

Daniel 6:1-28

Daniel in the Lions' Den

After Babylon's king Belshazzar is killed and the Medo-Persians take over Babylon, a man named Darius is named as ruling in Babylon.

Daniel 6:1-2 - "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage."

There is some controversy over the identity of Darius.

His real name was probably Gubaru (or Ugbaru), who is known from the Nabonidus Chronicle as the leader of the Medo-Persian forces who took Babylon. Gubaru appointed administrators and managed Babylon, which aligns with the authority exercised by Darius in Daniel 6. The name "Darius" was a title that means "Holder of the Scepter" or "Holder of the Good." Daniel 6:28 refers to "the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian," showing that Darius and Cyrus ruled concurrently. This Darius/Gubaru reigned for only two years.

The Bible later mentions other men named Darius.

For instance, another, later "Darius" is mentioned in **Ezra 4:5-7**, along with Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes. (Ahasuerus is also the king in the Book of Esther). A third reference to a ruler named Darius occurs in **Nehemiah 12:12**, which refers to the "reign of Darius the Persian." It is unclear exactly who that Darius is, but most historians believe it to be Darius Codomannus (336–331 B), the last king of the Persian monarchy who was defeated by Alexander the Great.

Daniel 6:3 - "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."

Once again Daniel is recognized and honored by the authorities of Babylon.

Jealousy and Intrigue

Daniel 6:4-5 - "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

Daniel was a man of integrity, and there were no skeletons in his closet. So they cooked up a plot to use Daniel's dedication to God against him.

The jealous officials propose to Darius that he issue a sort of executive order to forbid on pain of death prayers or petitions to any god other than himself for a period of 30 days. Those who disobeyed would be "cast into the den of lions."

They figured this would appeal to Darius' pride (the decree made him a god for 30 days) and his desire for a unified kingdom.

Daniel 6:8-9 - "Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree."

Like we see in the Book of Esther, the Persian tradition was that a decree of the king was binding, and not even the king himself could reverse it.

Daniel Disregards the Decree

Daniel 6:10 - "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

Daniel's habit in exile of praying toward Jerusalem was according to **1 Kings 8:30** - "And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive."

Why did he pray three time a day?

According to the Talmud, Abraham initiated the morning prayer, Isaac the afternoon, and Jacob the evening. David mentions three prayer times: **Psalms 55:18** - "Evening, morning and noontime, I speak and moan, and He hearkened to my voice." After the Second Temple's destruction in 70 A.D. they were formalized to correspond with the two daily sacrifices—Tamid (morning) and afternoon — with the evening prayer (Maariv) added as a later, obligatory requirement.

The Muslim command to pray five times a day is based off the Jewish tradition.

Daniel prayed on his knees, a posture that exhibits humility.

He gave thanks and made supplication.

Giving thanks accompanies the prayers of believers. Supplication is asking like Daniels companions did: "If God chooses not to save us, we will still not bow down" to a false god.

Christians are told to "pray without ceasing":

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** - ""Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Jesus was in communion with the Father continually, but in the garden he expressed the attitude required for prayer: "Not my will, but Thine be done" (**Luke 22:42**),

Notice that Daniel prayed to God rather than to Darius, whose name can be translated as "Holder of the Good." Darius represents the world's version of the "good."

Adam and Eve's fall in the garden was the result of their desire to judge good and evil for themselves. What we perceive to be "good" is often the opposite on reflection.

For instance, Joseph was thrown into a pit and then sold into slavery by his brothers. But Joseph's path of trouble was part of God's plan.

- **Genesis 50:20** - "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

In other situations, we give so much importance to the subject of our prayers that we "pray to the problem" instead of leaving it in God's hands.

- **Romans 8:26** - "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The Trap is Sprung

The court officials surprise Daniel as he is praying. They go to Darius and remind the king of his decree, and then accuse Daniel.

Daniel 6:13 - "Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day."

Darius, who respects and depends on Daniel's skills, begins to suspect now what all this was about.

Daniel 6:14 - "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him."

Darius was not only displeased with himself for not discerning what these officials were up to, and falling for flattery, but he was displeased with them as well. He tried to figure out a legal way to spare Daniel, but could not.

Into the Lions' Den

Daniel 6:16 - "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

Again, a Babylonian king expresses belief in the power of the one true God.

Daniel 6:17 - "And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel."

