup>[a]</sup> to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

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Let me say this about Daniel...regarding his age...being in his mid 80's. I shared last week about why people shouldn't think they're all washed up because they're older, because they still have so much to give in wisdom, discernment, knowledge and experience. And I was reminded of that yet again this week, when I read a study that chronicled the lives and achievements of 400 of the foremost characters of history. The study showed just over 45% of the world's greatest figures accomplished their feats between the ages of 58 and 90. That's almost ½ of the world's greatest people accomplished their feats of success after the age of 58.

That says a lot to older folks (LIKE ME). John Wesley was still preaching at 88 and traveled a quarter of a million miles in an age that knew neither electricity nor steam. Thomas Edison was still inventing at age 90. Orville Wright was still designing planes at age 76, just before his death. Grandma Moses was still painting at 80. J.C. Penny, worked until he was 95, and was heard often saying, "I'll get out when I'm 55." Well, Daniel was still at it...in his mid-80's.

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Well, this mob of people (a throng, some would say) burst in and flat-out lied about **everyone** being consulted (Daniel wasn't there), and that's because they're chomping at the bit to get rid of Daniel. Why? Well, if you ask me, it's all about money and power. Daniel is gumming up the works. He's in the way. He's a stick in the mud. He won't take bribes. He won't look the other way.

And that's the way the world works...they say, "Everyone agrees. It's settled science. You have to do what we say. We're the experts. You can trust us. It's all for your own good." The truth is: Daniel represented an obstacle to them...he was keeping them from profiting from their position. (We've got a lot of that in our country.) They're actually envious of Daniel's position and "envy hates the excellence it cannot reach." Well, they offer false flattery to King Darius...and tell him they're all unified in their desire to honor him!!! We're going to make you "god for the month." How nauseating! What liars!! Well, Darius went with it...and signed it into law. And when something was signed into law under the reign of the Medes and Persians, it was irrevocable and couldn't be changed.

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#### **Daniel 4:10**

<sup>10</sup>When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

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I love that about Daniel. He will not be deterred. He is doing exactly what he had previously done. He was not going to stop praying no matter what the government said. Church, what if one day it's against the law to share your faith, go to church, say anything about Jesus? What would you do? Would you bow down to the government? Be careful before you answer too soon. We just went through a period of time that there was immense pressure placed on people...or else.

In essence, this entire law was written to stop Daniel. Stop worshipping God! And yet, he refused! You see church, Daniel was totally consistent in his life. See it...

**Consistent in his Professional Life**

**Consistent in his Personal Life**

**Consistent in his Prayer Life**

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Are you consistent in your life? Many people aren't. They're very inconsistent. They're up and down like a yo-yo. They can't be counted on. Their yes isn't their yes and their no, isn't their no. And you know what...you know who you are. You say you're going to show up on time, but you're always 15 minutes late. You're not consistent, nor disciplined. And often time, those people aren't disciplined in other areas of their lives. You see, it's been my experience, if you see a person who is consistent in their work, they're probably consistent in their personal life and they're probably consistent in their prayer life.

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So, how is it with you? Are you dependable? Can you be counted on? That's the mark of a disciplined person who let's their yes be yes, and their no, be no. That was Daniel. The mark of consistency!

And here's another thing... You know, Daniel could have just closed his widows and prayed silently three times a day until the month was over, but he didn't fear man...he feared God. And that's the problem for a lot of people today...they fear man more than they fear God...because when they are faced with adversity, they wilt. But, he's been here before...right...he refused the King's meat...and God gave him the wisdom to interpret the King's dream and not be killed. He's watched his friends delivered from the fiery furnace.

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I thought of Polycarp. Do you know him? He was a disciple of the Apostle John and he was burned at the stake in Smyrna in 155 A.D.



He was 86 years old when he died. He was considered an early church Father. He was executed for not bowing and showing allegiance to Caesar. Thus, he was sentenced to be burned at the stake.

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Before they lit the fire, they said to Polycarp: “Say: ‘Caesar is Lord,’ deny Christ and save your life.” With a steady voice, Polycarp said. “Eighty-six years have I served Him. He’s never done me any harm. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” It’s interesting when you study the death of Polycarp. There are conflicting reports...all of which are quite amazing. One tradition stated that for whatever reason, there was confusion at the execution sight...the guards realized they had no nails or rope to affix him to the stake. Polycarp learning this...assured them that no restraint would be necessary—that Jesus would empower him to bear the flames. Another account says that the flames avoided his body and arched over his head and when the guards realized that he wasn’t being burned, they stabbed him with a spear—and then, the blood ran down the stake and extinguished the flames. What a man! What courage!

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Church, the reason I’m telling you this is because I don’t want us to misunderstand. Just because we have faith, doesn’t always mean that we’ll be delivered. We’re not always delivered from death or pain or suffering...we humbly accept God’s will, come what may.

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Listen...it’s been said that a believer who knows how to kneel in prayer has no problem standing in the strength of the Lord. Polycarp knew this and so did Daniel. Well, here come the Elites with the FBI...

