



Lesson 22 / September 24, 2017

DANIEL'S HOPE

Daniel 6-7

Key Verse

"I make a decree that, in all my royal dominion, people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

Daniel 6:26-27

Discussion Questions

1. Review the exile from Lesson 15.
2. How does Daniel end up not only in Babylon, but in the king's court (Dan 1:1-4)?
3. How does the LORD preserve Daniel in Daniel 6?
4. In what ways is the hand of the LORD visible? In what ways is it invisible?
5. How does the LORD use the situation to bring glory to his own name?
6. How does the LORD preserve us as his people today?
7. Read Daniel 7. What do you make of the baffling details?
8. What is the overall message of Daniel 7? How does it inspire hope?
9. What does Daniel's "Son of Man" have to do with our future hope as Christians?

Question 43: How does God preserve his people during exile?

Short Answer: *God preserves his people in the manifest sanctuary of his invisible hand.*

Full Answer: *God preserves his people in the manifest sanctuary of his invisible sovereign hand, whereby he remains present with us, watches over us, sustains us, and promises to bring us home.*

Question 44: What is the promise of the Son of Man?

Short Answer: *The Son of Man will come on the clouds and we will dwell with him forever.*

Full Answer: *God promises a coming day when the Son of Man will come on the clouds and achieve the final victory, and he will gather us into his eternal kingdom and we will dwell with him forever.*

Summary

In the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, a tornado carries poor Dorothy and her dog Toto to the foreign world of Munchkinland (in the Land of Oz). Dorothy's only wish is to return home, but she is obstructed by forces of evil and especially by the Wicked Witch of the West. In the end, she stands before the Wizard with the hope that he can send her home, but when Toto pulls back a curtain, the truth is revealed: the Wizard is an illusion, a mere image projected by a powerless man. But fortunately for Dorothy, (spoiler alert!) her magical red slippers have the power to deliver her home. "There's no place like home."

The prophet Daniel was also carried off to a foreign world, though his horrific ordeal was not imaginary. When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, young Daniel was among the exiles deported to the city of Babylon, hundreds of miles from his home in Jerusalem. The Book of Daniel revolves around two central questions: who is in charge, and who will win? Chapters 1-6 glance behind the curtain and answer the question of who is in charge by telling stories about God sovereignly preserving his people in Babylon. Then chapters 7-12 pull the curtain wide open and answer the question of who will win by recounting Daniel's visions of God's future victory over all the kingdoms of the earth.

The story of Daniel in the Lion's Den (Dan 6) offers a premier example of God preserving his people. When King Darius decrees that all prayers shall be offered to Darius alone, Daniel's faithfulness to the LORD as his God compels him to continue praying to the LORD alone. As punishment for his illegal act, Daniel is sealed into a den full of hungry lions. But after a long night, the den is opened and Daniel has not even been scratched. King Darius promotes Daniel and declares his God to be the one true and living God.

This story reveals *how* God preserves his people even in the midst of exile. We can see the preservation— Daniel is not eaten — but we cannot see God's hand that holds shut the lions' mouths. Ezekiel calls this preservation the LORD's "sanctuary" (Ezek 11:16), and indeed it is the visible sanctuary of the LORD's invisible hand. Not only is Daniel preserved, but the LORD also turns the egotistical plot of an idolatrous king into an international proclamation of the LORD's glory. The story peeks

behind the curtain and reveals the resounding truth: the LORD alone is God and he alone is in charge.

Daniel's visions in chapters 7-12 pull the curtain wide open and reveal the full extent of the LORD's sovereignty. These prophetic visions speak of the future with the confusing imagery of beasts, horns, angels, and wars. The details are notoriously baffling — rarely will two readers agree on what every detail means — but the broader message is relatively plain, namely that LORD *will* win and reign forever.

Daniel's first vision in chapter 7 lays the foundation for all of the visions to follow. This vision begins with four beasts that represent kings and kingdoms that will arise in succession, with each being devoured in turn. These beasts thus look ahead to five hundred years of history following Daniel, when the empires that would rise and fall include the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. That God could describe a kingdom's rise and demise before it even exists demonstrates his sovereignty over these kingdoms and their rulers.

Then Daniel describes God himself, the "Ancient of Days," sitting on his throne in spectacular glory to judge the nations, and God gives all dominion not to a normal "son of man" (= normal human), but to one "*like* a son of man" (= an abnormal human) who would come with the clouds (Dan 7:13). Through this Son of Man, God will defeat all other kingdoms and give to his people the eternal kingdom in which they will dwell forever under the dominion of the Son of Man. Not only does the LORD preserve his saints, but he will one day give them the victory and bring them home. What a glorious hope for exiles!

In the New Testament, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man who will one day come on the clouds with great glory to gather his people into his kingdom (Matt 24:30-31). He is the Son of Man from Daniel's vision, and Daniel's lessons still apply to us today. Regardless of our current situation or the suffering we may endure in this world, when we look behind the curtain, we do not see a powerless fraud, but we see that God is indeed in charge, that he holds us in his hand, and that one day Jesus, the Son of Man, will return on the clouds to bring us home into his eternal kingdom. Let us, then, renew our resolve to remain faithful even as we eagerly await the realization of our glorious hope. There's no place like home.