

V. 20. Clothed Daniel. . . the third ruler in the kingdom. Why not second? Because Belshazzar himself was second, his father being yet king.

BELSHAZZAR SLAIN.

V. 30. In that night. "Even while the assembly in the banquet hall was absorbed in the dread excitement, the Persian army had marched beneath the walls along the dried-up bed of the Euphrates, ascended the embankments, found the bronze gates carelessly or treacherously left open, surprised the city, and in the turmoil that ensued Belshazzar was slain. Thus, at a stroke, the Babylonian empire passed away."—*Dr. Green*

June 9—Daniel in the Lions' Den.—Dan. vi, 14-23.—B.C. 537.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also therefore, O king, have I done no hurt."—Dan. vi, 22.

INTRODUCTORY.

"It was the policy of Cyrus to propitiate those whom he had overcome in war. The Medes, for example, were now united with him in firm friendship; an illustration of which is the appointment of 'Darius the Median' to the province of Babylon. Who this Darius was, or whether his name appears at all in the secular history, is still an unsolved question. All that we are told respecting him is that 'he was the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes,' and sixty-two years old at the time of his accession to the Babylonian throne. The probability is that he was no other than Astyages, the last king of the Medes, son of Cyaxares and grandfather to Cyrus. Darius (the Restrainer) was a common title of the Medo-Persian kings, and the name Ahasuerus represents the Hebrew form of the Græco-Persian word Cyaxares. Having lost the throne of Media, Darius accepted from his grandson the vice-royalty of Babylon, which he administered for a little more than one year, Cyrus himself assuming the government on his retirement or death. The first measure of the newly appointed governor for the consolidation of the kingdom was the appointment of lieutenants for its several provinces, presided over by three rulers subject only to the king, of whom Daniel was 'one,' becoming thus, though in a very different way from that indicated by Belshazzar the 'third ruler in the kingdom,' Cyrus himself and Darius being the first and second."—*Dr. S. G. Green*.

The preference shown to Daniel by Darius; the jealousy and plotting of his associates; the signing of the decree; Daniel's disregard of it, and detection—all these, as contained in the previous verses should be sketched by the teacher before entering on the exposition of the lesson itself, which may be divided as follows: (1) *Daniel's doom*; (2) *the king's distress*; and (3) *Daniel's deliverance*.

DANIEL'S DOOM. V. 14-17.

V. 14. Sore displeased with himself. "The king is chagrined and ashamed of himself that he allowed himself to be caught in this snare. Now for the first time he sees the envious and mean spirit of his officers in obtaining from him that decree, and bites his lips in shame that he could have been so beguiled and entrapped."—*Crozier*. Notice the fact that his very displeasure was with himself for being thus entrapped into signing a foolish decree with such haste and inconsideration; for, as *Adam Clark* remarks, it was a law the object of which "would have been a disgrace almost to an idiot." Set his heart on Daniel. See verse 3. Labourled * * * to deliver him. In what way we are not told; perhaps in endeavouring to find a precedent for settling the decree aside, or to influence those who had forced the statute upon him to agree to

making a precedent; or perhaps to discover some flaw or loop-hole in the evidence convicting Daniel that might favour his escape.

V. 15. Assembled—literally, came tumultuously. "No decree. * * * may be changed. The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king by giving him a power to make or unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would. The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king by supposing that whatever law he solemnly ratified was so well made that there could be no occasion to alter or dispense with it."

V. 16. Then the king commanded. The slavery of this monarch to the dictation of his inferiors—so different from Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean kings—can be to some extent accounted for in the fact that Darius was, as before stated, the victory of Cyrus, and it was in the power of those nobles to compromise his standing with that great monarch. Compare the case of Pilate (John xiv, 12; &c.) and also that of Herod (Matt. xiv, 9 &c.) Darius however appears to have been a much better man than either of these. Den of Lions. "This is a new kind of punishment not previously mentioned in Scripture; and that it first occurs here at Babylon is a remarkable fact, showing the accuracy of the sacred writers in their references to the manners and usages of different nations. We have the conclusive evidence of monuments brought to light by modern travellers on the sites not only of Babylon but of Susa also, representing lions destroying and preying upon human beings."—*17th*. Thy God * * * will deliver thee. No doubt Darius had heard of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the burning fiery furnace.

V. 17. A stone. A large flat stone which would be placed over the opening in the flat roof of the den or pit through which the condemned were thrown to the lions. Compare Lam. iii, 53. Sealed it. Compare Matt. xxvii, 66. With his own signet and * * * of his lords. All this went to mark the deliverance which followed as most surely the work of God.

