

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE #17

I. Introduction

We are in a teaching series that paints a prophetic picture comparing how modern America is becoming like ancient Babylon...metaphorically, a spiritual jungle...

“Jungle”

A place where people behave ruthlessly, unconstrained by law or morality.

This is what happens when an antichrist spirit controls the government; and the Book of Daniel is a model of how God’s people are to survive and thrive in it.

Tonight, we will take a look at one of the most famous stories in the Bible...

“Daniel in the Lion’s Den”

Preview

I know of no story in the Bible that more perfectly reflects the growing threat Christian America is facing today concerning our religious liberty and freedom of speech. What happened before is happening again. And it will continue to happen wherever God’s people find themselves living under Babylonian political systems like the one we now have in Washington.

The Good News is that God has given us the prophet Daniel as our model for what we are to do in the face of their threats. The story is in Daniel Chapter 6; but first, let’s do a quick...

Review

When we last saw Daniel, in Daniel 5, he had pronounced the doom of evil king Belshazzar when he interpreted the mysterious writing on the wall by the hand of the Lord.

The Handwriting on the Wall

God had ‘weighed’ him in the balances and found him wanting...

God will always write judgment upon any nation that embraces the antichrist politics of Babylon. Whether it’s Communist Russia, Nazi Germany or the current Marxist Socialist Democrat party in America, God’s judgment will fall.

It's just a matter of time. In this case it came the same night.

Daniel 5:30-31

That very night Belshazzar, the Persian king, was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom...

Now in Chapter 6, Daniel finds favor in the sight of this new king (Darius) and he appoints Daniel to be the highest ranking of his 3 Prime Ministers.

Daniel 6:1-2

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one...

Daniel 6:3

Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

Here is the Biblical rebuke to all those who say God's people should have nothing to do with politics! Daniel was a prophet of God in a *political* setting.

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In speaking of Daniel's honor, it will at once appear that it was political, and we need more Godly men in high places. Daniel did not reach his position suddenly. He had lesser offices first, in which his faithfulness was proved.

Daniel won his position because 'an excellent spirit was in him'.

Notice, Daniel did not distinguish himself by his talent but by his character; 'because he had an excellent spirit in him.

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Honor comes from character not talent. These two things are often separated.

But men of genius are not always men of character. Although a young man has large mental capacity, it will not weigh for much, if that be all. His real strength or weakness is closely linked with his moral nature; it is the heart, even more than the brain, that determines the man.

God promotes Daniel into a high place of political power because of his character.

Even in the midst of a godless Babylonian system God can raise up a Daniel.

The problem is that he is hated and despised by his political rivals.

This sets up our story...

I. Daniel in the Lion's Den

A. The Trap is Set

1. You would think everyone would have been glad to have a man like Daniel in high office. But not so with these.

Daniel 6:4

So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.

2. Bible scholars believe that Daniel's integrity was a threat to the corruption of the political establishment of that day; they hated that he was promoted.

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Human nature is the same in every age in principle and in practice. It is no wonder that Daniel's exaltation should prove a source of enmity, and that those who were placed in a lower point of dignity should seek occasion against him, that so they might accuse him to their common King. There will always be those who watch for the failing of a righteous man.

3. Daniel's political rivals hated him because he had 'an excellent spirit'; they dedicated themselves to find a fault in him because of ENVY.

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The enemies of Daniel had powerful motives to seek his downfall. Motives impure indeed, but powerful. The spirit of envy had seized them. It cost them something to tolerate the Jewish statesman as an equal, but they could not stand him to be their superior. It is the penalty of greatness that envy ever follows in its path. Nor is goodness any protection from it.

a. Early on in my walk with the Lord He showed me the danger of the terrible sin of envy.

