

In the House Of, Part 8 (Daniel)

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

Written By: Pastor John T. Anderson

Delivered On: February 12, 2011

This Sermon is available in audio format for listening or downloading on our Audio Sermons web page.

Today we travel back to Old Testament times; not to Jerusalem but to a place that has figured prominently in the news lately. We're going to the home of the prophet Daniel when he served in the courts of Darius, king of Persia, today known as Iran. The name of the language "Farsi," is a throw-back to the ancient kingdom of Persia.

Daniel's life is quite a story. Taken captive in his teens, he was wrested from his home in Judea by King Nebuchadnezzar in the first of three waves of assault, in the year 605 B.C. Daniel was of royal blood, and perhaps aspired to sit on David's throne one day. Those hopes and dreams came crashing down when Nebuchadnezzar's armies attacked the southern kingdom of Judah and Daniel found himself, not in the palace of Jerusalem but in the court of Babylon.

In the throes of trial, Daniel, through the grace of God developed a Christ-like character. He is specifically mentioned as being "righteous" by the Lord in His message given through the prophet Ezekiel, who was a contemporary of Daniel. "'If I send a pestilence into that land and pour our My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.'" Ezekiel 14:19, 20. To be included in such illustrious company is a remark of high commendation, and this given even while Daniel was still alive. Daniel was later addressed by the angel Gabriel, who stands closest to God's throne as "greatly beloved." This he repeated no less than three times! Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19.

Eventually, the scepter of Babylon was handed over to the monarch of Medo-Persia. In prophecy, the head of gold was replaced by the chest of silver; the place of the lion was taken by the bear. Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar was slain as Cyrus launched a successful attack against the capital of Babylon in 539 B. C.

Under most circumstances, those who had held positions of great responsibility were exiled or killed when a new regime gained power. Instead, we find that Daniel, who had been essentially the "prime minister" of Babylon was given a place of great authority in the new empire. Most unusual! The story we're going to look at today happened shortly after this transition of power.

The account is found in Daniel chapter 6. Because of his sterling character and the breadth of experience he had gained, Daniel not only served as one of the “governors” of the new kingdom, but Darius gave careful consideration to elevating Daniel to a position above the other governors. “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. 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.” Daniel 6:1-3.

This idea must have become more than mere “thought,” because the satraps and other governors became moved with jealousy and tried to find a way to discredit this foreigner who was about to gain the upper hand. “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.” Daniel 6:5.

What to do? These envious and unscrupulous politicians conspired to dupe the king into signing a law which they knew Daniel would break. Since he hadn’t broken any of the laws of the kingdom, they would manufacture a new law against his religion, strongly suspecting that Daniel would disobey it. They had to stoop to flattery and deceit in order to get the king’s signature.

The new law simply said that for a period of thirty days, no one was to make any petition to any god or man, except King Darius. This, ostensibly, would cement his authority and establish him as the only ruler. We hear sometimes of laws that are given “teeth.” This was a law that was given “teeth,” literally, in the sense that whoever would dare to disobey would be cast into “the den of lions.” According to the laws of the Medes and Persians, once the king pressed his royal signet into the wax or clay of the seal, the law became irrevocable. It could not be rescinded or changed. This of course, was crucial to the plot of the instigators.

We come now to the event under study today. “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.” Daniel 6:10. Quite a man, this Daniel! Not given to cowardice, he threw open his windows and vaunted his faithfulness to his God! This was not going to be the time for secret closet prayer.

We might notice his posture; that of kneeling, which is appropriate as we approach the throne of the eternal God. We might notice his perseverance, as he prayed no less than three times that day. We might notice the pattern of his prayer life, as was his custom “since early days.” And we might notice the content of his prayer, as he “gave thanks.” When many would be pleading for their lives (and this is not to say that that would be wrong), Daniel simply gave thanks to his God, knowing that all things would be worked out according to His divine will.

This story has incredible relevance for God's people at the end of time. God spoke through many prophets and prophetesses through the ages; those things which He deemed important to be preserved for the benefit of His children through the ages, and especially at the close of this earth's history were packaged into what we call the Holy Bible. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come." I Corinthians 10:11. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4.

Prophecy tells us that the time is coming soon when God will bring to completion His plan for Planet Earth. This world is not spinning randomly; there is a design crafted by a Master Engineer. The world we see now is not as God made it. The original plan, devised in perfect detail, was marred by mankind in disobeying the Creator's command. It was such a simple law! Don't eat of one, just one tree of the garden. But Eve was seduced and Adam felt compelled to join her in eating the forbidden fruit, thus plunging this planet into chaos.

