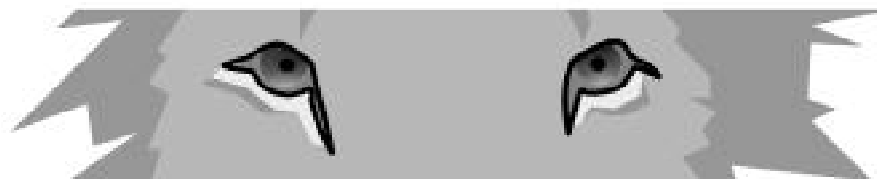


An Ancient¹ Death Law



SABBATH—OCTOBER 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 6.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘My [Daniel’s] God sent his [God’s] angel. And his angel shut the mouths of the lions. They [the lions] haven’t [have not] hurt me [Daniel] at all. That’s [that is] because I [Daniel] haven’t done anything wrong in God’s sight’ ” (Daniel 6:22, NlrV).

DANIEL IN THE LIONS’ DEN IS OFTEN THE FIRST BIBLE STORY CHILDREN LEARN. The story is simple. The story clearly teaches the difference between right and wrong. It has a happy ending. And it pictures Daniel’s strong faith.

But the story also brings up questions that are not so simple. History shows many examples of Christians who stood strong, but who did not escape death when thrown into the lions’ den. Even today, Christians still die for their faith.

Maybe the important point of the story is not that God saved Daniel. Maybe the important point is that Daniel took his stand without knowing whether he would live or die.

Daniel 6 brings up a lot of questions. But it is true that the more we learn, the more we understand that we need to learn much more. This week, let us learn a little more and receive a better understanding of how little we really know.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON: What have we learned so far about Daniel? Why is jealousy so dangerous? Why might Daniel have chosen to pray in secret, instead of praying so people could see him? What did the king learn about God after Daniel had escaped death? Why does God not force us to obey Him?

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 6.

¹ancient—very old.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 31

THE CHARACTERISTICS² OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (Daniel 6:1-4).

The following quote describes Daniel: “The greatest lack of the world is the lack of honest people. Honest people will not be bought or sold. In their inmost souls, they are true and honest. They do not fear to call sin by its right name. They do God’s will as surely as the needle of a compass points to the North Pole. They will stand for what is right, even if the heavens fall.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 57.



We must stand for what is right.

What were some of the qualities (character traits) that made Daniel stand out as a leader? Daniel 6:3, 4.

What can we learn from the following texts about Daniel’s character?

²characteristics—what the character is made of such as patience and kindness, or laziness and anger.

³foreigner—a person who is in a country he or she was not born in.

Daniel 1:8 _____

Daniel 5:11, 12 _____

Daniel 2:20-23 _____

Daniel 2:49 _____

Daniel 5:17 _____

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 1

THE EVIL PLAN AGAINST DANIEL (Daniel 6:5-9).

Read Daniel 6:4, 5. Do these verses mean Daniel was sinless? Explain your answer.

Daniel 6:4, 5 do not say why the men wanted to get Daniel into trouble. They probably were jealous of him, because he was a foreigner³ who was in a top place in the kingdom. Daniel clearly was one of the most powerful and influential people in the king’s court (Daniel 6:2). He was second to the king. It is not hard to imagine that people were jealous of Daniel. Jealousy was Lucifer’s sin. Lucifer became jealous of Jesus’ position in heaven.

What part of Daniel’s life did the governors and rulers choose to attack? Why? Daniel 6:5-9.

The governors and rulers failed to find anything about Daniel that they could have

used to discredit (dishonor) him before Darius. So they turned to his religion. Because there was no difference between Daniel's religious life and the way he lived, they had to invent a problem. So they told Darius that all the governors, rulers, and advisors had met together. But this was not true. Most of them were scattered across the kingdom and did not even know what was going on. But their flattery did its work. The king believed them.

The law required that no one could pray to "any god or man for thirty days" (Daniel 6:7, NKJV). Because the question involved worship the word *man* probably means the Babylonian priests. During this period of 30 days, only the king was to be the priest for the people. This would be a humbling experience for the local priests and a test of loyalty to the new Persian government.

Who has not experienced the terrible chain that jealousy can wrap around us? Think about times when you have been trapped by jealousy. What were you jealous about? Why were you jealous? (Does it not all seem so small and unimportant now?) How does death to self at the Cross give us the only escape from jealousy?



Jealousy is like a chain wrapped around us.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 2

THE MATTER OF PRAYER (Daniel 6:10-18).

List any reasons Daniel might have had for closing the shutters so his enemies could not see him pray. What Bible texts can you find for your reasons?

List any reasons why Daniel should have prayed as he always prayed, even though he knew he was stepping into a trap. What Bible texts can you find for your reasons?