#### **Daniel 6:11-14**

<sup>11</sup> Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. <sup>12</sup> Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” <sup>13</sup> Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.” <sup>14</sup> Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

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**(Duh-rye-US)** Darius worked all day, scouring the law, looking for loopholes...anything he could find to try to get out of this mess. Why? Because he liked Daniel. He had been a great help to him in understanding the people and how things had been prior to him taking over. He was a friend...a

confidant. It's how Nebuchadnezzar had felt about Daniel and Daniel felt about him. Remember, when Daniel was so distraught to tell the King the interpretation of his dream about the tree being chopped down? You get close to your advisors and Daniel had that "excellent spirit" in him and I believe **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius was feeling great remorse for being tricked into this whole deal. If he had only talked to Daniel!!! But instead, he's been duped and he knows there's nothing he can do about it and the sun was going down and the problem with that is: Medo-Persian Law required the sentence for the crime to be carried out same day. Boy that sure lowers the prison population. Here they come again...

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**Daniel 6:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." <sup>16</sup> Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared<sup>[b]</sup> to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" <sup>17</sup> And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

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Can you see how much the King cared for Daniel. He spent the night fasting. No diversions...that means, no women were brought in for him. He didn't sleep a wink all night. What an impact Daniel had on this pagan King.

Church, may we never underestimate the impact our witness has on others. People are watching us...every day. They're watching how we react to trouble, to pain, to mistreatment, to stress. They're watching and reading our lives. It's been said, "You're the only Bible some people ever read." They're watching...like **(Duh-rye-US)** Darius had Daniel.

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Now, a word about this lion's den. It was a large pit dug into the ground that was divided by a large moveable wall that could be pulled up to allow the lions to go from one side to the other. The keeper would put food (Daniel in this case) on the empty side and lift up the wall so the lions could cross over and eat. These lions were kept hungry for the purpose of executions...living on the gnawing edge of starvation. Great cruelty here! Well, the deed is done. The wall has been lifted. It's a matter of time... But something happened... God moved in... I absolutely love this painting...



It's like there is an invisible wall between Daniel and those lions...they just pad back and forth, back and forth...probably perplexed...why can't we get to him? God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "It's

a good thing those lions didn't eat Daniel because they wouldn't have enjoyed him...he's nothing but gristle and backbone." Verse 19...

### **Daniel 6:19-23**

<sup>19</sup> Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." <sup>23</sup> Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

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Yes, God could have delivered Daniel from the Lion's Den, but just like with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, God chose to deliver them unhurt, revealing His great power and Him receiving the credit and the greater honor! For all four of these men, it could be said that their faith was a commitment to God, come what may, even if it meant their death. And may that be said of us! Well, things get bad for those men who brought the false charges about Daniel.

### **Daniel 6:24**

<sup>24</sup> And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

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You know some people say, "Well, Daniel didn't get eaten because the lions weren't hungry." Well, that was totally disproven by what we just read. They were hungry enough to eat this huge group of people before they even hit the ground. These were ferocious that shredded those people and broke ALL of their bones in pieces. It's a horrifying scene. It's what happens to those who go against God.

Warren Wiersbe describes this as the "Law of Compensation." What is that? Well, it's described in

### **Proverbs 26:27**

<sup>27</sup> Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.

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Remember when Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew male babies be killed...Moses was saved...and then the 10<sup>th</sup> plague ordered by Moses would cause the death of all the firstborn Egyptians. Haman, that evil man who sought to kill Esther and all the Jews, erected a set of gallows to hang Mordecai on, but instead, he was hung on it! The same happened for those evil men who wanted to take Daniel down. They wanted him eaten by lions, but instead, they were eaten by lions. You reap what you sow!

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Now you may say...it was cruel to kill all those people...why the wives and children? Well, for the Medo-Persians, they didn't want any remaining members of a traitor's family to conspire one day to kill the man who ordered for their father's execution. For the Medo-Persians, it was much easier to bury corpses than to continually look over their shoulders for "would-be" assassins.

### **Daniel 6:25-28**

<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>26</sup> I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. <sup>27</sup> He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." <sup>28</sup> So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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Let me ask you a question. Who gets the glory in this story? Daniel? No! Daniel's God...our God! God gets the glory...and that's the common thread throughout the book of Daniel. God is in control, church...He is the deliverer...He is the Sovereign, Exalted One! He is the One who stands above all the nations of the world and places rulers in their positions.

**Daniel 4:17b**

**17 that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'**

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As we close, I want to go back to the phrase at the start of verse 27: "He delivers and rescues." That is true. That's what we've seen today. He delivers and rescues...He did that for Daniel. But, the question I have is: What about you? Let me show you this again?



As you look at that painting, I want you to place yourself in the place of Daniel and see the lions around you. The lions...yes...**the lions of your old habits, your sins, your personal hang-ups that you can't seem to defeat...anxiety, pain, frustration, disillusionment.** They dog us, don't they? They pad, back and forth and seek to pounce. But, listen...as a child of God, the same One who shut the mouths of the lions in Daniel's day can shut them for you and me. As you look at that painting, understand that you and I cannot win the battle in our own strength. May that painting make us realize that God's power and strength are with us...see that lion of guilt that you have lurking...wanting to leap on you with condemnation...No...look to heaven, close your eyes, breath in the freedom that comes from knowing Jesus. Listen, Daniel had to go into the lion's den...he wasn't kept from them, and as Christians, living in a sin-sick, messed up world, we don't have to be afraid of the lions that lurk, because of the LION OF JUDAH...is stronger! He is the PRINCE OF PEACE...and we need not fear, but instead know that He is with us in the lion's den and they will not overtake us!

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