

The Book of Daniel #4

by: Ronald L. Dart

What was it about Daniel, through at least three major administrative changes in Babylon, he kept coming out on top. Now for the believer it makes perfect sense, God gave Daniel and his companions favor through these hard and dangerous times, for His own purposes, but you have to wonder what does this look like from the perspective of King Darius, the latest King, Daniel had to deal with?

Daniel Had An Excellent Spirit

You'll find the story set in Daniel six, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a 120 princes that were over the whole kingdom, {2} And over these he had three presidents of whom Daniel was the first." He was number one. Why? Well, he was {3} "preferred above all the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him," to quote Daniel, "the King thought to set him over the whole realm." So he wanted to give him everything because he had what he called an excellent spirit.

Now from Darius' point of view, the Jewish people were smart and they had great common sense, they made wise decisions and he could depend on them, when the Jews decided something, it worked.

Decisions Within the Framework of the Law of God

What Darius had no way of knowing was, that the Jews in his newly conquered kingdom, made their decisions within the framework of the Law of God. Now this is more important than most people realize. Most of us make our life's decisions based on what feels good, what looks safe, what we think will work at the moment. We do this because we have no overriding framework into which we can put the things we know and out of which we can make decisions. That can leave us all over the landscape in our decisions. We have no standards, no consistency, we can be for something today and against it tomorrow and not have the least idea of why we are that way.

Now Daniel and the Hebrew children had been brought up with the Law of God, and it formed the framework for all of life's decisions. The biggest thing about this is, the system works!

As the psalmist said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105). It helps you to see in those dark places so you don't fall down and hurt yourself and there are a lot of dark places in this world.

I think this explains a lot about the Jews scattered throughout the world. They have a very long history of the study of divine Law and they have accumulated a lot of wisdom to go along with it and it all fits within the framework, through which they are able to view the world, evaluate questions, look at the hard decisions, and make decisions based upon reason, and with a framework in which they can place them, so that, life makes sense.

Politics Follows Power

So Daniel and his companions rose to great power in Babylon, and as naturally as day follows night, politics follows power, because the other princes, the other presidents were jealous of Daniel and they began to look for an occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. They couldn't find anything. They couldn't point to any issues and couldn't come up with anything to fault the man. He had been faithful and there wasn't any error or fault found in him. They didn't catch him in the back room somewhere with an intern. They found him faithful all the way up and down the kingdom.

Then these men said, in Daniel 6 and verse 5, "We are not going to find anything against Daniel except we would find it against him concerning the law of his God." Because they knew that was the one thing about Daniel that was absolutely changeless, so they thought it over, and went to the King and they said to him, {6} "King Darius, live forever! {7} All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counselors, and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for 30 days, except of you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions." This would be a violent end for some poor fellow. Now you would've thought that Darius would've tumbled to the fact that something's going on here, but he didn't. I guess its because it really made an appeal to his royal vanity and Darius pondered, "Well that's good, nobody should be asking a petition of any god or man except of me. Why for 30 days? Well, I don't know."

Darius Got Snookered

Continuing in Daniel 6 and verse 8, they said, "Now O King, establish the decree, sign the writing, so it can not be changed according to the law of the Medes and the Persians which alters not." Once they put something in writing, it could not be changed. You know, kings have to depend heavily on advisors, they can't know everything, they can't be everywhere but Darius got snookered here and he came to know it, although it took a little while for him to realize what had happened.

Daniel Prayed 3 Times a Day

So King Darius, (Daniel 6:9) "signed the writing and he signed the decree. {10} Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he carried on like he had before. He went into his house, with his windows being opened toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did before." For Daniel, his

faith ruled everything. I'm not even sure this took a lot of courage for Daniel. It was automatic. In a way it was not even defiant because he didn't have to open his windows for God to hear him, but he opened them anyway.

When his {11} "enemies assembled, they found Daniel praying and making supplications to his God and {12} so they approached the King and they spoke concerning the King's decree. "Have you not signed a decree that every man who shall ask a petition of any god or man within 30 days, save of you O King, should be cast into the den of Lions?" You see, one of the things they were appealing to here was that everything had to come to Darius, that he was to have full control, it was an appeal to his vanity in one way and an appeal to his power in another.

"The King answered and said, "Yes that's true. I signed that and it can't be changed." {13} Then they said, "Well, Daniel who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, Daniel the Jew, regards you not, O King, nor the decree which you have signed, but he keeps right on making his petition three times a day." They had Darius and he knew it. The sad thing about it was, I think they may have thought somehow or other that they would actually send him through the roof with anger over this but it didn't. {14} He was angry but he was angry with himself. "How," he thought, "could I have been so stupid." He tried his best to deliver Daniel and he labored till sundown to do so." Only then did he realize what these power mongers had pulled on him. But he couldn't get it changed.

Daniel Cast Into the Lion's Den

So finally in Daniel 6 and verse 15, "These men who were assembled before the King said to him, "You know the law of the Medes and Persians, you know that no decree or statute the King establishes may be changed, not even by the King, so {16} he commanded and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the King spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." {17} They put Daniel in the den, and 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 signet of his lords, so the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel."