Envy

- **When Isaac prospered, the Philistines envied him. (Genesis 26:14)**
- **When Joseph told his dream to his brothers they envied him (Genesis 37:11)**
- **When Jesus was on trial, Pilate knew that they handed Him over 'because of envy' (Matthew 27:18)**

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Never did man occupy so high a position who was more deserving of it. But honor and merit are always a target for the malicious arrows of envy. Daniel's colleagues seek his overthrow but search in vain for any fault in his character or administration. They soon see there is but one point at which he can be assailed, and that is, his commitment to his God.

b. Many wondered why President Trump was so hated and reviled by the Press and by his political enemies; it was beyond the pale; irrational. And so it was with their hatred of Daniel.

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It would not have been easy to play perfectly so exalted a part before the friendliest spectators. But they who watched Daniel were hostile in the worst degree. Theirs was no manly, open hostility. Theirs was a mean, underhanded, jealous and envious hostility, that could not bear to see virtue rewarded.

c. Daniel is one of the few major heroes in the Bible where we find no fault in him written in the scriptures. But he was just a man...

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We do not suppose this to mean that Daniel was no sinner, but there was no open departure from righteousness and justice which could be made the basis of an impeachment. There remained to them one chance of striking a blow at the man they hated. That Daniel was a religious man.

Daniel 6:4-5

So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

4. This is such an important point! They were unable to impeach Daniel or convict him of any kind of corruption or wrongdoing; so they realized the only way to bring him down was to put him in a place where his faith could be used against him!

5. So they set about to do what Babylonian political systems, (including the one we now have in America), always do...*they pass laws that will take away the religious liberty and the freedom of speech of the true people of God!*

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Daniel must be removed. To get rid of him, however, will require considerable skill, nothing less than the invention of a new crime unheard of in the annals of idolatry up until now.

a. They gather together to get the king to pass a law that proclaims a 30-day period of time when the people can pray to no other god or man except the king.

Daniel 6:6-7

So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

Daniel 6:8-9

Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." Therefore. King Darius signed the written decree.

(If you live in Babylon you can expect that stupid laws will be passed)

Adam Clarke

What pretense could they have had for so silly an ordinance? Probably to flatter the ambition of the king, they pretend to make him a god for thirty days; so that the whole empire should make prayer and supplication to him and pay him divine honors! This was the bait; but their real object was to destroy Daniel.

b. Oh how cunning their strategy. They flatter the king by exalting him to the place of a god; they convince him that all the people want to worship him; and the king falls for it. He does not realize that this is not about him, it is about *getting rid of Daniel.*

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Daniel's enemies saw that it was possible to frame a law that Daniel's conscience would not permit him to obey; and they knew that no matter what

penalties were attached, if obedience to the law of man meant disobedience to the law of God, Daniel would be a lawbreaker rather than be false to his religion.

c. You know you are living under an antichrist Babylonian system of government when laws are passed that threaten the people of God; in this case religious liberty (who you pray to) and freedom of speech (how you pray).

d. A Babylonian spirit in political power will require us to worship the government and pass laws to punish those who don't.

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The decree of an idolatrous worship is in everything among us which goes to put man in place of God, to put man's opinions in place of Gospel truths, and human fancies in place of a revealed and justified faith.

6. The historians tells us that the Babylonians had many 'gods'; there were 1200 temples in the city built to honor the various gods; it would be nothing for them to 'switch' gods for a month; this law wouldn't affect the heathens-it was designed to put God's people under pressure by exposure.

a. The fact that Daniel prayed to his God 3 times a day was well known to them all; so in passing this law they knew that Daniel would put himself in the lion's den.

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They were convinced that Daniel so valued his prayers and devotions that he would endure any loss or punishment rather than discontinue them even for a time. Doubtless they called him a fanatic and despised him for being narrow-minded. But fanatic is a term often applied to men of strong convictions.

7. This is how governments identify and destroy people of faith; they pass laws that they know the true people of God cannot violate and set up punishments systems for when they do.

