

The Living God

Scripture Text: Daniel 6:25-28

Introduction

Last week, we read about God sending His angel to keep Daniel safe from the lions during the night. When morning came, King Darius found that Daniel had spent a comfortable night surrounded by ferocious lions, while Darius himself had been unable to sleep though he was in the lap of royal luxury. We learned that the safest place to be is in the presence of the Lord, regardless of the situation, even if we are in a den of lions. God rescued Daniel from the lions. God showed once again that He was in control of the situation. No matter what schemes of Satan or what his little minions try to do to thwart God's plan or His people, God is still in control. When we face the roaring lion of Satan, or his little minions who seek to do us harm, the best response is to simply trust God. Because Daniel was safe, Darius was overjoyed and ordered Daniel to be lifted out of the den. He found no mark or injury on him. How would we have reacted if we were Daniel? How would we have reacted if we were Darius who witnessed this miracle? The truth is that Darius was greatly affected by Daniel's rescue.

Darius Praises The Living God

Darius was so impressed with God's miracle of saving Daniel from the lions' den that he issued a new law ordering all people throughout his kingdom to properly recognize the God of Daniel. The old law that got Daniel in such trouble was for Darius to receive praise at the expense of God's faithful, namely Daniel. Now, the king recognized who truly deserves our praise. Look at the following verse.

***Daniel 6:25–26** ²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ 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.*

First, King Darius began by pronouncing a blessing upon his people. He then issued the new law that commanded all the people in his kingdom to fear and reverence the “God of Daniel”. Darius set aside the previous law and mandated right worship to the right Person. Darius, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, confessed the awesome power and protection of Daniel's God. Does this mean Darius became a believer? Does this mean that Darius trusted in God and began worshipping Him? Darius recognized God's greatness. He witnessed the awesome power of God to save His faithful servant even when evil men tried to do him harm. God is living and eternal, sovereign, all-powerful, and able to deliver His people. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Darius became a true believer and worshipped God as *the only god*. Probably, like King Nebuchadnezzar before him, Darius accepted the God of Israel as one of many gods, perhaps as the greatest of all gods. In the end, we do not know exactly what Darius believed, but he did make somewhat a confession of faith.

Before we move on, what does Darius' decree for his people to fear God say about government sanctioned religion? At the beginning of this chapter, a new government was established. Now, at the end of the chapter, it seems that a new national religion is also established. What does this say about the separation of church and state, the separation of God and government? If you recall, King Nebuchadnezzar did something similar in chapter three after God rescued Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the fiery furnace. He did not command his people to worship the God of Israel, but he did command that they should say nothing against God (Daniel 3:29). For one thing, we should see this as *one king's command* for his people to fear God. This is not the same as God saying that government should *force* people to worship Him. God desires and deserves the worship of all people, but He does not force it on us. He does not desire for worship to be mandated through secular government. True worship is from spirit and truth (John 4:24). It is initiated by God, sustained by God, and designed for God.

God is the Everlasting God

Darius gave several reasons for issuing the new law that required all people to respect God. It could have been enough for Darius to issue a decree requiring his people to do what he said. That would have been enough. For instance, no reason was given for the previous law that required people to come to him for prayer and worship. But now Darius has issued a new law. The first reason Darius gave for respecting God is that He is “the living God” who lives “forever”. Look at the following.

Daniel 6:26 *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.*

Why did Darius call the God of Daniel “the living God”? Perhaps it was because Darius acknowledged that only a true, living god, not one made of wood, metal, or our own imagination, could do what God did for Daniel. People can dream up all sorts of things and false gods, but those things will not save us. All of the other “gods” in Babylon were not alive. All of the other things that people worship are also not alive. Our God is alive! Darius’ statement here contrasts to what the schemers said to King Darius earlier when they tricked him to sign the previous law. They came to him saying, “King Darius, *live forever*” (Daniel 6:6). Now, Darius acknowledged who truly is everlasting. It is not mortal man who is here like a vapor and then is gone. God is the true living God who lives forever. God is the everlasting God. Look at the following verse.

Isaiah 40:28–29 ²⁸ *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.* ²⁹ *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.*

God is the living God. God is the everlasting God. God is the Creator of everything. He does not faint or grow weak. We serve a living and everlasting God, and He deserves our praise and worship.

