

DANIEL & THE LIONS, DAN.6

Salt & Light #4

◆**Intro:** What if we rewrote Daniel 6 in terms of our own culture right now. It might sound something like this. It's Nov.3 and a new president is elected, no violence involved! Both the ancient historians Heroditus and Xenophen corroborate that Babylon fell to the Medes/Persians without any violence in one night. The new President (Darius) discovers a leader (we'll call him Congressman Daniel) of high repute (Belshazzar had just appointed Daniel as third highest power in the country, Speaker of the House) and Darius intends to appoint him Vice President. All the other congressional leaders, and the governors of all the states (120 + 2) take offense because Daniel is not even a natural-born citizen, but a refugee from Israel. So what happens? Reaching across the aisle, they all in unity plot to create a news scandal to force Congressman Daniel out of office (into the lions den of public shame and humiliation).

◆Here is their plan: Knowing that they need to catch him doing something they are *sure* he will do, they settle on his worship habits. They appeal to the President Darius to write an executive order declaring a 30 day prayer lockdown: All prayers in the nation must be made to the President alone. The President in vain glory signs the order and the leaders immediately leak to CNN a smartphone video of Daniel praying at home. The President realizes his foolish mistake and tries to undo the executive order, however they remind him that it is "unconstitutional" to revoke a law when it is a bi-partisan request

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of both the Medes and the Persians. Congressman Daniel is forced out of office and fed to the news media.

◆The next day after a sleepless night in the oval office, the President calls Congressman Daniel, and asks if it was worth it in the end for him to pray to God. Daniel replies, "Mr President, may you serve two full terms, Yes God has delivered me from mouths of the news channels."

◆That's pretty much what happened in real history when Cyrus the Great captured Babylon in 539BC. And as I hope we can see, the world hasn't changed all that much since. We still have the same cultural challenges Daniel faced, so once again God's Word speaks with relevance. What can we learn from the character Daniel about our call in our time? Many things, I think.

◆**1. God has called me to deep participation in my culture!**

◆**A.** Daniel has distinguished himself(v3). That doesn't happen by punching the time clock, and watching TV the rest of the night. Daniel, a refugee, worked, cared, thought, spoke up. Daniel distinguished himself in government under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius! Now, Christians sometimes think it's more spiritual to avoid the secular world, stay away from bad influence and be safe. But this is not the Christian way. In his High Priestly prayer of John 17 Jesus explicitly asks God the Father NOT to take his followers out of the world, but to protect them as he send them IN.

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◆ *John 17:15-18 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.*

◆ Our mission is to infiltrate the world for the name of God and good. This is what we see so clearly in Jesus' call to be salt and light in the world (Mt.5)

◆ *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? ... "You are the light of the world. ...nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand,... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Mat 5:13-16*

◆ **B.** This theme is the theme of Daniel's record as well. It's easy to assume that the lesson of Daniel and the lions is that if you pray consistently God will protect you from harm. There is some truth to that, but many saints have prayed fervently and still lost their lives and loved ones. Thousands of Christians were fed to lions by the Roman Empire even though they prayed. Prayer is certainly essential as we will see in point 3. But the theme of Daniel's book is that God is sovereign everywhere, all the time, over all nations and kingdoms of men, and his people are to make this glory known. Let's take a look.

◆ In chapter 2:20-21 Daniel sings a song to the True God.
"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power

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are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.

◆ In 4:1-3, 34-35 Nebuchadnezzar sings a song to the True God....King Nebuchadnezzar, to the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: may you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, ◆ how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. ... His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

◆ In 6:25-26 Darius sings a song to the True God. Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.

◆ Do you see what's happening? Kingdoms are being caused to know the true God, the God of Abraham. Israel is also learning it as they are in exile. Their God is still at the top! In fact Daniel in chapter 2, under Nebuchadnezzar predicts in perfect historic detail the coming of three more successive middle-eastern kingdoms after Babylon: Persian, Greece, and Rome. That tells you someone else is actually in control.

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◆ **C.** Here's the application if you haven't felt it already: God's people belong in the middle of world activity, helping to create godly laws and moral societies. Daniel's example stands out. He told Nebuchadnezzar...

