

## Daniel 6

### *Daniel's Six Kings*

Daniel is one of the most amazing people in the Bible. He was carried away from his native Israel by King Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., probably while he was still a teenager. He spent the rest of his life in Babylon and he seems to have lived to a ripe old age.

Daniel actually outlived the Babylonian Empire, and he was present throughout the duration of the captivity of the Jewish people. It was no doubt largely due to his prayers that the captivity came to an end.

After that, he lived on, advising and rebuking kings, and serving as a high government official. What a full and exciting life Daniel lived!

Daniel became a legend in his own time. Ezekiel, who was brought to Babylon just a few years after Daniel, mentions him with an almost holy reverence, and places him in the company of men like Noah and Job (Ezek. 14:14 & 20).

It is also interesting that when Christ later came to earth he referred to Daniel's prophecies for some of his key teachings regarding the end-days (cf. Mt. 24:15).

The early church father and Bible scholar, Jerome, states: "none of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as this prophet Daniel."

Daniel was not only a patriot, statesman, and prophet, but he was an interpreter of dreams and a seer of visions. God talked to him and on several occasions angels appeared to him. Because of his vision and understanding of the times he was able to interpret God's word to the pagan kingdoms of Babylonia and Persia. He was also able to receive God's revelation for those who are interested in searching it out even in our own day.

Daniel most likely lived under 6 monarchs. 2 Jewish kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah when he was a younger boy and four foreign kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede, and the Persian conqueror, Cyrus the Great, serving the last four rulers with great success.

During the reign of Cyrus, Daniel probably had a great influence in the decree which put an end to the Jewish Captivity (BC 536).

We read in Daniel 6:28, “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

I am intrigued and fascinated by these six kings which all reigned at different times during the lifetime of Daniel. We can learn so much from the failures and successes of leaders in the past. I would like to preach a series on these six kings, examining important events in their reigns that helped shape world history. The title of the series is simply, **Daniel’s Six Kings**: and I would like start by focusing this evening on **The Folly of King Darius**.

Darius is mentioned in the *Book of Daniel*, and is identified as Darius the Mede. He began ruling when he was 62 years old (chapter 5, verse 31), and was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans (chapter 9, verse 1).

Because of the sheer size of Darius’s new empire, he chose 120 governors to be his advisers (chapter 6:1).

The king then chose three men to be leaders over the 120 governors. Daniel was chosen as one of the big three! (chapter 6:2)

King Darius noticed Daniel's faithfulness and how he was different from the other governors. Because Daniel was wise and could be trusted to do what was right, Darius wanted to put Daniel in charge of all the leaders and governors of his kingdom. When the leaders heard about it, they were angry.

They devised an evil plan to destroy Daniel by striking at the very heart of his devotion to the Lord. The royal advisers proposed that the king make a decree, "For 30 days no one shall pray to anyone-god or man-except to Darius. And, if anyone does, he shall be thrown into the den of lions! Write this law and sign it, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed."

The king was delighted by their proposal, and he foolishly signed the decree into law!

Daniel soon learned about the new law, which he knew could never be changed. Daniel knew what he must do.

The Bible says he went into his house where his windows opened toward Jerusalem and kneeled three times a day to pray and give thanks to his God as he did before.

Just as they had hoped for, the scheming governors caught Daniel breaking the law by praying to his God! They rushed to tell King Darius!

The news from the sly governors saddened King Darius. The law had to be enforced by sundown. There was no way of escape for Daniel.

King Darius, very reluctantly, ordered that Daniel be thrown into the den of lions.

The folly of King Darius has important lessons for us all to learn. Let me suggest that the king was foolish in three different ways.

## 1. He believed he was a god.

We read in Daniel 6:7, “All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, 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.”

Probably to flatter the ambition of the king, the governors made the king a god for thirty days, so that the whole empire should make prayer and supplication to him, and pay him Divine honors! This was the bait: You will be god!

Isn't this the same bait that the serpent used to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden?

