

## Until The Son of Man Comes In His Glory 1) Don't Cease Praying

Daniel 6 • 2023-10-29 • End Times Series



The court was convened. It had authority to crush any man who opposed it. A man was on trial for what he had written. It all started 500 years ago when he posted his points for debate. The emperor presided as the judge. But it would not really be a trial. It would be the pronouncement of an ultimatum: “Recant or be punished as a heretic and enemy of the Roman Catholic Church.” That man, Martin Luther, knew what was at stake. He needed to get it right. He asked for a day to come up with an answer. How should Christians respond to an ultimatum against their faith? Today we will look at how Daniel responded to an ultimatum directed against his faith. And we’ll consider why he did what he did in the face of threats.

Imagine how Daniel must have felt. Daniel had been on the losing side in his youth. Daniel was probably only 15 or so when he was taken from all he had ever known. The Babylonians had defeated the people of Jerusalem. They took Daniel and thousands of his fellow countrymen from their homeland and carried off to a foreign land.

Everyone around Daniel spoke and taught differently. They worshipped other gods. Daniel was given a new name, which honored another god. He was made to learn the culture and language of another land, another ruler, another deity. Why should he go against the flow? Why should Daniel continue to look to the Lord, the God of Israel and Jerusalem? What reason could he have to still look to the Lord, the ruined city of Jerusalem and its destroyed temple?

But against all reason Daniel continued to look back to his homeland. He continued to not just look in a sentimental view of his past childhood but continued to worship and confess the Lord. We see that he had a habit of doing this in a way that was visible to all. He would take three breaks each day to go to an upper window. He would face back toward the city of Jerusalem and the destroyed temple of the Lord, and he would pray.

And Daniel, a Jew in a foreign land, held no small position. He had advanced in his learning and his captors trained him for service. He was so successful that he was recognized by King Darius of the Medes and Persians. Darius did some reorganizing of his government and made Daniel one of the top three administrators. Daniel, a lowly Jewish-born man from Israel, was now in a prominent position in the Persian Empire.

Would Daniel continue to publicly confess his faith even after reaching a high office? Yes. But those who grew jealous of him sought to silence him and destroy him. They devised a plan to create a conflict for Daniel. The back-handedly had a law passed which prohibited Daniel from worshipping the Lord for the next 30 days. The ultimatum: Pray to no man or god except the king for the next thirty days, or face the lions in the pit.

Now what? Daniel wasn’t just some stoic religious man who didn’t feel fear. I’m sure he was shaken. Why would he go back to that same habit, that same upper room, face the same direction, or would he cease praying?

We live in a foreign land. Churches of the living God might abound here. There are numerous Christian places of worship. But our lives are carried out as strangers. We don’t live in a land where you will automatically assume the person next to you in the office or restaurant is a worshipper of the living God. You may not hold a high and influential position like Daniel did. But your confession is picked up by those around you. Maybe you might wonder if it will really make an impact if you just decided to make your worship habit irregular. Instead of worshipping every Sunday rain or shine you stopped when it became inconvenient. Would anyone notice? No Christian has the option of saying, “My life doesn’t influence others or speak to others.” It does! Your habits are your confession for or against the truth.

What might move us to cease worshipping the Lord? Maybe a Christian today might wonder, “How will I be perceived by others if I posted my biblical beliefs on Facebook? How will my 600 friends respond if I share my belief in Jesus and his Holy Word?” Or maybe you have fears of broadcasting your faith to those around you each day. “Should I let my co-workers know that I look to that tan color church off the corner of Airport and McLane?” What will happen? The consequences are surely not the lion’s mouth. It’s probably at the most the mocker’s mouth. Though it may be the case for some Christians in other parts of this world, the threat is really nothing like what Daniel faced. What if it were? Do we stand unmoved in the far less severe threats or fears?

Daniel still continued in his confession. He got up as he always did. He kept on his habit of facing Jerusalem and praying to the Lord three times each day. He had the habit of worshipping the Lord.

How much should it take to change our habit, to mute our confession of the Lord? Your habit could be something like attending worship at church, daily Bible reading, prayer time at home, or even as simple as a short prayer of thanks for a meal. Does the setting you’re in ever silence the singing praises to your king? Does the carefree crowd at a restaurant ever silence the prayer of thanks before a meal? How much would it take to drive us to fear which would silence your confession? The lion’s den or the stranger next to you in a friendly restaurant? If our God is the living God, if he is worthy of all honor and praise, should even the lion’s den silence us?

