

Daniel Chapter Six

- **Daniel in the Den of Lions**

Daniel in the Den of Lions

Verses 1-28

Verses 1-2

“It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.”

Some time had passed since the fall of Babylon and Darius had organized the territory. He stands in contrast to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. He had less power than the king and more sensitivity than the grandson.

This well-known chapter contains no prophecy and very little history. However, it is rich in Biblical lessons. Learning to live righteously as an alien and depending on God to deliver you from danger is just as important as getting a glimpse of future Biblical events.

Like God will protect the remnant during the Tribulation period, God protected Daniel in the lion's den. Just as there was a question of where Daniel was in chapter 3 when his three friends were being thrown into the fiery furnace, one can ask the same question here, where are his three friends when he is being thrown into the lion's den?

We should let the event of chapter three remind us of the depth of human hatred and the event of chapter six remind us of the depth of satanic hatred. As Peter wrote in the New Testament ...

1 Peter 5:8-9

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Verse 3

“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

We have come to know Daniel in a way that these events may not surprise us. He has proven himself to be a righteous man. At the time of these events, he would be around eighty-three years of age. Daniel's life parallels Joseph in many ways. Darius, in his restructuring, now plans to make Daniel second in command to the king. This appointment is once again a God ordained appointment.

Verses 4-5

“At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for

charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

A conspiracy against God’s chosen should not surprise us. Children of God should live in a way that charges brought against them are a lie. Envious people attempting to bring down a political rival will go to any lengths to do so. Their first point of attack was Daniel’s professional competency. His track record spoke for itself. Daniel was a special kind of politician, *“he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.”*

Philippians 2:14-15

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.”

Daniel was different. When he was first brought to Babylon, he asked for a different diet. Everything about Daniel has been different. Daniel was a Jew in a foreign land, but his mastery of the language, culture, laws, and literature would make his age and ethnic background non-issues. Daniel’s enemies aimed their attack directly at one issue – Daniel’s relationship with his God. Daniel’s enemies knew he was faithful and dependent upon his God. If you are going to be verbally attacked what better area to be attacked than your love and dependence for God!

However, they had a problem here. Persia had no law prohibiting monotheistic (one God) worship. There was no charge to bring against Daniel.

Verses 6-7

“So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den.”

Now the real conspiracy begins. Those who had been passed over for promotion in favor of Daniel begin their plan. One would think that Darius would see through this ploy. Maybe the time limit of one month seemed reasonable. Maybe the thought of this action bringing unity was attractive.

Verses 8-9

“Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing.”

These conspirators wanted more than a verbal announcement; they wanted it in writing. This same “language” is found in Esther.

Esther 1:19

“Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed”

Esther 8:8

“Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.”

Once it was written a royal edict could not be revoked. Darius could do nothing; Nebuchadnezzar would have, but not Darius. This is more evidence of the deterioration from one kingdom to the next. So, by the end of verse 9, Daniel’s enemies had their plan in motion.

Let’s not miss the lie here! This group told the king *“The royal administrators ... have all agreed”* on this plan. The king had no reason to believe Daniel was not part of that agreement.

Verse 10

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

How should God’s servants respond to such a conspiracy?

Ezekiel 14:13-14

“Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals,¹⁴ even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

Daniel continued offering prayers of thanksgiving! Remember he had not seen his homeland for about seventy years.

The custom of praying towards Jerusalem, towards the temple was something first adopted by Solomon.

2 Chronicles 6:33-39

“When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to you toward this city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name,³⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.³⁶

"When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near;³⁷ and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity and say, 'We have

sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly'; ³⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; ³⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.

Daniel was in the habit of praying towards Jerusalem because it was there that the glorious presence of Yahweh had come to reside. Jerusalem was the direction of Daniel's life – facing the Lord!

1 Kings 8:10-11

"When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple."

Yes, in Ezekiel 10 the Shekinah Glory had forsaken the temple but the Lord promised to return there...

Ezekiel 43:2

"and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory."

...and the Lord promised to restore Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 29:10,14

"This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place... ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Everything about verse 10 tells us Daniel regularly knelt by his window and prayed. Daniel's posture, kneeling, is a way of acknowledging our humility before God. Let's not miss how easily Daniel could have compromised his worship to save his life. Why not suspend this public prayer pattern for a while. Why not close the window and pray in private? They could have accused Daniel of praying but they wouldn't be able to prove it. If he was asked, Daniel probably would have confessed violating the decree but would Darius have asked him? There was no compromise in Daniel.

Verses 11-12

"Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king

answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

I'm sure no one would have a hard time imagining this crowd of conspirators standing on the street looking up to Daniel's window, waiting for him to begin his prayer time. The fact that they did this was really a compliment. This man had a Godly reputation and Godly convictions.

Verse 11 offers more details into Daniel's prayer. Verse 10 said he prayed a prayer of thanksgiving. Verse 11 says he also asked God for help.

