

## He Stopped the Mouths of Lions

Daniel 6:1–28

Studies in Daniel #7

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**I**F there is one story that you all know about the biblical book of Daniel it's this one—Daniel in the lions' den. And I would guess even a good number of non-believers would know it too. It's such an important story because it parallels chapter 3 where Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image and so were thrown into the fiery furnace only to be preserved by the angel of the Lord. Once again, God shows his exiled people that he is God and that he is able to preserve. He did that under Nebuchadnezzar and now he does it again under Darius. Kings and kingdoms come and go but God remains the same and the gates of hell cannot prevail against his kingdom.

We read at the end of chapter 5 the transition from the Babylonian kingdom under Belshazzar to the Medo-Perisan kingdom under Darius (5:30). This was exactly what God said would happen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2.<sup>1</sup> Chapter 5 ended with Daniel being made the third highest person in the Babylonian kingdom. Then we read that **it pleased**

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<sup>1</sup> Who was Darius? We're not exactly sure as there is no archaeological evidence of him—yet. He could be Cyrus if the “and” in 6:28 is translated as “even,” which is legit and done elsewhere with two names (1 Chron. 5:26). Davis, 80–81, n31. Some think he was a general named Gubaru whom Darius appointed over Babylon.

**Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss** most likely meaning, loss of revenue<sup>2</sup> (vv. 1–2). The tax man always cometh! But just because a tyrant is removed and a gentler-looking king is put in his place should remind us “put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation” (Ps. 146:3). As we say, past results are no guarantee of future returns.

### **A Saint (vv. 1–2)**

Our story begins with a picture of Daniel as *a saint*. Don’t think halo; think godly man. We read that **Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him**. As we saw in chapter 2, it was not Daniel’s personal ability that allowed him to interpret dreams, but the grace of God working through him. It’s the same here. He is a picture to us of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives, sanctifying or making us more and more like Jesus. Because of his godliness **the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom** (v. 3). We’ll come back to this, but notice **then the high officials and the satraps sought to**

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, 84.

**find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but—and here’s our point again—they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him** (v. 4).

I was listening to a radio discussion this week of the L.A. Rams training camp. I’m so torn now who to like: my childhood team, the Rams, or my adult team, the Chargers; both my teams have moved away from me! Anyways, the hosts were talking about a bunch of young receivers and how well they were running their routes and catching the passes in practice. But a former player said, “Wait till an opponent stands in front of them, there’s a clock ticking down, and the coaches have to start cutting players. Then you’ll see what they’re made of.” Pressure can make you crack or make you shine. The pressures of being a believer in a hostile land allowed Daniel to shine. For us, he’s an example; not the “dare to be a Daniel” kind of example where we try to be like him, but an example those who are “grieved by various trials” have a “tested genuineness of...faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire” that “may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6, 7).

## A Scheme (vv. 3–13)

But Daniel’s godliness was not something to admire but something to attack by his peers. In order to have such a faith shine under pressure there needs to be trial, testing, and fire. So we read of *a scheme* by the other officials in the kingdom. When they saw **Daniel distinguish**[...] himself **above** them and when they heard **the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom** (v. 3) they **sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom**; but as we saw, they were unsuccessful (v. 4). So they hatched a scheme. They confessed, **“We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God”** (v. 5). This is that ancient Satanic scheme of using God’s own word against his people: “Has God said?” (Gen. 3:1) And when Satan tempted Jesus, how did he do it? By taking the very words of God and twisting them (Matt. 4).

So all **these high officials and satraps came by agreement** (“thronged,” which is related word to “raging” of Ps. 2:1<sup>3</sup>) **to the king** (v. 6). Their scheme was **that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man**

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<sup>3</sup> Davis, 84.

(meaning, through a priest as mediator<sup>4</sup>) **for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions**” (v. 7). And they implored him to **sign the document** because ancient Medo-Persian law was that the king’s decreed **“cannot be changed”** or **“revoked”** (v. 8).

I want you to notice three brief things about Daniel’s response of prayer in verse 10. First, notice *his defiance of prayer*. **When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.** This was no less a miracle than the lions’ den to come. Satan used Darius’ men to keep Daniel from prayer. We are called to obey God rather than men when it comes to worshipping our God. Second, notice *his direction of prayer*: **he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.** Why? That’s where the temple was and that’s where God had placed his presence. But he’s in Babylon. Turn with me to 1 Kings 8:46–51. Here in Solomon’s prayer at the temple he foresaw the day when God’s people sinned against him so that he would “give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near” (v. 46). Yet if they repented and “pray[ed] to [God] toward their land...the city that you have chosen, and

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<sup>4</sup> Davis, 84.

the house that I have built for your name” (v. 48), Solomon asked that God would “hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea” (v. 49), “forgive your people...and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them (v. 50). Which direction do we now pray? Upward! Jesus lifted his eyes to his Father in heaven. Third, notice *his discipline of prayer*. **He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.** This means he didn’t start praying in crisis; he prayed in peace to prepare for the crisis. Learn than lesson!

Back to the narrative we read that **these men first came by agreement** to spy on Daniel **and they found Daniel making petition and plea before his God** (v. 11). Their plan had worked! **Then they came near to the king** and reminded him **concerning his injunction** (v. 12). And Darius affirmed it: **“The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked”** (v. 12). Then came the bombshell revelation: **“Daniel...pays no attention to you, O king”** (v. 13).

### **A Savior (vv. 14–28)**

But this was Daniel, the one Belshazzar had made a third ruler, whom Darius made one of three overseers, and whom he planned to put over all

the kingdom. We read that he **was much distressed**. Then the story shifts to the question of *a savior*. Darius **set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him** (v. 14). But the hellish henchmen **came by agreement again to the king** to remind him **“that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed”** (v. 16).

Darius then followed the ethics of Spock: “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.” So he **Daniel was...cast into the den of lions** with the king’s wish for a savior: **“May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”** (v. 16) Those are famous last words. What’s interesting is what we read in verse 17: **a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords** (v. 17). Our ancient forefathers saw this as a type of Christ. An innocent man is put to death by a reluctant ruler, “buried” in a tomb with a stone to cover it, and with the king’s own seal that anyone who touches it would be put to death. Sound familiar?

So Darius fasted all night (v. 18) only to find out in the morning that the lions did too! He went to the den (v. 19) and **cried out in a tone of anguish...“O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom**

**you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”** (v. 20)

Then came the echo: **“O king, live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths”** (vv. 21–22). And as Hebrews 11:33 says, the prophets “stopped the mouths of lions.” I mentioned that this story parallels that of Daniel’s friends in the furnace. So you remember whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the flames with them? The angel of the Lord. Technically speaking, this was the Son of God before the incarnation saving Daniel and giving us a preview of coming attractions when he would lay down his own life only to take it up again (John 10:18). Hallelujah! What a Savior!” And as Daniel is a foretaste of Christ’s resurrection so Darius’ confession of faith (vv. 25–27) is also a foretaste of salvation to every tribe, language, people, and ethnicity. The Psalms say, “Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory” (Ps. 102:15); “All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth, and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD” (Ps. 138:4–5).

If there is one story that you all know about the biblical book of Daniel it’s this one—Daniel in the lions’ den. But did you know it said all this? As Jesus said, the Scriptures testify of me (John 5:39). Let’s pray.