THE KING'S DISTRESS. V. 18-20.

V. 18. Passed the night in fasting. So great was his anxiety that he had no desire or thought about food. Instruments of music. The usual evening's entertainment was postponed; he had no heart for it. And his sleep went from him. This whole verse with the two following ones shows the intense wretchedness of Darius. In an age when human life was sacrificed with so little thought on the part of Eastern monarchs, this tenderness and sensitiveness on his part is both remarkable and commendable.

V. 20. Is thy God * * * able to deliver? "The king has expressed to Daniel his confidence that God would deliver him, yet he still asks the question as one who would feel better assured by the evidence of his senses."—*Crozier*.

DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE. V. 21-23.

V. 21. Then said Daniel. Imagine the effect upon the king! Daniel's first word was in itself an answer to his trembling question. O king, live forever. The ordinary formal salutation to a king may have had a deeper significance in this case, expressing a heart wish that Darius might have that faith that Jesus afterwards spoke of in John vi, 25, 26.

V. 22. Hath sent His angel. Compare chap. xii, 28; Acts xii, 11, &c. We may suppose Daniel to have had a sweet sense of the presence of God by His angel while spending the night in the den with those hungry lions. There they were, of a savage nature and clamorous appetites, held in firm subjection, and God's own hand in it visibly present to his eye and consciously to his innermost soul. That was a night of mingled prayer and praise."—*Crozier*.

V. 23. Because he believed in his God. See Hebrews xi, 33; 1 Peter iv, 19; &c.

June 16—Messiah's Kingdom.—Dan. vii 9-14.—B.C. 539.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."—Psalm xli, 8.

INTRODUCTORY.

"After completing the personal history of Daniel, the Book turns back a year or two from our last lesson, and records another vision of Daniel. This vision covers the same ground as the one given in chap. ii. The salient points of the world's history are symbolized not as a great statue with its head of gold, but as a succession of beasts. The Babylonian empire is a lion, noble and bold, and kingly, with eagle's wings to mark its swiftness and the height to which its ambitions soared. Then followed the Medo-Persian world-empire as a bear, more fierce, warlike cruel than the lion, but inferior in strength and courage, devouring many nations. Next came a leopard, rapid and impetuous, symbolizing the Macedonian empire. It had four fowl's wings to intensify its swiftness to the four quarters of the earth; and four heads, the four kingdoms into which it was divided at the death of Alexander, and also, perhaps, the intellectual power that should then become prominent 'the kingdom of brains.' Then arose a fourth beast, so peculiar that no name was given to it, more terrible than all the others. It had ten horns, explaining as kings or kingdoms, and a little, but blasted horn sprang up among them, and absorbed three of the kingdoms; it had the eyes of a man and spoke great things. Some interpret this of the Greco-Syrian kingdom, which followed Alexander, and make the little horn to be Antiochus Epiphanes. But with most good interpreters the whole description seems to fit far more perfectly the Roman empire, seen by Daniel in the far off dim future, with Popery, with its triple crown and great boasting, and eyes like a man to see and control, for the little horn; and all to be broken and destroyed by the coming Messiah's kingdom."—*Peloubet*. Then came that part of Daniel's vision which is the subject of our study to-day.

Here we have (1) *Messiah's Enemies Destroyed*; and (2) *Messiah's Kingdom Established*.

MESSIAH'S ENEMIES DESTROYED.—V. 9-12.

V. 9. Thrones were cast down. "Cast down here means firmly set, preparatory to being used as a royal judgment-seat."—*Crozier*. The Ancient of Days. This term is peculiar to Daniel, and is equivalent to *Eternal*. (Isa. ix, 6). God the Father, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe is meant, who will give all power unto the Son, (see verse 13; Matt. xxviii, 18; &c.) Did sit—the attitude of a judge about to pass judgment. Garment white as snow. An emblem of purity and honour, and symbolical of the justice of the sentence that would be pronounced. Hair . . . like the pure wool—that is for whiteness indicating venerable age. Compare Rev. i, 14. His throne was like the fiery flame—"That is, it was brilliant and splendid, as if it were a mass of flame."—*Barney*. His wheels—that is the wheels of His throne. Oriental thrones usually moved on wheels. Wheels are an expressive symbol of power and rapid motion. Compare Ezek. i, 16, etc., and x, 9, &c., where the visible glory of Jehovah also appears upon a throne, which itself reposes upon a "firmament" or elevated platform, supported by four living creatures who are singularly connected with living wheels. Here also is the aspect of fire, (Ezek. i, 13).—*Crozier*.

V. 10. A fiery stream. "Fire and the