◆ *Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue. Dan 4:27*

◆ That's being salt, right? Salt as an ancient preservative would be rubbed into the meat until it was dissolved into it to prevent decay. And so too, unless Christians rubbed into culture, a part of culture, penetrating and preserving, the world will decay. Christians ought to be, need to be in television, writing the sit coms, making movies, in news companies, in the arts, in government. Christians need to be lawyers to bring a biblical world view into the courtroom, and to fight repressive laws. Christians need to be in the political debates instead of avoiding them. The only place salt isn't being salty is inside the salt shaker.

◆ Each of us must learn to see ourselves as ministers of the Gospel. That doesn't mean you have to be a missionary in Brazil. It means you be a christian CEO, and a christian body man, a christian molecular biologist, and an engineer who behaves as a christian. You infiltrate the arena God puts you in for good.

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◆2. Here's another characteristic of Daniel. **Obedience to God always comes first; I need to obey God first.** God followers honor authority, even bad authority. Jesus taught it. Paul taught it. Daniel obviously participated in the pagan government of Babylon under three different rulers! But God is always the higher ruler.

◆A. Which means there is a place for civil disobedience. When government tries to make us go against the law of God, we must resist. There was no way Daniel was going to pray to Darius. What Darius decreed was flat wrong. Look at verse 22.

◆Daniel 6:22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

◆We find the same thing in the New Testament with the Disciples are arrested and told not to preach about Jesus.

◆*Acts 4:18-19 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.*

◆Acts 5:27-29 they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

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◆**B.** Well my friends, governments have always tried to make Christians go against God's laws. It's happening today as you well know. Our taxes pay to destroy children in the womb. Christian bakers are fined for not making cakes affirming homosexual marriage. The Little Sisters of the Poor were taken to court for not offering abortion in their hospitals. In Philadelphia, Catholic Social Services was cut off from foster care with the city after 200 years of service because they will define a married couple as one man and one woman. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court. We could go on all day with examples. Go to familywatch.org , or frc.org or afa.net if you want to a million more examples. Your call is to stand for truth and resist evil.

◆**3. Godly cultural influence is only possible when constantly connected to heaven.** Did you notice who in the story is at peace and who is anxious? Daniel is the only one at peace here. It's unmistakable that Daniel was a consistent follower of God.

◆v10 says he took a break three times a day to pray, that is, to discuss life with God!

◆v16 Darius hopes the God "who you serve continually" will save Daniel from the lions.

◆v19 Daruis runs out to the den in the morning and asks the exact same phrase, has the God "whom you serve continually" rescued you?

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◆ Now let us ponder this. If someone were to characterize you, would your constant service to God, or consciousness of God be part of that description?

◆ B. Here's the application: in order to be immersed in culture and to influence it, and still resist evil, I need a key. Prayer is the key. Prayer is the electrical cord we plug in our lamps with, so we can turn on light. We will not affect American culture by cruising in here for an hour on Sunday and then walking back into the world indistinguishable from a non-believer. It's not going to work, folks. The darkness is greater than us. Like Daniel there is a lion that wants to eat us!

◆ Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings 1Pet 5:8

◆ How do we resist? Don't you wonder how Daniel could be so long in a position of such power and never "cave" to the opportunity to abuse it?

◆ v4 They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

◆ That means Daniel wouldn't shade the truth. Money wouldn't stick to his fingers. He couldn't be bought. He didn't claim business is business, as though there were standards at church, but they didn't apply at work. Daniel was "**light**" in darkness, but

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only because he was a man “continually in service to God”. Little wonder that Paul says to be “continually in prayer.”

◆**Conclusion:** One final characteristic for Daniel: he was Christ-Type. A typology of Christ. A precursor, an early figure of Christ. Daniel’s life is pointing us to Christ! God peppered the world with Christ Types all pointing to the Final Christ: Jesus. Both Daniel and Jesus were lowered into the earth in death (lions den was usually a pit-like cave with an entrance at the top.) Both were secured with a stone and seal. Both Daniel and Jesus have someone running anxiously to their place of burial at daybreak. Like Adam (another Christ-Type) and Eve, both were with wild animals, but guarded by angels. Mark says that Jesus, in the desert temptations was “with the wild animals and angels ministered to him.” Mk 1:13

◆But most importantly Daniels lifting out of the lions den foreshadows Christ’s resurrection too! As Peter said to the authorities in that earlier passage we looked at ...

◆The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

◆Did you hear that? Jesus is raised. Jesus is ruler. Jesus can grant you both repentance and forgiveness. Ask him. Turn to

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him. Then you can follow him in infiltrating a dangerous culture and yet remain in peace. He has made you salt and light.