But the gracious Creator God put forth a second plan; one that was conceived in His mind from eternity. He would take upon Himself the punishment deserved by man and give him another trial; another opportunity to love, trust and obey. This second plan has been supervised by our wise God from the very beginning. With sorrow He has watched as the fruitage of sin has blossomed and grown through the centuries. Four thousand years after Adam's fall, at the fullness of time, He Himself came to this planet and was born into the human family.

He came to reveal to the world the true character of God, which had been distorted and cloaked in darkness by the great deceiver. He came to atone for our sins by bearing our guilt on the cruel cross. He came forth from the tomb in triumph to certify that all who sleep in Christ will one day come forth from the tomb in immortality. What a wonderful and all-sufficient plan it was that He devised! What a wonderful and gracious Being He is to make the sacrifice in order to provide for man's sin! These events have already taken place. They are matters of historical record. We know from Scripture that the next event on which the prophetic spotlight will fall will be the return of Jesus Christ in the sky, coming to take us to the place He has prepared.

But oh, how many are living their lives without any consciousness as to God's great plan! They are living as if this life, with all its pain and suffering will continue as far as the eye can see. The Psalmist penned, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no god." Psalm 14:1. To live in a way that ignores God's plan and timetable is a very foolish way of living. That way of living, which is the way that the vast majority of humanity is living, is short-sighted and foolishly takes no account that there is a plan for this planet, and that God's plan will "swallow up" all earthly enterprises when His cloud appears in the sky.

The issue that will face the world at the close of time is no different than the issue that faced the world at the beginning of time. A test was given to Adam and Eve to see if they would be willing to heed the Word of the Lord and obey Him. Would they trust Him to the fullest? Would they follow

His command? Would they be loyal creatures? This is the story of Genesis 2 and 3. The “props” for the test were two trees in a Garden. Eating of one would give life; eating of the other would result in death. Arrestingly simple! And yet, as we know, failure came in Eden when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit.

The issue has never changed. It remains the same today and will be the issue at the end of time. As our Creator and Redeemer, the Lord deserves to be worshiped and obeyed. That was the issue in Eden. It is our privilege as creatures to interact with our Maker in a relationship of loving and willing obedience. The serenity and peace of the universe is dependent upon this being the guiding principle, the “operating system” of every creature. The virus of sin has corrupted the interaction of God and His creatures.

God’s “Ten Words,” the Ten Commandments, form the basis of His government. The question for us is the very same question as was given to Adam, How will we relate to our Maker and His laws? Will we render loving and willing obedience to Him? Will we be compliant subjects of His kingdom, or will we rebel and refuse to obey Him and want to do it “our way.” How could it possibly be that God would take to heaven those who rebel against His laws? That would perpetuate sin, which is the transgression of the law. His purpose is to eradicate sin so that harmony will again be the pulse of His universe. He must deal with sin! His plan does just that!

We know that of ourselves we are unable to do render perfect obedience, but if we consent; if we don’t resist, His promise is given that “I will write My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Hebrews 8:10.

Satan has ingeniously confused the issue, this issue which is so arrestingly simple. Satan inspired church men in ages past to change God’s holy law, the law which Jesus Himself said would not change in the slightest iota till heaven and earth passed away. Matthew 5:17-19. Nevertheless, human minds and hands flagrantly changed God’s divine commandments, substituting the first day of the week, a common working day according to Scripture, in the place of God’s holy Sabbath. The “man of sin,” the papacy of history not only admits to this change, but flaunts it as being proof that he has power over the written Word; and lo, nearly all the Christian world has accepted his version of the Ten Commandments.

In other cases, Satan has inspired men to believe that obedience to God’s law is not required at all; that living “under grace” means that we are free to walk the path of disobedience. Not so! “Under grace” simply means that we are under the banner of His forgiveness and power, and are therefore under a higher obligation to serve Him! We have an even greater duty to be loyal to our gracious and merciful God!

For many others, Satan has brought forth the marvelous deception that there is no God whatsoever, and the Holy Scriptures are the fabrication of men’s minds. Obviously if there is no God, there is no divine law to be obeyed; there is no accountability or final judgment. Unfortunately, atheism is one of the fastest growing religions in America.

All of these deceptions, woven by the master deceiver, ignore the plain and simple issue that faces our planet; will the creature render loving and willing obedience to his or her Maker? The Scriptures point us to this issue as it will surface in the days just prior to Jesus' coming. It won't be about two trees; it will be about two days. It will center on worship, a word that appears no less than 8 times in Revelation 13 and 14. Every single person alive at that time will be either a worshiper of the Creator God, or a worshiper of the beast and his image. Those who are Christ's are the ones of whom He will say, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. They obviously are keeping the true Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the only day that God sanctified and blessed. The observance of the day set aside by Jehovah will mark those who have chosen to be loyal and obedient citizens of His kingdom.