Sealed so the officials could not secretly kill Daniel themselves, and so the miracle of deliverance would be even greater.

Daniel 6:18 - "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him."

Like Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, the king could not sleep. In the morning he rushed to the den of lions.

Daniel 6:19-20 - 'Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Daniel 6:21-22 - "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 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 before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Just as in the case of Daniel's three companions in the fiery furnace, an angel or messenger was with him, shutting the lions' mouths. Actually it says God sent "His angel" i.e. the Angel of the Lord, which could refer to the pre-incarnate Christ - also seen in the fiery furnace.

Daniel 6:23 - "Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

Retribution

Daniel 6:24 - "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den."

Daniel's deliverance is reflected in the Book of Hebrews among the list of the faithful.

- **Hebrews 11:33** - "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions."

In that verse, it says Daniel stopped the lions' mouths through faith. Daniel's faith and God's presence and power combined to perform the miracle.

To be like Daniel, we need to empty ourselves and surrender to His will.

It's a Picture of Christ's Death and Resurrection

We need to remember that these Bible stories always refer to Jesus in some way:

- **John 5:39** - "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Jesus, who was innocent like Daniel, was falsely accused and crucified.

He was placed in a tomb, which was shut with a large stone and then sealed.

In the same way that Satan thought he had eliminated the Messiah, the tables were turned and Satan was defeated, along with death when Jesus descended and then arose.

Like Haman, who was impaled on a 50-foot high gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Haman's sons were also killed, like the families of the jealous court officials in this story.

Josephus (Antiquities I. 10. c. 11. sect. 6.) relates, that the enemies of Daniel, when they saw no hurt came to him, would not ascribe it to the providence of God, but to the lions being full of food; upon which the king then ordered much meat to be given them, and then the men to be cast in to them, to see whether because of their fulness they would come unto them or not:

"And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den; the lions seized them at once; and though they did all they could to defend themselves, fighting with them; yet the lions were too powerful for them, and overcame them, and not only tore off their flesh, but broke their bones in pieces, and that as they were falling, before they came to the bottom, or the lower part of the den; this was a plain proof that it was not through fulness, or want of appetite, that the lions did not fall upon Daniel and devour him"

Darius' Declaration

Daniel 6:25-28 - "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and

his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

"So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

Obeying the Law

This incident brings up a number of questions, about obedience to authority and how to be faithful to God amidst persecution.

So far, Daniel and his companions have done nothing but disobey government rules and decrees.

Were they wrong?

We're told in **Romans 13:1-2** - "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

But we're also instructed by the reply of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin when told to stop preaching:

- **Acts 4:18-20** - "Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Esther broke the law, and risked her life, by approaching Ahasuerus without being summoned (**Esther 5:1**) to try to save her people from a powerful political conspiracy against them.

Some rabbis criticized Mordecai for not bowing down before Haman, a high government official, which stirred up more trouble for the Jews. So they imagined an idol around Haman's neck caused him to not bow down.

The Bible depicts government as both having the ability to persecute believers in the image of the Beast in Revelation, as well as serving as a social structure that keeps order as in Romans 13.

Government may be God ordained, but because of the fall it is infused with Satanic possibilities.

Jesus noted that the coin used to pay the legal tax had Caesar's face imprinted on it, while each human is created in the image of God.

- **Luke 20:25** - "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."

He also proposed that some laws were higher or "weightier" than others:

- **Matthew 23:23** - "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

For the midwives in Egypt, for instance, it was more important to honor the lives of the male babies rather than obedience to Pharaoh's decree to kill them.

The theologian Stanley Hauerwas reminds us that Romans 13 should be paired with Romans 12.

- **Romans 12:20-21** - "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Burning coals" are an image of God's judgment (**Psalm 140:10**). When a consciousness of judgment is glimpsed, it can open us up to repentance.

Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek" has the same effect. By doing good to our enemies - even to representatives of an oppressive government - we activate a spiritual condition that might draw them to feel shame for their actions and repentance for their sins.

Such action is so radically opposed to our human nature that it is startling, and momentarily brings the natural chain of events to a halt. In that space, the Holy Spirit can act. It can break a cycle of hate.

But nothing is guaranteed. The Roman soldier might interpret this as mocking him, and cut you down with his sword.

As Daniel shows us, walking in the Spirit is a risk. But God is faithful.