

Lake Cities Community Church
Daniel 1-6
August 17, 2008
Pastor Craig Schill

“ _____ and the Lion’s Den”
(Daniel 6:16-28)

It is time for our back to school Bible Test. It is a test of association – associating a Bible character with their well-known story. Shout out the answer – This is our last week at the bowling alley – we can be loud here.

1. _____ and the whale (Jonah 1), Jonah
2. _____ and Goliath (1 Sam 17) David
3. _____ and the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6) Joshua
4. _____ and Jonathan (1 Sam 18) David
5. _____ and the Ark (Genesis 6) Noah
6. _____ and parting the Red Sea (Exodus 15) Moses
7. _____ and the 450 Priests of Baal (1 Kings 18) Elijah
8. _____ and the ruined City of Gezer (1 Kings 9) Solomon
9. _____ and the empty tomb (Luke 24) Jesus
10. _____ and the Lion’s Den (Daniel 6) Daniel

Daniel and the Lion’s den. Yes – this is one of the most popular and beloved stories in the Bible. But this morning I am going to *challenge the association* of Daniel with the lion’s den. Is Daniel part of the story? Yes. But the story of the lion’s den does not belong to Daniel exclusively. Turn with me to Daniel 6:16-28. We began this story last week, and as we complete the tale we will see the lion’s den revolves around four characters. First, verses 16-20 it is *Darius and the Lion’s Den*. Second, 21-23 we have *Daniel and the Lion’s Den*. Third, verse 24 is about the *Deceivers and the Lion’s Den*, and finally, 25-28 is about *Deity and the Lion’s Den*, God’s relationship with the lion’s den. Darius, Daniel, Deceivers and Deity. The lion’s den represents something different for each one.

Darius and the Lion's Den (16-20)

Our text begins with Darius. In fact chapter six is primarily about the King – the story is told from his perspective. His dialogue dominates the text. He is tricked, he signs the law, he tries to fix the mess, he gives the order for Daniel's arrest. Everything centers around his character. And concerning the lion's den – it is *his* den - these are *his* lions. Hunting lions was a royal sport in the ancient world they would capture lions and release them to hunt them again. They would be kept sometimes in empty cisterns – large holes in the ground – and their convenient “fast food” was often the bodies of the king's enemies.

Brief review of last week: Darius was tricked to sign the law that set him as the only one the people could pray to – Daniel continued to pray to God and so broke the law and was turned in to the king for the punishment of being thrown to the lions. The purpose of the law was to trap Daniel – and the King is aghast as what he has done – and spends the entire day trying to undo it – but has failed in the attempt. We pick up the story now in verse 16: “**Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lion's den.** Daniel is taken to the entrance of the pit and thrown in. And even as Daniel is falling to the ground the king calls out with hope in his voice: “**May the God whom you constantly serve rescue you!**” Darius could not save him! But Daniel had shared with the King about a God who could rescue people even from a fiery furnace, and so he offers a prayer of hope to God. Verse 17: **A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.** Ropes or chains were laid over the stone and then wet clay was set over it and into the wet clay the impressions of the rings were left. When the clay would harden – the stone could not be removed without breaking the seal. With the deed done the King returns to his palace with a mixture of guilt, remorse and hope swirling and

dancing in his brain – verse 18: **He spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.**

For Darius the lion's den represented the consequences of poor choices yet the hope of redemption It was his pride that caused this mess – and it is tearing him up inside – he has to live with the consequences of his sin – yet there is hope that it might turn out OK.

On September 3, 2004 in Beslan Russia Islamic terrorists took over a large Middle School and held more than 1,000 people hostage. As the tragedy continued the terrorists decided to release about 30 women and young children. 27 year-old mother Zalina Dzandarova began to leave with her two kids: 2 year old Alan and 6 year old daughter Alana - but a terrorist stopped her and told her she could only take one child – the other would have to stay. He said: “You can go and save one – or stay and die with both of them” Later that day she a reporter “I didn't want to make this choice. People say they are happy that my son Alan and I are saved. But how can I be happy if my daughter is still inside there?” I didn't have time to think what I was doing. I went out, and I heard all the time my daughter crying calling for me behind my back. I thought my heart would break into pieces there and then.” *Some of the emotion of that story was pounding in the heart of King Darius.*

(1) He felt the helplessness of not being able to rescue his friend – even though he was the King he had to walk away – and has to leave his friend. (2) He certainly felt anger that he was forced by evil men to make a choice he didn't want to make – to condemn his friend to death, and (3) even though the situation was dire – there was still hope – just as Zalina left with a sliver of hope that she would see her daughter again – so the King hopes that a miracle might yet occur.