Daniel knew the ultimatum before him. He no doubt knew what his silence would say to the Medes and Persians. He knew what it would say to the believing Jews that joined him in exile. And he knew it would say to the God if he ceased to worship. But he also knew the one he worshipped. That is why the ultimatum against his faith had no effect. Daniel looked to the living God who delivers us from evil. He wasn't moved; he wasn't muted; and he wasn't mauled.

The threat was carried out. Darius stood to lose his best administrator over his pride and the jealousy of the other statesmen. Daniel was thrown into the pit for the night. Who wouldn't anticipate a bloody mess by morning? Daniel couldn't rely on his high-ranking position and in with the king. The king would rather not lose face. The king was muted when it came to what he cared about.

But God shut the mouth of the lions. Not a single wound was found on Daniel. After all, Daniel didn't fend off the lions. God delivered the one who trusted in him. The lions didn't even considered as an option. An angel of the Lord came to subdue the lions. "This one's off the menu! By orders of the Creator, the living God." Darius would not save Daniel. But God would overrule the law which couldn't be repealed.

Daniel had trusted in the living God. He knew that despite his high position –about to be placed as second in command of all the Medo-Persian empire, he was still a sinner before God. He humbly continued to fall on his knees before God in prayer, and he prayed in thanks to God for all the mercy that was shown him in a foreign land. He continued to confess the God of truth.

Daniel looked to Jerusalem with good reason. It carried God's promise as the city where God placed his name. And God didn't choose Jerusalem to bear his name for nothing. His choice of Jerusalem was for the sake of his promise. God promised to Daniel that Jerusalem would once again be restored. Jerusalem pointed to the coming Messiah. Daniel had a vision once of the Messiah, a son of man who would also rule forever and receive worship as divine. (Reading Dan 7:13ff) "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

That Son of Man worshipped in Daniel's vision is Jesus. He emptied himself of all his divine glory, veiled his person in flesh, and became like us. Rather than turning from fear, rather than being silenced, he made the good confession. When he was on trial, he did not fail to confess the truth. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mt 26) Jesus wasn't moved from his mission, not muted.

Jerusalem's God and Savior would himself take the place of sinners –suffer the unrepealable justice against sinners. Jesus entered the pains of hell on the cross in our place. He faced the darkness for us. Even for the sins of silence –he paid the full price for you and me. And afterward he was raised to life and returned to all his glory. He is not a Savior for just Jerusalem but a Savior for all peoples –from ancient Persia to modern Payson.

How could we ever be muted or moved or turn aside from our Savior and King? He has done the impossible and overturned the law that stood opposed to all the world. He spared us all from our deserving sentence of death and hell. Will he not also safely bring you into his kingdom?

God always delivers his people. Sometimes like he did for Daniel and sometimes he delivers like he did with Paul who was rescued from the lion's mouth as he battled wild beasts in Ephesus. He did it with Martin Luther. Luther knew that the last notable person before his time to make their confession of Jesus as the Savior by grace alone was burned alive. Luther's life was on the line. The second day of the trial he wasn't muted. He made a bold confession of faith in Jesus and was declared worthy of death. But God delivered him and let the gospel flourish in the face of opposition.

Sometimes God delivers those who trust in him directly to the safety of his heavenly kingdom –the new Jerusalem filled with angles in joyful assembly and all of those whose names are written in the book of life. Daniel knew with the vision he had of the Son of Man that God would send his Son to take on flesh and rule an everlasting kingdom and eternal dominion over all evil. In the end, Daniel and all the worshippers of the Lord were brought to the glory of the kingdom of the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus. They, along with Paul, Luther, and all believers are forever with the living God in his Jerusalem above. He is the Son of Man, Lord of all, and will return in all his glory.

Until then make your devotion a habit. Don't cease praying. Don't cease regular worship and devotion. Look always to the Living God –who delivers us from evil. Whatever your devotional habit it is, make it a habit. Habits are made, not by accident, but by continual practice.

And don't be moved from your habit. Don't be muted from your confession. Trust your Messiah who will come again in glory and bring you safely home into his eternal kingdom.