

The Lions' Den

Daniel 6

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What event made Daniel famous?

His trusting God to survive the lion's den.

This enabled him to be recognized in the "hall of faith"

Hebrews 11:33-34 – who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

The Plot Against Daniel, Daniel 6:1-9

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; ² and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. ⁴ So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God." ⁶ So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Who was Darius?

Darius, the Mede, was an individual whom Cyrus, the Persian, appointed as ruler (king) over Babylon immediately after its capture; Medo-Persian rule was implemented.

How did King Darius organize his government?

He organized his Kingdom so the responsibility could be shared seeking out leadership/management capability from within the Empire.

- He appointed 120 satraps – The term "satrap" (or prince) refers to an individual who is a governor or viceroy with both civil and military powers
- The 120 satraps reported to 3 governors... "so that the king might not suffer loss" (v2)

Why was Daniel appointed to be one of the governors?

- Daniel not only had seniority in this group, but he had superiority
- Daniel was probably chosen because of his experience holding high office in the Babylonian Empire.

Why did King Darius consider promoting Daniel over the whole realm (verse 3)?

Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him

How might we likewise distinguish ourselves with an excellent spirit?

Do excellent work...

Proverbs 22:29 – Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.

And how do we do excellent work? Work with the right attitude...

Ephesians 6:5-7 – Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men

Why do you think the governors and satraps plotted against Daniel?

Probably because of mere envy and jealousy, and perhaps because Daniel was a foreigner and one of a despised group of people being held in captivity.

- He was a Hebrew! (God's chosen people)
- He was well known for his integrity and this made him a target
- The other two administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against him
- The one who was "conquered" was put in charge of the "conquerors" (a formula for certain jealousy)
- He held a coveted position – To preside over the affairs of the "once" Babylonian Empire and all the conquered provinces

Why do you think God arranged for Daniel to have such a position of authority in the Kingdom?

God made sure His plans and desires would be accomplished through the Babylonian Empire by having His selected administrator in a position of leadership. God's man would also continue to be in charge.

How did Daniel's enemies attack him?

- They knew that his integrity was without blemish (something they did not have)
- They knew that he was faithful in his religious duties and that he prayed to his God. They knew he prayed three times a day and made no effort to conceal it
- They did not try to kill Daniel themselves, for fear of the consequences, so they devised a plan that the King himself would be responsible for his death
- They appealed to King Darius' vanity and convinced him to issue a "decree" commanding his subjects to "pray to the king" exclusively for one month (v6-7)

What did those plotting against Daniel fail to consider?

In plotting against Daniel, they were effectively plotting against the God who controlled their very existence.

v7 – What was the lie the plotters used to coerce the king to do their bidding?

That they had consulted "all" of the governors; Daniel had not been consulted... he would never have agreed to such a pagan act!

How did the plotters take advantage of their knowledge of the king's weakness to have their way?

- He yielded to flattery!
- He thought it great to be treated like a god!
- He accepted the elevated position of deity so that prayers would only be offered to him

What did King Darius not recognize about the men who manipulated him?

- That he was being used by self-centered, envious, jealous men
- He did not understand the selfish motives and hidden agenda of his own subjects!

How does not having a biblical perspective of the nature of men get people into trouble?

They think people are basically good and thus are surprised when they are taken advantage of.

Psalm 14:3 – *They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, no, not one.*

How did Daniel's enemies appeal to Darius' pride and his desire for a unified domain?

The suggestion to compel every former Babylonian subject to formerly acknowledge the authority of the Medes and Persians would help unify their empire.

- King Nebuchadnezzar tried to do it with a statue
- The "organizational" structure created by Darius would help to facilitate this desired unification
- These administrators and satraps are, on the surface, demonstrating their support of King Darius and seemingly have his interest in mind

What was the decree that the conspirators have King Darius approve?

Anybody that prayed to any god or man except to the king would be thrown into a den of lions.

How did this decree tie the king's hands?

- A written decree could not be revoked even by the king himself (according to the law of the Medes and Persians).
- The decrees of a Persian king were unchangeable because he was thought to speak for the gods, who could never be wrong and who never needed to change their minds

How did the law of the Medes and Persians differ from the Babylonians?

- This situation showed that King Darius' authority was quite inferior to that of King Nebuchadnezzar whose person was above the law
- This government of King Darius fulfilled the "inferior" Silver Arms and Chest of Nebuchadnezzar's statue

Why do you think the “decree” for praying to Darius was for a 30-day period? (V2)

It was long enough to entrap Daniel while not looking suspicious in their scheme.

Daniel in the Lions’ Den, Daniel 6:10-17

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

¹¹ Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. ¹² And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king’s decree: “Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?”

The king answered and said, “The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.”

¹³ So they answered and said before the king, “That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

¹⁴ And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. ¹⁵ Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”

¹⁶ So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.” ¹⁷ Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

Did Daniel know about the decree? Did this knowledge cause him to change his routine?

Yes... Since the decree did not say that a person had to pray during the thirty days, he could have stopped praying altogether for that month.

How did Daniel respond to the decree?

