

Punishment And Reward

Daniel 6:24-28

INTRODUCTION

The King will order Daniel's accuser's punished (v.24). The same king will order Daniel's God honored (vv.25-28).

For Daniel the morning brought deliverance (v.23) For his accusers the morning brought judgment (v.24).

And why was Daniel delivered? “. . .because he believed his God” (v.23).

How will the accuser's of Daniel be punished? They will be thrown into the very same lion's den and be instantly torn apart. Darius then publishes an executive order; all people in his kingdom should show the proper respect and reverence for Daniel's God.

Why does the king issue the command (v.24) and the decree (vv.25-26)? Because of the misery that the kings' subjects brought on Daniel (vv.16-17); and the miracle he witnessed (vv.19-23).

The King really has two messages; one to his servants (v.24) and one to his subjects (vv.25-28).

The King's Execution Order (v.24)

Daniel 6:24 (NKJV)24And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, 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.

The same law that brought Daniel to the lion's den would bring Daniel's accusers to the place of punishment.

The first thing I would have you notice is that Daniel was supernaturally preserved in the place of certain death and Daniel's accusers are miserably destroyed in that very same place.

The obvious application is the events that will take place at the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some of God's elect will be supernaturally preserved in the time of tribulation. Those who exercised the role of accuser and persecutor to the saints will be punished.

In the end there will be a faithful remnant who refused to receive the mark of the Beast or worship the Beast.

“The wicked destiny they had planned for Daniel would become their own destiny” (Ron Rhodes; p.167).

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What does your enemy have planned for you? God's plan for your enemy is far worse.

The Greek historian Herodotus tells us that executing an entire family for the crimes of one person was common among the ancient Persians (see *Histories*, 3.119; cited by Ron Rhodes p. 168). Darius orders the men, their wives and their children be cast into the den. The king does not want anyone left alive who might foment division, rebellion or further manipulate his royal majesty.

Did Persian law reflect God's law or even God's heart for justice? Not always.

Hosea 8:7: "They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

Warren Wiersbe: "*How tragic that their innocent children had to suffer; however, such are the awful penalties of sin. We believe that the children under the age of accountability went to be with the Lord. God always vindicates His own. "The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead" (Proverbs 11:8, NKJV)(Wiersbe's Outlines of the Old Testament; p. 571).*

What do you believe about punishment?

The atheist Nietzsche famously said; "Distrust all in which the impulse to punish is powerful."

He hated God. Clearly he hated the God who would punish human beings for their sin and rebellion.

What does the Bible teach about punishment?

The first mention of punishment takes place in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 (vv.1-24). Adam and Eve disobeyed God. God does not allow sin to go unchecked or unpunished. If the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin seems extreme—remember their sin sets in motion all human rebellion. Every human being with the exception of Jesus Christ is born with a sinful nature (Romans 5:12-21). Adam and Eve's punishment gives us our first glimpse at how serious God views sin and its consequences.

In principle we see punishment as a consequence of sin. Punishment is inevitable. The soul that sins shall surely die. But punishment also refines character. The Psalmist cries; "O Lord, don't punish me while you are angry" (38:1 TLB).

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6).

We punish people for what they do. God punishes based on what we are.

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In Numbers 32:23 we read; “If you do not keep your promise, I warn you that you will be sinning against the Lord. Make no mistake about it; you will be punished for your sin” (GNB).

And there’s the rub. Many people don’t believe God will punish sin. We know human beings are capable of rendering judgment and pronouncing punishments that are excessive or inconsistent. But God knows.

We want God to punish people based on what they do. We want God to punish us based on what we meant! “God knows I am not a bad person or a mean person or an evil person.”

Imagine what happens when they read 2 Thessalonians 1:9; “These (who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus) will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

How do I obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus? Believe Him.

Oswald Chambers wrote; “I am not judged by the light I have, but by the light I have refused to accept.”

Too late. You know. God will be glorified in the punishment of sin as well as the reward of obedience.

George MacDonald; “No man is condemned for anything he has done; he is condemned for continuing to do wrong. He is condemned for not coming out of the darkness, for not coming to the light.”

The King’s Executive Order (vv.25-28)

25Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

26I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. 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.

27He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

28So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

This last sentence (v.28) can be translated; ‘the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus.’ This is very similar to 1 Chronicles 5:26: “Pul king of Assyria, that is Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria.”

