

PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. John 15:20

IN A LION'S DEN

Daniel in the Lion's Den is one of the most widely recognised stories in all the Bible. It's a story marked by jealousy, scheming, faithfulness, prayer, deceit, innocence, vindication, and honour. Yet could this popular children's classic bear more weight than its readers once thought? Could this story contain the very undercurrents of the greatest classic ever given to man? Echoing the order of themes listed above, and supported by evidence from *Prophets and Kings* and *The Desire of Ages*, this comparative study seeks to explore the undeniable parallels between Daniel chapter 6 and the events leading Christ to Joseph's tomb.

The story begins with King Darius, whose innocent act spurs the source of conflict from the opening verse: "it pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes...And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first..." Daniel 6:1-2.

Jealousy

For the "excellent spirit [which] was in him," Daniel was placed second-in-rank to the nation's King. Vs 3. As Sister White explains, "the honours bestowed upon Daniel excited the jealousy of the leading men of the kingdom", and it was for this reason that "they sought for occasion of complaint against him." {PK 539} Ultimately, it was this initial coveting act which led to the the princes and presidents' attempted murder, and consequently, their fatal demise.

Without doubt, this foremost recalls the jealousy of Lucifer in heaven, and secondly that of the Jewish leaders on Earth. Although "thou shalt not covet" is the final commandment, it was the first to be broken. While mysterious in its nature, the inception of iniquity concerned one who coveted the honour and position of the Son of God; the second-in-rank to the King of Kings. And it was this very spirit of Satan which manifested itself in the Jews on Earth, "for he knew that for envy they had delivered him." Matthew 27:18. To this end, the jealousy of the leading men of Babylon finds its direct counterpart in the jealousy of the Jewish leaders toward Christ. A sin which - left unchecked - was to spiral continuously downwards in the path of its leader.

Scheming

Following their secret assessment of Daniel, the princes and presidents united to assert: "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Vs 5. Like Christ, who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22), these men "could find [in Daniel] none occasion nor fault forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him". Vs 4. With this in mind, "the prophet's enemies counted on Daniel's firm adherence to principle for the success of their plan". {PK 539}

The very same strategy was enacted with Christ. Jesus' unwavering sense of princi-



ple served as an agent by which the Jews thought to condemn Him. In many instances - such as in the payment of the tribute to Caesar - it appeared that no response could free Him from the damnation of the Jews (according to their interpretation of the law). However, as with the prophet Daniel, every attempt to find "occasion against" Christ "concerning the law of His God", left His accusers condemned, whilst Jesus was vindicated and even more greatly revered amongst the crowds.

In spite of this, the Jews continued in their plot for the death of the Messiah and "the presidents and princes...devised a scheme whereby they hoped to accomplish the prophet's destruction". {PK 540} Yet neither the Jews nor the princes foresaw that their victim was to be saved. Both Daniel and Christ arose from the darkness of their caves. And in the place of these innocent victims, the accusers' own heads were laid.

Faithfulness

The decree was established and could not be changed. Drawing on the pride and vanity of the King, the princes passed their sinful law: "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." Vs 7.

Now, like in times before, Daniel was faithful. "He quickly read their malignant purpose in framing the decree, but he did not change his course in a single particular." {PK 541} Rather, he continued to pray, committing himself to the will of his God regardless of the cost. "Although he knew full well the consequences of his fidelity to God, his spirit faltered not." {PK 541}

As a lamb led to the slaughter, Jesus too foresaw the course He was to take. And at each step, He accepted His lot. With no compromise to principle, Christ walked on. Though He could have loosed Himself from the pain of the cross, He committed Himself to His Father's will, "to save man at any cost to Himself". {DA 693}

Prayer

In Daniel's uncompromising dedication to prayer, the princes and presidents observed their golden

chance. Certainly, they were not to be disappointed. "Three times they saw him go to his chamber, and three times they heard his voice lifted in earnest intercession to God." {PK 542}

Interestingly, Christ also prayed three times on the night of his arrest. The record declares: "and he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Matthew 26:44. Each of these three prayers were especially vital for the restoration of Jesus' faith, and His recommitment to His Father's will. Perhaps it was also Daniel's "earnest intercession to God" which invigorated his faith, and kept him safe from the mouths of the lions. For as John declares: "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". 1 John 5:4.