After a Sunday law was passed in California, A. T. Jones encouraged Adventists to disobey the laws openly. He said Adventists should do on Sunday whatever work they always did on Sunday. But Ellen White told Adventists not to disobey the Sunday law: "To disobey the Sunday laws will give our enemies a good reason to persecute (attack) us. Give them no reason to attack you. . . . People do not receive the mark of the beast because they show that they understand the wisdom of keeping the peace by not doing the work that breaks the law while doing at the same time the gospel work that is most important."—Adapted from *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 232. In another place, Ellen White wrote about obeying Sunday laws, "Every time it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday."—Adapted from *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, p. 233.

We do not know why Daniel chose to pray so other people would see him, even when it meant he might die. Even if Daniel had been eaten by the lions instead of being rescued, would it still have been right for him to have prayed, so other people would see him? Explain your answer.

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 3

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN
(Daniel 6:19-23).

The lions' den was probably an underground pit (hole in the ground) with walls and an opening at the top. Guilty people were lowered or thrown into the pit from above. In Daniel's case, a large stone was rolled over the opening and sealed with the king's signet ring.⁴ The seal was a guarantee to Daniel's enemies that no one would try to save him. The seal was also a guarantee to the king that Daniel would not be harmed by a person because the king had hoped that Daniel's God would protect him from the lions.



A signet ring.

How does Darius's question the next morning show that he had known about Daniel's faith? Daniel 6:19, 20. What does the king's question teach us about the kind of example Daniel was for God?

What is interesting about Daniel's answer is that God spared him because he was "innocent" (KJV). What could Daniel mean by saying he was innocent? When people are as close to God as Daniel was, they realize how sinful they are. So why would Daniel say he was innocent?

What does Romans 3:9-20 tell us about human nature?

Daniel's innocence meant he had a clear conscience.⁵ He knew he was following God all the way. He also knew he had done nothing wrong to deserve being thrown into the lions' den. Daniel was not stealing money from the king's treasury. He was not planning a rebellion. Daniel's clear conscience helped him to have some sense of peace. Daniel did not know for sure that God would save him. But his clear conscience must have given him some courage.

Whatever sins you are doing, they will catch up to you (Matthew 10:26). Ask God to give you both the desire and the power to overcome your sins. Repent⁶ before it is too late.

⁴signet ring—a ring someone with authority would use to close something important with a lump of hot wax.

⁵conscience—a knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do right.

⁶repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and that you want to stop sinning.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 4

DARIUS HONORS GOD (Daniel 6:24-28).

Darius was “exceedingly [very] glad” when he discovered that Daniel was alive. At the same time, Darius was angry at the men who had tricked him. The men’s wives and children were thrown into the lions’ den with them. This is terrible. But it was common practice of kings to kill the families of guilty men. Maybe the thought of their families being killed would make them think twice before breaking laws. But it is also a sad example of how our sins can influence other people besides ourselves.

What are the things about Daniel’s God that the king admits? Daniel 6:25-27. Compare⁷ what the king says with the following verses. Psalm 59:1, 2; Acts 2:22; Galatians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:9, 10; Hebrews 2:4; Hebrews 10:31; James 1:17. How correct a picture of God did the king give?



Every good gift comes from God
(James 1:17).

What God did for Daniel gave the king a very good understanding of God’s character and power. But at the same time, it was still a limited understanding. This limited understanding is seen best in the law the king gave.

What was the king’s law? What about the law shows the king’s lack of understanding about God? Daniel 6:26.

In a way, God wants us to “tremble [shake]” before Him and “fear [respect]” Him. But only because of His holiness and our sinfulness. We can never force anyone to tremble before God and fear Him. No government or church can ever force a person to love and obey God. Why? A relationship with God needs to be based on our own personal relationship with Him; with His love; His mercy;⁸ His power against our sinfulness; our helplessness; and our great need of salvation. From such a relationship alone we worship Him. This is something the king did not understand.

A man was studying the Bible with his young daughter. After he told her how much he wanted her to love God, she asked, “Daddy, would you force me to love God if you could?” What would you answer, and why?

⁷compare—show how things are the same.

⁸mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 5

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 539–548.

“From the story of Daniel’s rescue, we may learn that in times of trouble and sadness, God’s children should be just the same as they were when they were happy and bright with hope. Daniel in the lions’ den was the same Daniel who stood before the king as his chief advisor and prophet of God. People whose hearts are with God will be the same in the hour of greatest trouble and suffering as in successful times.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 545.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What comparisons⁹ can we make

between Jesus’ life and Daniel’s life? What differences are there?

2. What is the relationship between a person’s devotional life and the ability to meet tests of faith?
3. Read again the last line in the Ellen White quote. What is this line saying? How can you make this idea useful in your life?

SUMMARY: From Daniel’s experience in the lions’ den, we learn that people who will receive God’s kingdom are not necessarily the strongest or the smartest people. Rather, they will be people who have fully surrendered to God and dedicated their lives to Him, no matter what the results may be.

⁹comparisons—show how things are the same.