He continued his custom of generally praying three times a day. He did nothing to hide it, the windows were wide open toward Jerusalem.

Why do you think Daniel disobeyed the king’s decree?

The king was merely a man, not due worship so did what he knew was right...

Acts 4:19 – *But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.”*

Doesn’t this conflict with Romans 13 were we are commanded to obey government authorities?

We are to obey government authorities as long as their decrees are aligned with God’s Word. If instead they force us to disobey God, we should engage in civil disobedience and trust God for the consequences...

Acts 5:29 – *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”*

What did the conspirators do to trap Daniel?

They simply went to his house where they know he prayed and witnessed him doing what he had always done.

What did the conspirators report to the king?

They reminded the king of the decree that could not be altered and that Daniel had not shown “*due regard*” for the king by disobeying it.

What did King Darius do when he realized he had been tricked into having Daniel killed?

- He was displeased with himself for not recognizing the hidden agenda of the conspirators
- He tried to deliver Daniel laboring all day but was constrained by the law
- In the end, the king had to give the command to throw Daniel in the lion’s den sealing the entrance with a stone and signets of himself and lords

What did the king appeal to when he failed to prevent Daniel from going in the lion’s den?

He appealed to Daniel’s God...

“May your God, whom you serve continually rescue you!” (v16)

King Darius recognized that the God of Daniel really was omnipotent and sovereign, He could deliver him!

Daniel Saved from the Lions, Daniel 6:18-23

¹⁸ Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. ¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

²³ Now the king was exceedingly 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 injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

What did the king do while Daniel was in the lion's den?

He fasted, isolated himself and lost sleep because of worry.

How did King Darius show concern for Daniel?

- How he spent the night
- Going to the lion's den at first dawn
- Calling out to Daniel hoping for a response!
- He was glad when he realized Daniel had survived the lion's den

How did Daniel respond to the king calling out to him?

With respect... "O King live forever! My God sent his angel, and shut the mouths of the lions..." (v21-22)

v22 – How was it that Daniel had done no wrong before the king?

- He was still faithful to the king as God's governing proxy on earth (Romans 13).
- His prayers were simply to the only One who was able to hear him and had the power to affect change
- He had done nothing to harm his throne, or to cause any dissatisfaction among the King's subjects

v23 – How did Daniel manage to survive the lion's den unscathed?

Because "he had trusted in his God"

Darius Honors God, Daniel 6:24-28

²⁴ And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

What happened to those who conspired against Daniel?

- Those governors and satraps who accused Daniel were thrown into the lion's den along with their wives and children
- They were killed before they even reached the bottom of the den

What is the principle here?

Sin always has consequences & conspiring against God will not end well...

Psalm 7:14-16 – *Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.*

God will cause our enemy to be impaled on the very snare our enemy has set for us.

Why were the wives and children included in the execution?

- Sin impacts others, especially those close to us
- It kept family members from holding a grudge and attempting retribution

What decree did this situation cause Darius to make?

- The new “decree” resembled the decree King Nebuchadnezzar issued after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been removed from the fiery furnace (Dan 3:29)
- That people must fear and have reverence for the God of Daniel.
- It was a testimony of recognizing God’s existence, capabilities, and His control over circumstances

Did King Darius come to trust in the Creator-God?

It certainly appears so

- King Darius and probably others were brought to God through the miracle of Daniel being delivered from the lion’s den!

How did it work out in the end for Daniel trusting in God?

“Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (v28) [6th Century B.C.]

Note: Daniel was about eighty years old and had been in obscurity for some years since Nebuchadnezzar’s death. This event caused the Persians to recognize his genius in administration, and he prospered for the remaining years of his life.

What do we know about King Cyrus who superseded King Darius?

It was King Cyrus who made the decree permitting the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the Temple...

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 – Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!

As prophesied...

Jeremiah 29:10 – For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. [7th Century B.C.]

Even prophesied by name...

Isaiah 44:28 – Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”

[8th Century B.C.]

What observations have you made about the story of Daniel and the lion’s den?

1. Jealousy is a powerful sin that can cause much harm to others
2. Daniel remained faithful to God being steadfast in his prayers
3. Compromise with the world of men was not an option to Daniel
4. Integrity matters and is rewarded by God
5. Daniel remained untouched by the immorality and idolatry of those about him and had a testimony among all men of his faithfulness to his God

This concludes the strictly historical section of the Book of Daniel. From this point forward, the book is mainly concerned with the visions and prophecies which were given to Daniel over the long period of his life spent in a foreign land...

Chapter 7 – Vision of the four beasts; the vision of the Son of Man coming in the clouds

Chapter 8 – Daniel’s vision of the ram and the he goat and its meaning

Chapter 9 – The prayer of Daniel; prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

Chapter 10 – The vision of Christ glorified; transforming effect on Daniel; message from an unidentified heavenly messenger

Chapter 11 – Antiochus Epiphanes; type of the Antichrist

Chapter 12 – The Great Tribulation; resurrection of Old Testament saints; Sealing of Prophecy until the end time; the Abomination of Desolation; time between Tribulation Period and the Millennium Period