

Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 9, Daniel 6 – God’s Superior Law and His Servant’s Faithfulness Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 9, Daniel 6 – God’s Superior Law and His Servant’s Faithfulness, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel 6 explores the themes of God's superior law and Daniel's unwavering faithfulness. The session examines the conflict between God's law and the law of the Medes and Persians, highlighting Daniel's refusal to obey the latter. It investigates the historical difficulties surrounding Darius the Mede, offering potential solutions such as the idea that he may have been Cyrus the Persian. The lecture analyzes literary devices like wordplay in the text, specifically focusing on the motifs of "seeking" and "finding." Widder also draws parallels between Daniel's experience and New Testament themes, particularly in Matthew's account of Jesus's burial and resurrection. Ultimately, the session portrays Daniel as an example of faithfulness to God under challenging circumstances.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 9 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



Widder_Daniel_Session09.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 9, Daniel 6 – God's Superior Law and His Servant's Faithfulness

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Widder_Daniel_EN_Session09.pdf":

Briefing Document: Daniel Chapter 6 - God's Superior Law and His Servants' Faithfulness

Main Theme: The central theme of Daniel chapter 6 is the contrast between God's superior law and human law, and the faithfulness of God's servants, specifically Daniel, when faced with conflict between the two. This chapter echoes the theme of faithfulness under persecution found in Chapter 3.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. The Historical Setting and the "Darius the Mede" Problem:

- **Shift in Power:** The setting shifts from Babylonian rule (end of chapter 5) to the Medo-Persian period with Darius the Mede taking the kingdom.
- **Historical Anomaly:** There is a historical problem with identifying "Darius the Mede" as no such person is definitively known in historical records outside of the book of Daniel.
- **Critical Scholarship Explanation:** Some scholars consider "Darius the Mede" to be an error, a misattribution by an author writing after the events.
- **Alternative Explanations:** Other theories propose:
 - Darius was an official appointed by Cyrus to rule over Babylon.
- **Dr. Widder's Preferred View:** Darius the Mede is actually Cyrus the Persian, with the narrator using two different names and titles for the same person. This aligns with Aramaic constructions elsewhere in the bible such as in Hebrews and 1 Chronicles.
- **Theological Significance of the Name:** The use of "Darius the Mede" allows the narrator to emphasize the fulfillment of prophecy by Isaiah and Jeremiah that Babylon would fall to the Medes.
- It also fits the pattern of successive kingdoms common in ancient Near Eastern literature (Assyria/Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece).

2. Introduction of the Conflict and Wordplay:

- **Characters:** The key characters are introduced: Darius, his satraps and high officials, and Daniel.
- **Daniel's Character:** Daniel is portrayed as having "an excellent spirit," reminiscent of the description of him in chapter five, and is favored by the king.
- **Wordplay: "Seeking" and "Finding":** The chapter employs a recurring wordplay involving the Aramaic words for "seek" (ba'a) and "find" (shachach).
- **Conspirators Seek:** The conspirators seek a way to find fault with Daniel to gain political advantage.
- **Daniel Seeks God:** Daniel seeks God and finds security as a result, highlighting the irony that Daniel's perceived weakness (his devotion to God) becomes his greatest strength.
- **Quote:** *"His enemies are seeking security by finding fault in Daniel, but Daniel is seeking God, where he will find security as a byproduct."*

3. The Conspiracy and the Law of Darius:

- **Conspiracy Against Daniel:** The officials, envious of Daniel's favor with the king, realize they can only trap him using his religious devotion.
- **The Decree:** They convince Darius to create a law that for 30 days, people can only petition the king and not any other God or man, a law that is irrevocable because it is the law of the Medes and the Persians.
- **Purpose of the Law:** This law was created to force Daniel into disobeying it, they knew that Daniel would not adhere to the law, and he would subsequently be punished.
- **Weakness of Darius:** Darius is portrayed as a weak king, easily manipulated by his officials who use strong-arm tactics to push through the law. He does not question the law and signs it without considering the implications for Daniel.
- **Irony of the Law:** The law binds Darius while Daniel remains free because of his higher allegiance to God.

- **John Walton's Proposal:** John Walton suggests the decree may have been intended for Persians who had strayed from Zoroastrianism and not to foreigners like Daniel, which may be why neither Darius or Daniel thought it would apply to him.
- However, the officials were able to argue that because Daniel was such a high-ranking official he should abide by the letter of the law.

