

# Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

## Chapter 6 – Daniel in the Lion’s Den

This is an inspirational story of great faith and trust in God, even in the face of an incredible trial.

### Daniel Exalted by Darius (Verses 1-3)

Please see the notes at the end of Daniel 5 for a discussion of who Darius may have been.

- 1-2** Once Darius had conquered Babylon and made it part of the Medo-Persian empire <sup>Daniel 5:31</sup>, he set up a government by appointing new leaders (“satraps”). Daniel was chosen by Darius to be one of the three top administrators (presidents, prime ministers) <sup>Daniel 2:48</sup> to hold all the satraps accountable for the financial matters in governing their area of responsibility. The number of satraps noted (120) is debated, because other sources have various numbers <sup>Esther 1:1</sup>.
- 3** Daniel impressed Darius by his excellent spirit and his faithfulness in administering his responsibilities, so he planned to put Daniel over the “whole kingdom” <sup>Genesis 41:41, Daniel 1:20</sup>.

### The Plot Against Daniel (Verses 4-9)

- 4-5** The native (worldly) Medo-Persians were jealously angry of an 80+ year old (Godly) Jew being in such a powerful position over them <sup>Daniel 3:12</sup> (and certainly did not want him as head over everything), so they tried to find some corruption they could charge him with; however, their efforts were unsuccessful (futile). Concluding that Daniel was a man of flawless integrity, they set out to find a conflict between the earthly Medo-Persian laws under Darius and Daniel’s conscience, directed by the laws of Daniel’s God <sup>Acts 24:13-16</sup>.
- 6** The Daniel conspirators greeted King Darius in the usual manner <sup>Daniel 2:4, 3:9, 5:10, Nehemiah 2:3</sup>.
- 7-8** Years earlier the royal leaders were required to worship as directed by King N <sup>Daniel 3:1-6</sup>; in a similar manner, these advisors (stating they were “all” in agreement) told King Darius he should issue and enforce a decree stating any person found praying to anyone except to him in the following 30 days should be thrown in the lions’ den. These leaders urged Darius to quickly put it in writing, also reminding him decrees were irreversible <sup>Esther 1:19, 8:8, Daniel 6:12</sup>. Obviously not “all” of the administrators were in agreement, because they didn’t consult with Daniel.
- 9** In the blindness of his pride, Darius issued the decree, not realizing the leaders’ objective. As indicated here <sup>v.8</sup>, the laws of the Medes and Persians did not allow any change to a decree once it was formally written and signed by the king. As a result, the Medo-Persian laws were sovereign over everything, including the king. This was in contrast to the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king of the Babylonian empire, who had been given total earthly sovereignty <sup>Daniel 2:37-38, 5:18-19</sup>.

### Daniel Proved His Faithfulness in the Face of Testing (Verses 10-11)

- 10** Daniel, clearly knowing about and plainly understanding the decree and its punishment, showed his faithfulness to God <sup>1 Thessalonians 5:17-18</sup> by continuing his routine of going to

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"his upstairs room" <sup>Matthew 6:6a</sup> three-times-daily <sup>Psalms 55:16-17</sup> to maintain his practice of kneeling in prayer with his windows open toward Jerusalem <sup>2 Chronicles 6:36-39, Psalm 5:7, 28:2</sup>.

Christians have a responsibility to obey human leaders <sup>Hebrews 13:17</sup>. However, when earthly rulers demand something unbiblical, then believers are called to yield to The higher authority <sup>Acts 5:29</sup>.

God honors and hears all sincere prayers from His followers, but for special fervent prayer, kneeling was the position of humility used by many in the Bible <sup>Psalms 95:6</sup>, including Solomon <sup>2 Chronicles 6:13</sup>, Ezra <sup>Ezra 9:5-6a</sup>, Jesus <sup>Luke 22:39-41</sup>, Stephen <sup>Acts 7:59-60</sup>, Peter <sup>Acts 9:40</sup> and Paul <sup>Acts 20:36, 21:5</sup>.

In Solomon's prayer of dedication for the just completed temple, he prayed to the "LORD, the God of Israel" that His "eyes be open toward [the] temple night and day" in order for Him to "Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place." <sup>1 Kings 8:27-30</sup>.