(19) Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. In the dim light of dawn, Darius breaks open the seals and calls down in a troubled voice, **“Daniel, servant of the living God – has the God you constantly serve, been able to deliver you?”**

Have you ever wondered why it is now OK for Darius to break the seal when the whole point the day before was that he had no power to change the outcome? Scholars suggest the answer is found in this question: Did Darius give Daniel an execution order, or an “ordeal?” Let me explain: “An Execution order would have no time limit – If it was an execution order – Daniel would have to stay in the lion’s den until he was dead – one day, two days – a year – whatever it took. but an ordeal was torture for a limited time. The custom of that time was that the victim would be pardoned if he were tortured and had not died by the following day.” Daniel’s sentence is probably an “ordeal” – which is why Darius now rushes out – if Daniel has somehow survived until morning – he could legally go free! So into the dark pit - into a lion’s den representing the tragic consequences of his sinful pride and yet with a glimmer of hope – Darius calls: “Are you OK?”

Daniel and the Lion’s Den (21-23)

In verse 21 we move from Darius and the Lion’s den to Daniel. With Daniel’s first syllable we know a miracle has happened, and he says with unexpected graciousness and joy (21-22): “O King live forever. My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.” Daniel has been rescued by God! While Darius was fasting and worrying, Daniel is having a spiritual retreat with an angel! Verse 23. The king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

For Daniel, the Lion’s Den **represented faith in God**. Hebrews 11:33: **By faith...he shut the mouths of lions**. Through his faith – *Daniel finds deliverance* – he is rescued. Even as Peter

said to the church: [2Pet. 2:9](#) The Lord knows how to **rescue the godly from temptation**. Daniel's faith in God leads to his protection and rescue.

In Beslan Russia things went from bad to worse. The Russian army stormed the school and the result was a disaster. 334 people were killed including 186 children. It was horrific. After the storming of the school, Dzandarova the mother I told you about earlier looked in vain for her daughter –and then went to the hospital where the casualties and injured were being taken. And there she found her 6 year old – as it was reported: "She found her covered in blood in the hospital, but it turned out the blood was someone else's." It actually may have been that blood of those already dead saved her life – because of all the blood she was assumed to be dead and therefore not shot. How much like our own salvation – that because we are covered with the blood of Jesus – we are rescued from God's wrath – and have salvation and deliverance from sin. Through his faith in God Daniel is rescued – and through your faith in God and the blood Jesus shed on the cross you can be rescued from your sins.

Deceivers and the Lion's Den (24)

We have seen Darius and Daniel and their relationship to the lion's den – and now the third connection in a strong one – the Deceivers and the Lion's den, verse 24: **The King then gave orders, and they brought those who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lion's den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions over powered them and crushed all their bones.** Now the charge is against the accusers – they had maliciously accused Daniel and deceived the king into condemning him. Now that Daniel is cleared - like Haman in the story of Ester – the device of death they intended for him is ironically made to be their own death – there is a poetic justice. But there is also a hard statement – notice that in the ancient world children and wives were

also killed so that no survivor could exact revenge later in life. It is not condoned here but reported as was the custom of the time.

For Darius, the Lion's den represented the consequences for poor choices. For Daniel it represented faith. **For the deceivers the lion's den represented punishment for sin.** The Psalmist said: [Psa. 55:23](#) But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

Divinity and the Lion's Den (25-27)

Darius and the Lion's Den. Daniel and the Lion's Den. The deceivers and the Lion's Den – but there is one more – Divinity and the Lion's Den. Ultimately *this is God's lion's den*. Look at Darius' decree (26-27): “I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living god and enduring forever (27) He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” For God the **Lion's Den represented salvation and deliverance** for the faithful Daniel. The main lesson from our story this morning is that ultimately – God is in the rescuing business. He would much rather see the redemption of Darius and the rescue of Daniel than the punishment of the deceivers.

Conclusion

As we conclude this passage and this series – let me end with some questions for you to think about. What does the Lion's den represent for you? Like Darius, is it a place where you can see the consequences of foolish decisions you have made – that have hurt those you love? If so, follow Darius by showing godly sorrow, turning off the entertainment around you and getting quiet before the Lord – knowing He can sort out what you have messed up. Or maybe

for others - the Lion's den encourages you this morning to stay strong in your faith – that no matter where God takes you – He will be with you. Be faithful no matter what. And maybe there is a person here this morning for whom the lion's den represents God's punishment upon sin. Remember little 6-year old Alana – have you ever found safety and salvation in the blood of Jesus? By believing and trusting in Him, he will forgive your sins and rescue you – even now.

After the massacre in Beslan was over, the Russian Orthodox church began plans for a memorial - a chapel and statue where survivors could find comfort in God and His love. However some Islamic Clerics in Russia opposed the plan – they argued for a secular memorial that included no faith or religious message – so that no one would be offended. Why should Christianity be highlighted, after all? That is the world we live in today. But I am glad to report the Orthodox Christians stayed faithful and a small chapel and a cross and the message of God's love remain where evil and horror once prevailed. Why Christianity and not another religion, or nothing at all? Because God is sovereign over the affairs of men – He is a living God and he endures forever. That is the fight of Daniel – and it is our fight to exalt the one True God in a world that needs to be rescued and to believe in Him.