4. Daniel's Faithfulness and Darius's Distress:

- **Daniel's Steadfastness:** Upon learning of the decree, Daniel continues his regular prayer routine, praying towards Jerusalem three times a day with his windows open.
- **Significance of Open Windows:** His visible prayers suggest he is unapologetic and may also be praying for restoration and mercy in line with Solomon's temple dedication prayer in 1 Kings 8.
- **Quote:** *"Despite what it was going to cost Daniel, he carried on his routine as if nothing had happened, as if nothing had changed for him, because nothing had changed for him, right? His God was still on the throne."*
- **Contrast Between Daniel and Darius:** Daniel remains unfazed while Darius is frantic after being informed about Daniel's disobedience.
- **Darius's Powerlessness:** Darius is trapped by his own law and unable to save Daniel, highlighting the weakness of human laws compared to God's power.

5. The Confrontation and the Lion's Den:

- **The Conspirators' Demands:** The conspirators come to Darius three times, each time with increasingly less respect, ultimately demanding Daniel's punishment.
- **Darius's Acknowledgment of God:** Despite being trapped by his own law, Darius expresses faith in Daniel's God stating, "May your God whom you serve continually deliver you."
- **Significance of the Sealed Den:** The sealing of the lion's den with the king's signet ring is meant to ensure "nothing might be changed." However, the narrator implies that nothing changes regarding Daniel's faithfulness. This prefigures the sealing of Jesus's tomb in Matthew's gospel.

6. Daniel's Deliverance and Vindication:

- **Darius's Anxious Morning:** Darius spends a sleepless night and rushes to the lion's den at daybreak to see if Daniel has survived.
- **Daniel's Declaration of Innocence:** Daniel declares that he was found blameless before God and Darius, stating that an angel shut the lions' mouths.
- **The Conspirators' Punishment:** The conspirators and their families are thrown into the lion's den and are quickly devoured.
- **Theological Significance of the Ordeal:** The events align with the concept of an "ordeal" where the gods are to decide the guilt or innocence of a person.

7. Darius's Proclamation and Conclusion:

- **Darius's Decree:** Darius issues a decree to all his kingdom, praising the God of Daniel as the living God who endures forever.
- **Darius's Doxology:** Darius's doxology echoes themes from the first six chapters, emphasizing God's eternality, his power to deliver, and his dominion.
- **Daniel's Continued Prosperity:** The chapter concludes by mentioning that Daniel prospered during the reigns of both Darius and Cyrus, emphasizing the continuity of God's plan through the different kingdoms and reiterating the idea that history is unfolding exactly as God had planned.

Concluding Points:

- **Superiority of God's Law:** The chapter highlights the superiority of God's unchanging law over human law which is fallible and can even ensnare those who create it.
- **Example of Faithfulness:** Daniel serves as an example of unwavering faithfulness in the face of persecution, demonstrating how to live as a faithful servant of God during exile and in times of hardship.
- **New Testament Connections:** There are subtle links and parallels with the New Testament, particularly with Matthew's gospel, where the sealing of Jesus's tomb echos the sealing of the lion's den in this story, and Jesus's suffering and resurrection is a greater and more complete parallel to Daniels' deliverance.
- **Quote:** *"...the chapter also sets Daniel out, I believe, as an example of faithfulness. His faithfulness in his prayer, his routine of worshiping God, and obeying God, and following God."*

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and ideas presented in the provided lecture excerpts on Daniel chapter 6. It highlights the significant contrasts and theological points emphasized by Dr. Widder, providing a comprehensive overview of the chapter's central messages.

4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 9, Daniel 6 – God’s Superior Law and His Servant’s Faithfulness

Daniel Chapter 6: God's Superior Law and His Servants' Faithfulness

Study Guide

Key Concepts

- **God's Superior Law:** The chapter highlights the contrast between God's eternal and unchanging law and the temporary, flawed laws of earthly rulers. It demonstrates that faithfulness to God's law is ultimately more powerful.
- **Faithfulness of God's Servants:** Daniel's unwavering commitment to his prayer routine demonstrates faithfulness even in the face of mortal danger. He serves as an example for how God's people can live under hostile or misguided rulers.
- **The Problem of Darius the Mede:** The historical ambiguity surrounding Darius the Mede is discussed, along with different explanations for why he is not easily identified in historical records. One possibility suggests he is another name for Cyrus the Persian.
- **Wordplay:** The use of the words "seek" and "find" illustrates the conflict between Daniel's enemies seeking his downfall and Daniel seeking God, his ultimate security.
- **Irony:** The chapter is replete with irony. Daniel's enemies believe they have discovered his weakness, but it is actually his strength. Also, Darius' decree is intended to secure the kingdom, but instead, it exposes the king's weakness.
- **Power of Prayer:** Daniel's consistent and open prayer is a key element, demonstrating his dependence on God and his unwavering commitment.
- **Human Law vs. Divine Law:** The conflict between the law of the Medes and Persians and God's law is central. The chapter emphasizes that human law is ultimately inferior to God's law.
- **Darius's Weakness:** The chapter portrays Darius as a weak king, easily manipulated by his officials. His inability to challenge the decree or its consequences highlights the limitations of human power.
- **Doxology:** Darius's letter at the end of the chapter serves as a doxology, praising the living God.