God's Kingdom Lasts Forever

The next reason King Darius gave for fearing God had to do with God's kingdom. Not only is God Himself living and everlasting, His kingdom will endure forever, too. God is King and Lord of all. This means that God is the One in charge. God is the true King of all kings. Like a broken record, Daniel (and now Darius) reminds us about God's sovereignty, the main theme of the book of Daniel. God is in control of everything. He moves kings and kingdoms like pieces on a chessboard. God gives to whomever He wills and He takes from whomever He wills. God gave Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. God gave Nebuchadnezzar kingship and greatness, but only God's rule is forever. When other governments end, God's kingdom remains. When the United States of America is but a distant memory, God's kingdom will remain. At its heart, this is saying the same as one of the earliest church creeds, the Nicene Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty." To say that God is sovereign is to express His almighty in every area. His rule will not ever end. His sovereignty will never end.

Not only will God's rule not end, just as God will live forever, God's kingdom also has no bounds. There is no place where God is not sovereign. There is no place where God's kingdom does not exist. There is not one square inch of space in the whole universe that is not under God's sovereign rule. You cannot go so far to remove yourselves from God's control. You cannot, like Jonah, truly turn from His presence and control. God is the King of all the earth, just as the psalmist declared.

Psalm 47:7–8 ⁷ For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! ⁸ God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.

God is the King of all the earth. He reigns over all nations. There is nothing outside of God's rule. There is also nothing that surprises God. For that, we ought to sing praises to Him. We ought to worship Him as the sovereign Lord of all. What does God's sovereignty mean for you personally? Are you living within His will or are you living in rebellion to the true King of the universe? When kings and laws seem opposed to God, what will we do? Will we lose hope? Will we cling to a human ideal that new laws, new leaders, or something else politically is the answer? What does God's sovereignty mean for us as a church? Do we truly live like God is in control of His church? Do we really believe that His will is to be done, regardless of what it means for us?

God Is A God Who Rescues

Another reason King Darius proclaimed that God is great was because God protects His followers from harm and is able to perform great miracles. God saved Daniel from the evil schemes of people who sought to do him harm. God saved Daniel from the ferocious lions in the pit. God miraculously rescued Daniel from a terrible fate. For this, Darius acknowledged that God is a God who rescues. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 6:27 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.

Darius acknowledged the saving power of God. He acknowledged God's miraculous rescue of Daniel. God does not do miracles in order to "show off" but rather to show to a lost world that He is the true, living God and He should be honored. God does miracles to point people to Him as the God Who saves. Neither was Daniel delivered primarily for his own benefit, but so that God could manifest to a lost king and a lost world His reality and power. God still rescues us today from lions. God saves us from the great enemy of death and from the roaring lion of Satan. Whosoever believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior will be saved from death and eternal separation from God. In John 3, we read about a pharisee named Nicodemus who had a "come to Jesus moment" and realized that God rescues people from perishing. Look at the following passage.

John 3:16–17 ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God loves the world in such a way that He gave to us His only Son. Jesus came to die for our sin and make payment for the wages of sin, which is death. Those who turn to Christ and trust in Him as Lord and Savior, will be rescued from the pit of sin and death. Those who confess Jesus as Lord will escape condemnation and instead receive eternal life, where they can live with the everlasting God. After Darius delivered his new law of praise, Daniel closed this chapter with a reminder of God prospering him.

Daniel 6:28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

This closing comment reminds us that most of Daniel's life was spent in exile. Yet God preserved him alive and unharmed throughout the whole time of his exile. God enabled Daniel to prosper under different governments until the time of King Cyrus, when his prayers for Jerusalem finally began to be answered. Cyrus was God's chosen instrument to bring about the return from the exile, when he issued a decree that the Jews could return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem. In essence, Daniel's entire life was spent in a kind of lions' den, in exile in Babylon. And yet, God sustained Daniel, and more than that, God prospered Daniel. This is proof that no matter what our situation is, the best place to be is right in the middle of God's will.

Conclusion

In closing, the story of Daniel in the lions' den exemplifies faithfulness. Daniel was a faithful servant of God in older age, in godly example, in prayer, in trials, and in testimony. As a result he was delivered, experienced a special manifestation of the presence of the Lord in a den of lions, provided an opportunity for witness to unbelievers, and was subsequently blessed. Not only that, Daniel witnessed a pagan king praise God and acknowledge God's eternal life, sovereignty, and salvation. There is truly no God like our God. Not only is He God and sovereign, but He rescues us out of the pit of lions. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!