Certainly Daniel would have behaved as he did, no matter what; however, don't you think the faithful actions of Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego ~50 years earlier provided some encouragement to Daniel?

- 11** Being sure Daniel would not change his routine, because of his integrity and loyalty to God, the leaders that had convinced Darius to issue the decree came to observe his daily habit of praying in his room with the windows open toward Jerusalem, asking God for help.

Through his earthly workers, Satan has used the same approach to attack many followers of God: not being able to find legitimate charges to bring against them, the accusers conspire to lie in wait to discover anything to discredit or even kill Godly men. This tactic was used against Daniel here <sup>Daniel 6</sup>, as well as against David <sup>Psalms 59:3</sup>, Paul <sup>Acts 21:27-29, 25:1-12</sup> and even Jesus <sup>Matthew 26:57-68, Luke 20:19-40</sup>.

Shouldn't all Christians wish they had a testimony like Daniel's, even if it resulted in persecution?

### Daniel Accused Before Darius (Verses 12-15)

- 12-13** Once they had proof Daniel had violated the requirement of the decree, the arrogant leaders went directly to Darius to report the violation <sup>Daniel 3:8-12</sup>. First, they made sure Darius agreed to the specific wording of the decree (signified by his signature on the decree) and that, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, the decree could not be changed or repealed. They then surprised Darius with their trap by telling him that Daniel, "one of the exiles" (an outsider <sup>Esther 3:8</sup>) continued to pray to his God (similar to the refusal of Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego to worship the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar <sup>Daniel 3:12</sup>).

- 14** Darius responded with grief <sup>Mark 6:26</sup> (unlike Nebuchadnezzar's angry response to Daniel's friends <sup>Daniel 3:13</sup>), determining to give himself until sundown to find a way to save Daniel.

To put it in today's vernacular, Darius called in his justice department to look for a loophole in the law.

- 15** The accusers once again made it a point to remind Darius of the irreversibility of the decree. The accusers' intentions were clear to Darius, but he was resigned that he must carry out the decree.

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### Daniel Cast into the Lions' Den (Verses 16-17)

**16** Once sundown came and Darius could find no way out of his dilemma, he was forced to execute the decree by giving the order, and Daniel was thrown into the den with the lions. In a mixture of confidence and hope, the king exclaimed to Daniel as he was being placed in the lions' den that he hoped Daniel's God would deliver him <sup>Job 5:19, Psalm 37:39-40, 97:10</sup>.

In saying "...you serve continually", Darius added to the evidence of Daniel's incredible testimony <sup>v.11</sup>.

**17** The den was closed with a large stone and sealed <sup>Matthew 27:65-66</sup> with Darius' signet ring and the rings of the accusing advisors, making sure the king could not allow Daniel to escape.

While the accusers sealed the den with both their and Darius' rings to make sure their evil intent be carried out, God used this action to prove His rescue of Daniel was an indisputable miracle <sup>Genesis 50:20</sup>.

### The King Lamented for Daniel (Verses 18-20)

**18** After completing the carrying out of the punishment, Darius returned to his palace for a grief-stricken night of quiet fasting <sup>2 Samuel 12:15-17, Daniel 10:2-3</sup> and insomnia <sup>Esther 6:1</sup>.

**19-20** Continuing in his unusual behavior for a king, Darius arose at the break of dawn and rushed over to the den to see the results of Daniel's night with the lions. Darius started out, not by looking to see what had happened, but by first calling out to Daniel in an "anguished voice", hoping beyond hope that Daniel's powerful God had rescued him and he would receive a response from his trusted friend.

Unfortunately, the half-hearted 'faith' Darius had in Daniel's God is similar to many American church-goers of today. They claim to believe in the Lord, but have not placed their full trust in Him <sup>Proverbs 3:5</sup> and His Word <sup>Psalm 119:42</sup>. Instead, they choose to govern their lives with earthly wisdom <sup>James 3:13-18</sup>, resulting in them being double-minded and unsure in their faith throughout life <sup>James 1:5-8</sup>.