Areas of Focus

- **Character Analysis:** Pay attention to the portrayal of Daniel, Darius, and the conspiring officials.
- **Historical Context:** Understand the shift from the Babylonian to the Persian period.
- **Theological Themes:** Analyze the key ideas related to God's sovereignty, faithfulness, and justice.
- **Literary Devices:** Recognize and understand the use of wordplay, irony, and foreshadowing.

Short-Answer Quiz

1. What is the central conflict in Daniel 6?
2. Why is Darius the Mede a problematic figure for historical study, and what are the three main ways scholars have tried to resolve this issue?
3. Describe the wordplay involving the words "seek" and "find" in Daniel 6.
4. How does the chapter highlight the contrast between the laws of God and the laws of the Medes and Persians?
5. Why did Daniel continue to pray with his windows open toward Jerusalem despite the new decree?
6. Describe Darius's reaction to the discovery of Daniel's disobedience to the new decree.
7. How does the text emphasize Daniel's innocence?
8. How is Darius portrayed in this chapter and how does that contrast with Daniel?
9. How do the three times the conspirators approach Darius illustrate their increasing control over him?
10. How does Darius's proclamation at the end of the chapter reinforce themes present throughout the Book of Daniel?

Answer Key

1. The central conflict in Daniel 6 is between Daniel's faithfulness to God's law and the decree issued by King Darius, which was designed to trap Daniel. This creates a conflict between human law and divine law.
2. Darius the Mede is problematic because there is no historical evidence for such a figure outside of the Book of Daniel. Scholars resolve this issue by suggesting it's an error, that he was an official appointed by Cyrus, or that "Darius the Mede" is actually another name for Cyrus the Persian.
3. The wordplay involving "seek" and "find" highlights the contrast between Daniel's enemies seeking to find a reason to accuse him, and Daniel seeking God. Ultimately, his devotion is what led to his deliverance.
4. The chapter highlights the contrast by showing how the law of the Medes and Persians was designed to manipulate and entrap, while Daniel follows God's unwavering law. Daniel's faithfulness is superior to the flawed human law.
5. Daniel continued to pray with his windows open toward Jerusalem as part of his established routine, symbolizing his unwavering faith and dependence on God. His actions showed he prioritized God's law over the king's decree.
6. Darius was greatly distressed and spent the entire day trying to find a way to rescue Daniel. His distress highlights his weakness and inability to overturn the law of the Medes and Persians.
7. The text emphasizes Daniel's innocence through Daniel's own claim before Darius and God, the angel's intervention that shut the mouths of the lions, and that Daniel had done no harm to Darius or anyone else.
8. Darius is portrayed as a weak king who is easily manipulated by his officials, while Daniel is portrayed as a strong, faithful, and righteous man who does not change his behavior even when threatened. This is seen in their reactions to the new decree and subsequent events.
9. The three times the conspirators address Darius moves from a polite request, to an accusatory question, and finally to an order, illustrating their increasing control over the king. By the third approach they do not acknowledge the king at all.
10. Darius's proclamation at the end of the chapter reinforces the idea of God as the living God, whose kingdom is eternal, who delivers, rescues, and performs signs and wonders. His doxology highlights God's ultimate power and the importance of remaining faithful to Him.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the character of Darius as portrayed in Daniel 6. How does his weakness as a king contribute to the main conflict of the chapter and the overall message about God's sovereignty?
2. Explore the significance of Daniel's prayer practices in Daniel 6. How does his routine and devotion impact the chapter's themes of faithfulness and obedience?
3. Compare and contrast Daniel 6 with Daniel 3, focusing on the similarities and differences in how God's people responded to pressure from gentile kings and what these chapters reveal about God's faithfulness.
4. Discuss the use of irony in Daniel 6, particularly in relation to the decree, the conspirators' plans, and Daniel's ultimate deliverance. How does irony enhance the chapter's theological message?
5. Explain how Daniel 6 demonstrates the supremacy of God's law over human law and how this theme is important for understanding the book of Daniel as a whole and how it applies to believers today.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Satrap:** Governors of provinces in the ancient Persian Empire.
- **Darius the Mede:** A mysterious figure mentioned in Daniel, whose historical identity is debated.
- **Law of the Medes and Persians:** Refers to the laws that were considered unchangeable and irrevocable.
- **Zoroastrianism:** The ancient Persian religion that emphasized the worship of Ahura Mazda.
- **Syncretistic:** The mixing or blending of different religions or cultures.
- **Collusion:** Secret or illegal cooperation or conspiracy.
- **Signet:** A seal used to authenticate documents or indicate ownership.
- **Doxology:** A formal expression of praise to God.
- **Chiasm:** A literary device in which words or ideas are presented in an "ABBA" pattern.
- **Apocalyptic literature:** A genre of writing in which the author describes a divine revelation, often containing symbolic visions about the end times.
- **Ahura Mazda:** The supreme god in Zoroastrianism.
- **Ordeal:** A trial in which an accused person's guilt or innocence is determined by submitting them to physical danger.