Deceit

Integral to the completion of the princes' plan however, was the compliance of the monarch. For this accomplishment, any manipulative or deceitful guise was to be employed. Howbeit, "when the monarch heard these words, [condemning Daniel to the den of lions] he saw at once the snare that had been set for his faithful servant. He saw that it was... jealousy against Daniel, that had led to the proposal for a royal decree." {PK 543}

In Pilate's judgement hall, we find a similar scene. Under great distress, the monarch was made to meet the goals of the Jews. Yet the heathen ruler "saw through their purpose....He knew that the Jews had accused Him through hatred and prejudice." {DA 726-727}

Nevertheless, the monarchs gave in. King Darius submitting to the law of the Medes and Persians, and Pilate submitting to the law of the Jews.

Innocency

For his uncompromising faith, Daniel was cast into - what could only be seen as - the grave. Moreover, to secure his death, "a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords". Vs 17.

At this point, King Darius was greatly troubled. He could not sleep. Hence, at the light of morning, the

king rushed out to discover the fate of his beloved friend. With great faith he called out: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Vs 20. Certainly, Daniel had been the Lord's servant continually. He had placed himself in the Lord's hands, and acknowledged that his life was saved because "before Him innocency was found in me". Vs 22.

In a most similar way, it was the innocency of Christ's life which allowed Him to be saved from death and the grave. Though a "great stone to the door of the sepulchre" (Matthew 27:60) had been laid, and all human hope escaped, Christ rose forth on the third day. And at the first light of morning, the news was proclaimed. For "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [He] condemned sin in the flesh", "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

To further emphasise the immense significance of Jesus' innocency, Sister White states: "could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed." {DA 761} Rather, it was by His victory and spotless life, that Christ bade us the promise: "the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

Vindication

Thus, in accordance with this promise (as a wage for their sins) "the king...brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them." Vs 24.

And what was the fate of the Jews?

"Looking upon the smitten Lamb of God, the Jews had cried, 'His blood be on us, and on our children...' That prayer was heard. The blood of the Son of God was upon their children and their children's children, a perpetual curse." {DA 739}

In the destruction of Jerusalem, and in the lion's den, the Lord's accusers met their temporal end. For both parties had rejected their only saving grace, and thus they were bound to a tomb from which they could not be saved. In rejecting Christ and His

prophet Daniel, the Babylonians and the Jews had had disavowed themselves from the sacrifice made to take their place. Without Christ, each was to personally pay.

Yet by this act, a most precious lesson was gained. As "the wicked opposition to God's servant was now completely broken...these heathen monarchs were constrained to acknowledge his God as 'the living God, and stedfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'" {PK 545}

Honour

It was for this glorious end, that "God did not prevent Daniel's enemies from casting him into the lions dens...that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked... Satan was to be defeated, and the name of God was to be exalted and honoured." {PK 543}

This same cause was later repeated in the garden of Gethsemane. Here, Jesus was assured that "His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High." {DA 693} By subjecting Himself - a sinless being - to the heart of the Earth, then rising up again to life, the Father's name was to be restored throughout all the heavens. In Christ's death and resurrection, the one "living God" was to be glorified and honoured forever.

Ultimately, in examining the clear parallels between Daniel chapter 6 and the gospel of Christ's life, we find a most pertinent reminder that such events are to happen again. Whether we shall be saved from the torture of the lions, or made to endure all pain for the glory of the faith, is yet unknown. Though this we do know: that laws will be changed. Our allegiance to God as King will be challenged. And we'll be made subject to jealousy, scheming, and deceit by our own men. What will be our saving grace then? Let us look to the Lord Jesus and the prophet Daniel. For their story declares that those who remain true in all faithfulness, prayer, and innocency, will also be partakers of His vindication and honour.