### God Delivered Daniel from the Lions' Den (Verses 21-23)

**21-22** To the amazement of Darius, Daniel calmly responded with the customary greeting of respect to a king <sup>Nehemiah 2:3, Daniel 3:9</sup>. Daniel proclaimed "[his] God sent His angel" <sup>Daniel 3:28</sup> to rescue him <sup>Acts 12:11</sup> from the mouths of the lions <sup>Daniel 6:27, Hebrews 11:33</sup>, because God honored Daniel's obedient faith <sup>Romans 1:5</sup> and his virtuous service to King Darius <sup>Hebrews 13:17</sup>.

Not mentioning his thought life, Daniel only said he had not "*done any wrong*" toward King Darius. <sup>v.22</sup>. One of the primary roles of Angels is to minister to genuine followers of God <sup>Psalm 91:10-11, Hebrews 1:14</sup>.

**23** King Darius was ecstatic at discovering Daniel's safety. Not waiting to remove the stone, Darius immediately had Daniel lifted out of the lions' den. As a result of Daniel's deep trust in the Lord <sup>1 Chronicles 5:20, Isaiah 12:2, Hebrews 11:32-33</sup>, there was not a single harmful mark from the lions on Daniel (similar to Shadrack/Meshack/Abednego coming out of the fire <sup>Daniel 3:27</sup>).

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### The Enemies of Daniel Destroyed (Verses 24)

**24** The king commanded that the leaders who had conspired against Daniel (probably just the few advisors who appeared before Darius to convince him to issue the decree) and their family members <sup>Joshua 7:20-26</sup> were then thrown into the lions' den (divine judgement). They were all killed (and bones crushed) even before their bodies reached the floor of the den.

In cases of someone causing injury or death <sup>Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-22</sup>, the Mosaic Law required an "eye for eye, tooth for tooth". It was also the rule for false witnesses <sup>Deuteronomy 19:16-21</sup>. This type of judgement was referred to as the principle of exact retribution (*lex talionis*: the law of punishment identical to the offense [lit]), and was also applied in the laws of Rome and many other nations.

The Mosaic Law also required that an individual must pay for their own sin: a parent could not pay for the sin of their child and a child could not pay for the sin of the parent <sup>Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Kings 14:6</sup>.

However, Ammianus Marcellinus, a fourth-century Roman historian, confirmed the killing of the families of condemned men was a common custom in the Persian Empire.

Saving Daniel from harm and the judgement of his accusers was another example of the fulfillment of God's promised blessings for those who bless Israel and curses for those who curse Israel <sup>Genesis 12:3</sup>.

### Darius Wrote a Second Decree (Verses 25-28)

**25** Darius began a 2<sup>nd</sup> binding decree <sup>Esther 1:19</sup> with a humble greeting to his subjects <sup>Daniel 4:1</sup>.

Darius "wrote to all the peoples", indicating he was not just a local leader, but another name for Cyrus.

**26-27** The decree Darius issued was a short, to the point command for all of the people to fear and revere the "God of Daniel", who is "living" (probably implying all other 'gods' are dead) and will reign over His kingdom forever. Continuing in this decree, Darius proclaimed the awesome power of God over all of creation and the rescuer of His faithful follower, Daniel.

The great faith of Daniel and his friends resulted in earlier decrees by King Nebuchadnezzar that called on everyone to fear the Jewish God <sup>Daniel 3:28-29, 4:1-37</sup>, similar to this decree by Darius.

These facts are a strong illustration that while earthly kingdoms change, God never changes <sup>Psalms 55:19</sup>.

**28** In the end, Daniel continued to prosper in all that he did, because of his obedience to God.

Once again, a passage in the OT <sup>Daniel 6</sup> provides a picture of God's unique plan for the Hebrew people - God generally does not keep them from times of trouble, but watches over them through their trials.

A Biblical principle illustrated in both OT <sup>Daniel 3,6</sup> and NT <sup>1 Corinthians 4:12-13, 2 Timothy 3:10-15</sup> Scripture is that all genuine saints who face persecution are called to remain true regardless of the cost.

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