Verse 18, "The King went away to his palace, and spent the night fasting. He never ate anything and didn't allow any of his musical instrumentalists to be brought in before him. He didn't get a wink of sleep all night long, then {19} very early in the morning, he hurried down to the den of lions {20} And when we came to the den, he cried with the lamentable voice, a pitiful voice, unto Daniel and he said, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, Is your God whom you serve continually able to deliver you from the lions?" {22} Daniel called to the King, "O King, live forever, my God has sent His Angel and has shut the lions mouths, they have not hurt me, forasmuch as before Him innocence was found in me, and also before you, O King, have I done no hurt." {23} The King was elated, he commanded to take Daniel up out of the den, so it was that no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed in his God."

You know, I've heard people talk about a place of safety where God can take away all of His people and protect them from bad things that can happen. For Daniel, his place of safety was in the lions' den. No one was going to bother him there. No enemy could have come down and stabbed him in his sleep. Nobody could do anything bad to him. I like to think of Daniel sound asleep with his cats, while Darius tossed and turned all night long.

The Tables Are Turned

Let's continue in Daniel 6. The upshot of all this was that {24} "The King commanded and they brought all of those men who accused Daniel, they cast them into the den of lions, with their children and their wives, and the lions had the mastery of them, and broke all of their bones in pieces before they ever got to the bottom of the den." I have a feeling that Darius took a certain amount of relish in that, who knows, he may not have liked these guys anyway.

Then, {25} "King Darius wrote to all of the people, nations, languages that dwell in all the earth, "Peace be multiplied to you, {26} I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, steadfast forever and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed, His dominion shall be even unto the end. {27} He delivers, He rescues, He works signs and wonders in heaven and earth, and He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." All that from King Darius. {28} "So Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

Daniel's Dream Was a Nightmare

What follows in chapter 7 of the book of Daniel is rather more difficult. It is the description of a dream and this dream came directly to Daniel. In a way it is better described as a nightmare. You're going to have to follow this complicated vision very carefully.

Daniel seven and verse one, "In the first year of Belshazzar King of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed, then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters." Now the dream that follows is a further development of the dream of chapter 2, which developed from Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four succeeding empires, kingdoms that rule the entire world, or at least the civilized parts of the world. These empires may even have been encouraged by God to create order out of what would otherwise have been chaos. These four empires would stretch across all of human history from Babylon to the very end, to the Kingdom of God. They're not hard to identify with hindsight

Daniel spoke in verse two, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea." It was a great storm. It's a picture of the chaos the kingdoms of the world had before Babylon came along and conquered them.

Now comes Daniel's nightmarish dream, {3} "Four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. Each of the kingdoms was dramatically different from the others, although in the end, they all served the same purpose in God's plan, maintaining order.

Now verse 4, "The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings and I watched until the wings were plucked and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand up on his feet like a man and a man's heart was given to it." This compares to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, and what shall we call it, the semi-conversion of Nebuchadnezzar after his years of insanity.

Verse 5, "Behold another beast, a second like a bear, and it raised itself up on one side and it had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it, and they said to it "Arise, devour much flesh."" With hindsight, this has to be the Medo Persian Empire that conquered Babylon, not very long after this dream. The Medes had conquered three other petty empires before coming to Babylon and I suppose they were still digesting them when they took over the great kingdom of Babylon.

"After this," verse 6, Daniel says, "I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard which had on the back of it four wings of a fowl, the beast also had four heads and dominion was given to it." Using our 2020 hindsight again, we see Alexander the Great, and the four generals who ruled the four divisions of his empire after his death.

Now verse 7, "After this I saw in the night vision, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful, terrible, strong exceedingly, it had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it. It was different from all the beasts that were before it and it had 10 horns." The iron corresponds well with the iron of chapter 2 and universally is understood to be the Roman Empire and it's irresistible to compare the 10 horns we find here to the ten toes of the great image of chapter 2.

The Roman Empire

So we see the fourth beast, as the Roman Empire, and somehow very near the time of the end, it has 10 divisions, all still a part of the same whole. Now what makes all this so hard is, the prophecies take this fourth Empire all the way to the Kingdom of God at the end. But, if you know any history at all, you know that Rome fell, and a lot of people assume that that's the end of that. However, if you know anything at all about European history, you'll be aware of the persistence of the idea of Rome which dominated Europe down through the ages, that it was still a Roman Empire long after the fall of the city of Rome.

Many people probably don't realize that Hitler saw his third Reich as a continuation of the Roman Empire. Most people never ask, if it was the third Reich, what was the first and the second?

Hitler's rule was loaded with the symbols of Rome, all the way to and including the swastika. I was browsing one day in the Roman section of the British Museum, looking at a silver

silver serving tray that dated back to the time of Roman influence. And right in the center of this silver serving tray was a small swastika. It made the hair stand up on my neck.