- They know that real Christians will never support abortion or approve of gay marriage (so they will pass the new Equality Act that will force us to hire the ungodly or affirm gay marriage)
- They know that God's true ministers will not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God (so they will pass law labeling God's commandments as 'hate speech')

a. They know that shutting down churches does not affect unbelievers; it did not even really affect fake Christians; it only affects those of us who believe that God told us 'not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together'. (Hebrews 10:25)

8. You know you're living under an antichrist spirit of Babylon kind of government when you see laws passed that put you in a pickle:

- If you keep their laws, you must violate God's clear commandments
- Yet not keeping these laws may put you in a place of peril

9. This was Daniel's dilemma; and here is what he did.

B. The Trap Snaps Shut

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

1. Here is the key to the story: Daniel refused to allow the laws of men to supersede the law of God!

D.L. Moody

Daniel was none of your sickly Christians of our own day; he was not one of your weak-backed, weak-kneed Christians; he had moral stamina and courage.

2. Daniel could have wimped out.

a. He could have just gone along with it as the law of the land.

Charles Spurgeon

Somebody might whisper in Daniel's ear, "It is the law of the land." Yes, but whatever the law may be, and whatever custom may be, the servants of God serve a higher King, and they have but one rule, and one custom, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

b. He could have put his lamp under a bushel. He could have hid his religion away by not opening his windows or praying out loud. But a true believer cannot do it!

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Christian manhood shrinks in horror from conformity, even in appearance, to that which is false. It may be the law of the country, but no country has a right to make such a law. Yes, human law has its province: but there are certain broad rules morality that no one has a right to transgress. Human law has no right to interfere with man's religion: here he passes into a sacred realm; a man's relationship with his God.

c. I drive the speed limit. I wear a seat belt. I pay my taxes. It's the law. But...

3. Beloved, we are now living in a time when our Christianity will be challenged like never before; new laws will be passed that will test our character and our commitment to Christ.

The Biblical Illustrator

A man may be religious and prayerful, and yet, if he lacks decision of character, he is liable to be led into any form of evil. What the world and the Church needs today are men who have some backbone in them; men who will do right and do it at all hazards.

4. Daniel knew that praying to God land him in the lion's den; but he chose to be faithful to God; and they ratted him out.

a. In vv. 11-14 Daniel's enemies spied him praying to his God and went to the king to remind him of his decree; so though the king loved Daniel, Persian kings could not change a decree once spoken.

Daniel 6:16-18

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." (Perhaps they had told him the story of how the God of the Jews had delivered the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace?) Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

b. Daniel was put down into the earth and the entrance was sealed in the same way the body of Jesus was put into the tomb and the opening sealed with a great stone!

Adam Clarke

All this precaution of sealing the den served the purposes of the divine Providence. There could be no trick nor collusion here; if Daniel be preserved, it must be by the power of the Supreme God. The same precaution was taken by the Jews, in the case of the burial of our blessed Lord; and this very thing has served as one of the strongest proofs of the certainty of his resurrection and of their unmixed wickedness.

c. The king's conscience kept him up all night in the same way Pilate's wife was troubled about what was happening to Jesus.

Daniel 6:18

Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also, his sleep went from him.

(God says, "I will disturb those who disturb you!")

Daniel 6:19-20

Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

d. Oh to have the kind of Christianity that makes men know we're the real deal!

Andrew Maclaren

The world is a very poor critic of my Christianity, but it is a very sufficient one of my conduct. If we call ourselves Christians, we are bound, by the very name, to live in such a fashion as that men shall have no doubt of the reality of our profession, and of the depth of our fellowship with Christ. Men will judge us by our conduct.

Daniel 6:21-22

Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den.

Daniel 6:23

So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Adam Clarke

No manner of hurt was found upon him. And why? Because he believed in his God. How mighty is faith? It is the power of the believer by which the sea is dried up, the mountains removed, the dead raised to life. By faith sin forgiven, the heart purified, Satan vanquished, death conquered, and God himself delighted and glorified!

Daniel 6:24

And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions — them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

e. The devil always overplays his hand! God has laid down a law...

Psalm 7:15-16

He made a pit and dug it out and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.

(Watch for history to soon repeat itself regarding God's enemies!)

C. The Great End of the Story: God is Glorified!

1. The great ending to the story of Daniel in the lion's den is not that Daniel is delivered-it is that God is glorified!