Verses 13-14

"Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him."

Daniel's enemy's plan went exactly the way they wanted it to go. The king issued the decree in writing; Daniel still prayed to his God.

Does this scene bring back memories? Remember the astrologers who approached Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 3?

Daniel 3:12

"But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

If nothing else one point has been made clear – God's people will serve no god but God Himself!

The king's reaction reveals his heart. *"he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him."* The king was not distressed because someone violated his edict, He was distressed because he had been tricked and Daniel had been trapped.

Verses 15-16

"Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed." So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

Daniel's enemies remind the king he had no choice in this matter. The law of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. Again, revealing his heart, Darius followed Daniel all

the way to the lion's den and speaks words of hopeful expectations. He fully recognizes that Daniel's fate is in God's hands.

These were real lions, fierce, wild beasts not old toothless animals. Why lions? What happened to the fiery furnace? One empire had replaced another, and the Persians worshipped fire (part of their Zoroastrian beliefs) and would never use fire as a form of punishment.

Footnote: Zoroastrianism: The early form of this religion was distinctly Persian. This system replaced the polytheism of Assyria and Babylon. The religion is named after a wandering prophet named Zoroaster. Most of what is known about him is mystical including the detail of his birth and existence. He was a contemporary of Buddha, Confucius and Jeremiah. Rejecting polytheism, Zoroaster warned of a coming day of judgment where everyone would be faced with their record on earth. Matter was seen as evil, and a corpse was the most defiling of all earthly things. Funerals could only be held in dry weather because rain must not touch the defiled corpse. A corpse could not be burned – fire was sacred.

Verse 17

“A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.”

The pit or lion's den was underground. The stone placed over the opening would have had hot wax poured over it so the king could “seal” it with his ring, making removing the stone impossible.

The king was the one the wise men needed to be concerned about. By sealing the den with his ring, they guarantee there wouldn't be a mid-night rescue attempt. Darius was bound by Persian law.

Verse 18

“Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.”

The long night began. Darius would normally have eaten a huge meal and enjoyed some type of entertainment before retiring. Instead, the king spent the night in meditation and fasting.

Verses 19-20

“At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

At the morning first light Darius rushed to the pit and called to Daniel. One can feel the air of expectation. This is more than just the rescue of a friend; this was a test of deity. Darius knew of no gods who could stop the mouth of the lions. In anguish he called out.

Verses 21-22

“Daniel answered, “O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.”

What a mighty morning message; *“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.”* One has to believe there is a direct relationship between the fourth person in the fiery furnace and the angel in the lion’s den.

Daniel not only spent the night in the company of the lions but infinitely better, he spent the night in the company of the pre-incarnate Son of God! It is difficult not to be curious about the conversation through those night hours.

Verses 23-24

“The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.”

The king’s anguish turned to joy as they hoisted Daniel out of the pit. Daniel was saved by his faith – by his God!

Hebrews 11:33

“who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,”

Suddenly the pagan leader showed the fury of a wicked heart and threw Daniel’s accusers into the den *“along with their wives and children.”* This may seem barbaric, but this kind of judgment was seen among the Jews and sometimes by God Himself.

Numbers 16

“the ground under them split apart³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions.³³ They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.³⁴ At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!"³⁵ And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense. ... So Eleazar the priest collected the bronze censers brought by those who had been burned up, and he had them hammered out to overlay the altar, ...⁴⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to

make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started."
⁴⁷ So Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. ⁴⁸ He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. ⁴⁹ But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah. ⁵⁰ Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, for the plague had stopped.

Deuteronomy 19

"¹¹ But if a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, ¹² the elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. ¹³ Show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you... ²⁰ The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. ²¹ Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

There was no suffering for those thrown into the lion's den because "*before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.*"

Verses 25-27

"Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

Darius once more took pen in hand and sent a message, a personal testimony, to all the people, nations and "*men of every language throughout the land*". Similar to the words of Nebuchadnezzar at the end of chapter 4, Darius had found the same peace (4:1). Darius commands men to fear the God of Daniel and testifies He is the Living God. These words are from the same man who could not eat or sleep the night before!

Darius' testimony conforms to the theme of Daniel, the sovereignty of God; "*He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.*"

Verse 28

"So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

The chapter ends with a delineation between Darius and Cyrus putting an end to the argument that they are the same person. As for Daniel, abilities in both leadership and administration are both gifts from God and so he "*prospered during the reign of Darius*

and the reign of Cyrus.” Daniel continued studying the Scriptures and praying. Daniel 10-12 was written during the third year of Cyrus’ reign in Babylon.

Eventually it was Cyrus who encouraged the Jews to return to Israel to rebuild their temple and their (God’s) city (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:11, Isaiah 44). Cyrus reigned until he was dethroned by Alexander the Great.

This chapter ends the “history” portion of the book. Now it moves into the visions and prophecies of Daniel.