But now, there's something new in this vision, something that is not in that first vision from chapter 2. In Daniel 7 and in verse eight, Daniel says, "I considered the horns, and look, there came up among them another little horn, before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots and behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

Icons and the Antichrist

Now, once again, I want to remind you that we are encountering icons again and again in Daniel. We're all familiar with icons these days, from our computer screens, where we have learned that the little icon that looks like a printer, if we click on that, we print the document that were working with. I counted once and I think I had 40 some icons visible on my computer screen at one time.

Well, what you have in a horn is an icon referring to a ruler. So here is a kingdom with 10 rulers, one of whom becomes dominant and because he has this mouth speaking great things, the presumption of many commentators is, that he is a strong and a very arrogant person. He is so powerful that he's able to destroy three of the others and dominate the remainder. The way this is worded, these rulers are almost certainly contemporary with one another, although there is some disagreement on that among the commentaries.

As you follow these ideas through the New Testament writers, it's hard to avoid a comparison with the 'Antichrist' or 'the man of sin' described by Paul in second Thessalonians.

God and His Throne

"Daniel watched (Daniel 7:9) until the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, the hair of His head was like pure wool, His throne was like a fiery flame, His wheels as a burning fire." Now there is a difference in translations here. The King James version seems to say that Daniel watched until these thrones of the 10 Kings were cast down, but nearly everyone else translates this differently. Here's how the N.I.V. puts it, "I looked and thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of days took His seat, His clothing was white as snow, the hair of His head was white like wool, His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze, a fiery stream issued and came forth before Him, thousand and thousands ministered unto Him, and 10,000×10,000 stood before Him. The judgment was set and the books were opened." And this is an aspect of God that makes a lot of people uncomfortable, but since God doesn't seem to be overly concerned with our comfort, perhaps we had better just learn to live with it.

God is not only merciful, kind and forgiving, He is also just and justice demands that some crimes cannot go unpunished.

The Horn Was Speaking

Daniel kept watching because he was fascinated with the words which this horn was speaking with this great mouth of his. In Daniel 7 and verse 11, he said. "I watched even until the beast was killed and his body was destroyed, and given to the burning flame." This great arrogant one who comes to dominate, becomes so obnoxious in God's eyes that he has to be dealt with. The image of Hitler comes to mind, although I wouldn't go so far as to say he was the man but he does serve nicely as an icon of one speaking great words who has set himself up as a destroyer and a beast.

This great arrogant one is destroyed in the river of fire that proceeds from the throne of the Ancient of days, called a 'lake of fire' in Revelation.

Return of Jesus Christ

Daniel seven and verse 12, "The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but they were allowed to live for a period of time. {13} Now I saw in the night, visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him."

Now, almost any Christian would look at that and think, "Okay, here is the Ancient of days which is God the Father, and the Son of Man is Jesus."

"He's being brought before the Father, {14} "And there was given to Him dominion, and glory and the kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve Him, His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom which shall not be destroyed."

This ties up that last connection with Daniel chapter 2, because in chapter 2 of Daniel and verse 44, it says, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom, which will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to other people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but in itself will endure forever." This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of the mountain but not by human hands. The rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, the gold, the whole image into pieces. The great God has shown the King what will take place in the future. The dream is true, the interpretation is trustworthy.

It comes ringing back down through the ages, even in Handel's Messiah, "The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ". So we have come to the return of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Daniel Wanted to Know

But there is still so much that we don't know. Daniel didn't know either. He said in Daniel 7 and verse 15, "I was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. {16} And I came near to one of them that stood by, and asked him, what is the truth of all this? So he told me and he made me to know the interpretation of these things. {17} These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. {18} But the Saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

Daniel was still not satisfied and he said, {19} "I still want to know the truth of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, who was so dreadful, whose teeth were iron, his nails of brass, which devoured, and broke into pieces and stamped everything with his feet. {20} I want to know about the 10 horns that were on his head, and of the other one that came up before whom three fell. I want to know about the horn that had the eyes and the mouth that spoke great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. {21} I beheld, Daniel says, and the same horn made war with the Saints, and prevailed against the Saints until the Ancient of days came and judgment was given to the Saints of the Most High and the time came when the Saints possessed the Kingdom."

Daniel said, "I saw all these things, and I want to know what it means."

So in verse 22, "The angel answered and said, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth, which shall be different from all the rest, and it shall devour the whole earth and tread it down and break it in pieces. {24} and out of this kingdom are 10 kings that shall arise, and another shall arise after them and shall be different from the first, and he will subdue three kings. {25} He will speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the Saints of the Most High, he will think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times and half a time." What this suggests to many is a 3 1/2 year persecution of Christians, the Saints, the holy people, by this evil King.

But, in the end, {26} "The court shall be seated, and they will take away his dominion, to consume it and destroy it unto the end. {27} And the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey Him. {28} This is the end of the matter, as for me Daniel, my cogitations which troubled me and my countenance changed in me, but I kept the matter in my heart."

Now there is no way of giving a certain interpretation of this as we come down toward the time of the end. But one might be led to expect that somewhere, somehow, in Europe there might arise 10 kings or something that can be called kings, with one great dominant personality, one evil personality, who actually persecutes the people of God. Perhaps an Antichrist, perhaps a 'man of sin.'

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