5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 9, Daniel 6 – God’s Superior Law and His Servant’s Faithfulness, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Daniel Chapter 6 - God's Law and Daniel's Faithfulness

1. **Who is Darius the Mede and why is his identity debated?**
2. Darius the Mede is a figure in Daniel 6 who is presented as the ruler of Babylon after its fall to the Medes and Persians. However, no historical records outside the Book of Daniel mention him, leading to significant debate. Some scholars view it as an error in the biblical text, while others suggest he was an official appointed by Cyrus the Great. The presented perspective suggests that "Darius the Mede" may be another name for Cyrus, who was both Mede and Persian, used to emphasize the fulfillment of prophecy about the Medes taking Babylon.
3. **What is the significance of the "law of the Medes and Persians" in Daniel 6?**
4. The law of the Medes and Persians was known for being unchangeable and irrevocable. In Daniel 6, this is exploited by Daniel's jealous colleagues who conspire to create a law that would force Daniel to violate it by continuing to pray to his God. The law, which prohibits prayer to anyone other than Darius for 30 days, becomes the means by which they attempt to eliminate Daniel. However, the law also ironically traps Darius, as he cannot change the law he himself enacted, even when he realizes Daniel's predicament. This highlights the limitations of human law and its contrast with God's superior law.
5. **What is the central conflict in Daniel 6?**
6. The central conflict revolves around the opposition between human law and God's law. The law of the Medes and Persians, while seemingly powerful, is shown to be inferior to God's law, which dictates Daniel's loyalty and prayer. Daniel's faithfulness to God, even when it breaks human law, exposes the weakness and flaws of the human-made law.

7. What role does the wordplay of "seeking and finding" play in Daniel 6?

8. The wordplay surrounding "seeking" (ba'a) and "finding" (shachach) is a key motif throughout Daniel 6. Daniel's enemies *seek* to find a way to condemn him by finding a fault, and they ultimately *find* what they sought in Daniel's devotion to God, which they perceive as a weakness. However, Daniel is actively *seeking* God through prayer, and by doing so, *finds* security, deliverance, and vindication as a result. It demonstrates that what his enemies see as a downfall, is actually his strength.

9. How is Daniel portrayed as an example of faithfulness in Daniel 6?

10. Daniel's actions demonstrate unwavering faithfulness to God despite the decree that prohibits his worship. He continues his regular routine of praying towards Jerusalem three times a day, openly demonstrating his devotion. This contrasts with the frantic behavior of Darius and the manipulative scheming of Daniel's colleagues. Daniel's steadfastness showcases him as an example of how to follow God, even in the face of dire circumstances, and highlights the theme of God's people living under foreign rule.

11. What does Darius's reaction reveal about his character and the nature of human power?

12. Darius's reaction shows that he is a weak king, easily manipulated by his officials, as they pressure him into signing the decree without fully considering its implications for Daniel. Despite his distress when he realizes the consequences of his decree, he is powerless to undo it, highlighting the limitations of human power even for a king. He is trapped by the very laws he put in place. His behavior contrasts sharply with Daniel's consistent faith and steadfast prayer.

13. How does Daniel's deliverance from the lions connect to larger theological themes in the book of Daniel?

14. Daniel's miraculous deliverance from the lions reinforces themes of God's sovereignty, faithfulness, and power. It shows that God is capable of rescuing his people from seemingly impossible situations. Daniel's statement of blamelessness before both God and Darius is a vindication of his character and faith. This parallels the protection of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in chapter 3. This reinforces the idea that God is the deliverer and that human laws are always subject to his supreme authority. The events of Daniel 6 also evoke New Testament imagery, prefiguring Christ, especially regarding Jesus's entombment, and resurrection.

15. What is the significance of Darius's proclamation at the end of the chapter?

16. Darius's proclamation, which is similar to Nebuchadnezzar's in chapter 4, is significant because it marks his recognition of the supremacy of Daniel's God. He not only acknowledges God's power but decrees that all people should fear and reverence him. This demonstrates that even foreign rulers can be brought to recognize the true God through His actions, showcasing God's ability to work within and through worldly powers, even those that initially seek to oppose Him. This final declaration ties all the previous themes together and highlights that history is moving according to God's plan.