Daniel 6:25-26

Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

Daniel 6:26-27

For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, and He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

2. Difficult days are ahead; our lives may be threatened; but if we have faith, God will be glorified!

F.B. Meyer

Dare to believe that the ministering angels, though unseen, engirdle you and intercept the blows and plots of your adversaries. Walk before God in righteousness and peace and be sure that you are immortal till your work is done. That a heathen king should publish such a proclamation is a glimpse into the divine wisdom that can make His mighty power known by the strangest circumstances.

3. The story ends with Daniel being promoted again!

Daniel 6:28

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Adam Clarke

Daniel prospered while serving under five kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. Few courtiers have had so long a reign, served so many masters without flattering any, been more successful in their management of public affairs, been so useful to the states where they were in office. Few have been more approved by God or have left such an example to posterity.

(Daniel is our model for how to live when cultures collide)

III. Conclusion

A. The Great Lesson of the Lion's Den

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Babylon has fallen, but it has had its counterpart in every age, for it is the type of that world, with its still subtler pomp and vanities, through which you and I have to pass on our earthly probation; go where we will, we cannot

escape from it. It sets up its idols and demands worship for them; it has issued its imperious edicts and attaches formidable penalties to the defiance of them.

The Biblical Illustrator

Yet this will ever be the secret of moral victory -- the victory which will overcome the world, even unto the end -- our faith. The true self cannot be touched with the mightiest of persecutors or the cruelest of inquisitors, -- the true self which comes from God, and belongs to God, and witnesses for God, cannot be delivered to the tormentors. It defies captivity; it is indestructible and immortal.

This series on “Welcome to the Jungle” has compared Daniel’s life in Babylon to the Christian’s life under any antichrist political system, including the one we now have in Washington. Daniel and his friends show us how to prepare for persecution; like a fiery furnace or a lion’s den. Who knows if it will come to that? So let me close with the words of a great missionary to China...

Bishop Daniel Huntington

(Missionary to China)

Men are heard to say, ‘There are terrible times coming.’ It may be so. We know nothing of the future. But prosperity is a harder test of fidelity to Christ than misfortune. So let us not just look out for dangers that shall imperil men's souls when worse days come. We would be wiser if we look for them just where we are right now. In business, in politics, in company, in families, in schools, the question will have to go forth once more like a dividing sword, ‘Who is on the Lord's side?’

Closing Prayer

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Andrew Maclaren

It was Daniel's prayerful communion with God that now risked his spiritual life and fortified him against perils which otherwise would have destroyed him. The den of lions was, indeed, a historic reality. Yet it was no less a figure of the tribulations into which our Lord Jesus and all his followers are thrown. We are powerful if we are in communion with God, and powerless if we attempt to cope with Him alone.

D.L. Moody

The world is no friend to true grace: mark that! A man may live for the world, and like the world, and escape persecution. But if the world has nothing to say against you, it is a pretty sure sign that God has not much to say for you; because if you do seek to live unto Christ Jesus you must go against the current of the world.

The Biblical Illustrator

There was nothing in Daniel's life that ought to have excited hatred. All through life he had maintained his steadfastness of holy life; and they hated that holy life. They hated him also because he was a man of rare gifts. Notice the effect of the conspiracy. It brought out Daniel's confession: In consequence of his confession, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Would you be ready, if the call were to come forth to the lions for Christ's sake, could you be ready?

The Biblical Illustrator

If earthly authorities command what is clearly contrary to God's law, a Christian is absolved from obedience, and cannot be loyal unless he is a rebel. Obedience to God needs always to be sustained. In our little lives, the motto, "This I will not do, because of the fear of the Lord," is absolutely essential to all noble Christian conduct. These people calculated Daniel would be faithful. Can the world calculate the same of us?

D.L. Moody

It was not only Daniel they were thus going to get out of the way, but every conscientious Jew. There was not a true Jew in the whole of that wide empire who would bow down and worship Darius; and these men knew that: and so they were going to sweep away at a stroke all the Jews who were true to their faith. They hated them. And I want to tell you that the world does not love Christians nowadays. The world will persecute a man if he attempts to live the life of a true Christian.