The keeping of the Sabbath, in the context of Christ's pronouncement, is much more than a day, just as the test given Adam was more than just a tree. It speaks of submission and allegiance, which is the condition of being accepted as belonging to Him. On the simple test of loyalty, Lucifer fell. He wanted to do it "his way." On the simple test of loyalty, as highlighted by the two trees of Eden, Adam fell. On the simple test of loyalty, as contained in the two days, God's holy Sabbath, the seventh day, or the day substituted by man, the first day of the week, all will ultimately stand or fall.

In Daniel's day, his plotters conspired to effect an edict which would restrict his religious freedom. There are some parallels between the story of Daniel in chapter 6 and the three Hebrews and the fiery furnace of chapter three. Both encountered a test which compelled, on pain of death, disloyalty to God. Notice, though, that in chapter three the test is to do something; fall and worship the image, while in chapter 6 the test is to not do something; pray to any God other than Darius. So it will be when the time of the final test comes to this earth. Legislation will be passed compelling all to do something; honor the first day of the week by abstaining from many activities. Then also will come a law which will say must not do something, in this case keep holy the seventh day. Sanctions will be imposed, saying that the one who disobeys will not be able to buy or sell. Penalties will be increased, leading to the punishment of death for violators.

As unthinkable as it might seem that our wonderful country of America could possibly lead out in such an activity, it will happen. The beast that first appeared as a "lamb" will speak as the "dragon." As strange as it might seem that the whole world, with its various religions could find unity in the promotion of such a law, be advised that the sure Word of prophecy has declared it to be so. The question is not Will it come? The question is Where will I stand when it comes?

Try to imagine our world plunging into calamity and disaster with such ferocity that people will look to any source to find a solution. Try to imagine chaos that make our present dilemmas with floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes look puny. Try to imagine financial collapse that reduces the planet to famine in a way that makes us now seem to be "feeding in a meadow." Try to imagine

our leaders searching in vain for the answers and now ready to turn to one who claims to be the true spokesman for all of Christianity, the one who claims to be the Vicar of Christ, the pope.

Try to imagine Satan working such miracles that the frenzy of this false revival sweeps across America like a tsunami. Then will be brought to complete fulfillment Paul's prophecy, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." II Corinthians 11:14. Try to imagine a glorious being, resembling the depiction of Christ in the books of Daniel and Revelation, appearing and speaking gracious words, performing healings and even calling down fire from heaven. The cry rings out from one end of the globe to the other, "Christ has come, Christ has come!" And yet it is the great imposter, Lucifer, as always deceiving the ones not grounded in the Word of truth. Try to imagine the founders of false religions such as Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius and others apparently "coming back to life," and joining the chorus of leaders promoting the universal day of worship, Sunday.

This will be the strong delusion, the almost overwhelming, irresistible test, which will try the hearts and souls of men. Nearly all will join together in the worship of the being claiming to be Christ. What if this glorious being approached you and said, "Why are you resisting?" What if someone who looked exactly like a deceased relative begged you in "love" saying, "Don't stand in the way of the "gospel."

Opposing this movement will be a relatively small group who hold to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. On the basis of Scripture they reject the Sunday Sabbath and maintain that the seventh day is the only day God has sanctioned. To be a part of this group, one must be willing, in the words of Martin Luther, to "let goods and kindred go; this mortal life also." To stand firm in that day will require a faith that has been tested, tried and made pure as gold. It will require a life-view, a way of thinking that subscribes 100% to God's plan for this planet. It will require a way of thinking that puts God's honor first and foremost; that considers the vindication of His name to be worth more than bank account, house, family or life. It will require the type of faith that was shown in Daniel's house that day.

Are these things in the far distant future? Will the world wait more generations until Jesus fulfills His promise to return? I don't think so. It is true that the readiness of His people, the spiritual condition of His bride is the single most important factor in His coming. You don't send the combine over a field if there's only a stalk or two ready to harvest. And yet we sense that we are now living in a time when things in this world could come together for the final movements to be fulfilled rapidly. I am not a prophet, but consider how fragile the world is in the political arena. What will happen in Egypt? What will happen if many countries in the middle east fall under the sway of radical Islam? How far away is Iran from obtaining nuclear power? Truly, we should be praying "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

A law was passed back in Daniel's day that put his life in jeopardy. He hesitated not for a moment. And God put forth His mighty hand and preserved the life of his saint. Do we have Daniel's faith? Are we ready to let this world go? Are we living in a way that is above reproach so that in order to

discredit us, a law would have to be made up against our religion to make us law-breakers? Have we placed everything in God's hands so that no matter what would happen we would choose to obey Him rather than man? Is our love and appreciation for Christ so strong that we would rather die than disobey Him? Have you been to Daniel's house?