We read in Genesis 3:4-5 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The object of the tempter appears to have been this: to persuade our first parents that they should, by eating of this fruit, become wise and powerful as God, and be able to exist for ever, independently of him.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) wrote, "Pride is the commencement of all sin because it was this which overthrew the devil, from whom arose the origin of sin; and afterwards, when his malice and envy pursued man, who was yet standing in his uprightness, it subverted him in the same way in which he himself fell. For the serpent, in fact, only sought for the door of pride whereby to enter when he said, 'Ye shall be as gods.'"

The sin of pride is a preoccupation with self. Pride is all about "me, myself, and I."

We read of Lucifer's fall in Isaiah 14:12-15, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Satan's enmity against God began with "I". And so it is with us. If you are preoccupied with yourself, you are suffering from the sin of pride.

Martin Luther observed, "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, Self."

We see in the heart of King Darius that his vanity and pride blinded him to its unreasonableness and wickedness.

The folly of King Darius was that he thought he was a god.

Is Christ God or are you god? Do you pray, "Not my will but thy will be done?" Who really rules your life? Christ or you?

## **2. Besides thinking he was a god, King Darius did not think through the consequences of his actions.**

We read in Daniel 6:9, “Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.”

We should consider well the consequences of a proposed measure before we give our assent to it.

Spurgeon writes, “King Darius signed the writing and decree little dreaming what he had thereby done. It is wise to consider a long time before we set our hands to any writing, otherwise we may soon sign away the inheritance of our children.”

By signing such a decree, King Darius had unknowingly sentenced his most loyal government servant, Daniel, to death.

Illustration/Honda Prelude

Today there is unprecedented financial debt, alarming divorce rates, and serious addictions of all kinds. These are indicators that people are not thinking through the consequences of their sins.

Someone once said, “Sin will take you further than you want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay.”

King Darius did not think through the consequences of his actions.

Have you ever thought about the consequences of not trusting in Jesus Christ? Where your sin will lead you?

Don't be foolish like King Darius. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and He will save you from sin.

### **3. The folly of King Darius led him to regret what he had done.**

We read in Daniel 6:14, “Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.”

Through his excessive folly he passed a law that, if thought through to the end, would have been a disgrace almost to an idiot.

When he realized what he had done, Darius strove by every means to get the law annulled. He had no doubt spoken to several of his lords in private, and had gone from one to another till the going down of the sun.

King Darius must have thought, “If I could only go back in time and make the wrong right! If I could only go back and change what I did!”

We read in the New Testament of another ruler, King Herod, who acted foolishly to his own regret:

Matthew 14:7-9, “Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. *And the king was sorry*: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.”

*And the king was sorry.* There might have been several reasons for this:

(1.) Herod had a high respect for John, and feared him. He knew that he was a holy man, and had regarded him with respect and admiration. He had done some things in obedience to John's precepts, according to Mark 6:20.

(2.) John was in high repute among the people, and Herod might have been afraid that his murder might excite commotion.

(3.) Herod, though a wicked man, does not appear to have been insensible to some of the common principles of human nature. Here was a great and most manifest crime proposed; no less than the murder of an acknowledged prophet of the Lord. It was deliberate. It was to gratify the malice of a wicked woman. It was the price of a few moments' entertainment. His conscience, though in feeble and dying accents, checked him. He would have preferred a request not so manifestly wicked, and that would not have involved him in so much difficulty.

Sadly, King Herod followed through with the wicked request, and had John the Baptist beheaded.

If you are here today and outside of Jesus Christ and you die in this lost condition, you will have regrets when you stand before the Lord at His Judgment Seat and say, “Why did I reject Christ? I heard the gospel message and I didn’t believe it? At the Judgment Seat it will be too late!

You don’t have to have regrets! Believe in the Lord Jesus! Come to the Lord now! Put away your sins! Put on Christ!

The folly of King Darius led him to regret what he had done.

In closing, the folly of King Darius was evident in his pride, in his impulsiveness, and this led to regret regarding what he had done in signing a foolish decree. May we learn from the folly of King Darius and lean on the Lord for our understanding. Let us pray.