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Kings in the ancient Near East often had more than one “throne name”—and here Persian—since Cyrus took over the Median Empire and had a Median mother, he could also be called “the Mede or even king of the Medes” (see note: 6:28—*NKJV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible p.1485*).

The Executive Order is addressed to all the king’s subjects no exceptions. He expresses the desire for peace. The king calls on his subjects to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. Why? Because He is alive and secure and eternal. He is invincible and His kingdom is without measure or end. **Who but the living and eternal God could have preserved Daniel in that den? (v.27).**

King Darius did not have the power to save Daniel from the lion’s den. But God did have the power to save Daniel. The king testifies; he delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth (v.27). **Does this mean the king converted to belief and trust in Daniel’s God?** Not really. Confession isn’t always conversion. But it is obvious what Daniel believed about God and what God did for Daniel left a lasting impression on the Gentile king.

What was God’s purpose for Daniel? Daniel was everything God hoped for the nation Israel! A person who would separate himself from sin and consecrate himself to God!

Daniel was to serve as a witness to the Gentiles! Daniel was supposed to cause the Gentiles to ask the questions; what kind of God is Daniel’s God? Israel had failed. They had fallen into gross idolatry and disobedience. God judged the nation and sent them into captivity but refused to leave Himself without a witness and a testimony. God raised up Daniel and his friends to serve as a powerful testimony to God’s plans and purposes in the world.

The enemies of Daniel wanted to kill him. Their hope was that with his death would also come the end of his testimony. **But God had other plans. God planned to preserve the testimony of Daniel and the prophecies of Daniel!**

What can we learn about our own purpose? We are to be everything Jesus hopes for!

And what pray tell is that?

Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 11:1) “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Titus 2:7; “In everything set them an example by doing what is good”.

“A pint of example is worth a gallon of advice.” A good example is the best sermon. And there is no greater example of love and humility than in our Lord Jesus and the cross of Calvary.

The order provides us with at least some understanding of Daniel’s ordeal. Why would God allow Daniel to go through such a horrible trial? Why does God permit you to go through trials?

The answer in the broadest terms possible goes to the issue of promoting God’s glory.

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In 1 Peter 3:10-17 provides a glimpse into the sometimes secret and invisible world of private struggle and suffering. Peter addresses the issues of godly living in the home and church. He cites the Psalms (34:12-15) *“He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. 11Let him turn from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

Peter asks the question facing women in abusive relationships: “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” (v.13). The answer—he could—he could still harm me and abuse me! Peter’s response; “But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled”. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (vv.14-15).

What does this have to do with our study in Daniel? When Christians overcome trial, testing, temptations we glorify the Lord. Angels and demons are always watching.

But sometimes our trial becomes someone else’s freedom.

“We are not only to renounce evil, but to manifest the truth. We tell people the world is vain; let our lives manifest that it is so. We tell them that our home is above and that all these things are transitory. Does our dwelling look like it? O to live consistent lives!”(James Hudson Taylor).

Countless God honoring Jews in captivity would be given a brief respite from overt persecution. Why? Because of the witness and testimony of Daniel.

Permission to worship the God of Abraham and Moses and David was granted. The synagogue system would take root in the place of captivity and a group of leaders who would call themselves Pharisee would emerge.

Persecution and molestation would be briefly halted. Daniel along with the rest of the Jews would prosper in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus the Persian (v.28).

But it would not last. In the book of Esther hatred for the Jews reemerge with a genocidal fervor.

Conclusion

Daniel would eventually die and enter into God’s reward. But not in chapter 6. God had unfinished business with Daniel. His powerful testimony and God’s prophecies would need to

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be recorded for the ages. **The man or woman of God, in the will of God and the Word of God, is immortal until his or her work is done. Daniel was such a man. God preserved him to finish His plan.**

Thank God Daniel survived the lion's den. Thank God we have the record of chapters 7-12. It is prophetic and apocalyptic. And like the book of Ezekiel it uses highly symbolic language to describe the unfolding Gentile kingdoms; the rise of persecution and the coming of the Messiah. The visions are in chronological order a vision of four beasts representing four empires; Babylon (lion); Medo-Persia (bear); Greece (leopard) and Rome (terrifying beast). The last is destroyed as 'one like the son of man' is given universal authority by the Ancient of Days (chapter 7). Fast forward to the last chapter (12) and 'the end of time' and clear promise to Daniel of his future resurrection when that time comes.

Our adventure with Daniel is not over. Daniel will give further testimony and prophecy. Won't you join us?

There is an old gospel hymn written by P.B. Bliss,

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known.