

DANIEL 6 | Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel's Trustworthiness

1 It pleased Darius [Gobryas/Gubaru]¹ to set over the kingdom 120² satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom, 2 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.³ 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit (רִיחַ)⁴ was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.⁵ 4 Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom,⁶ but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was trustworthy (אֱמֵן), and no error or fault was found in him.⁷ 5 Then these men said, We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law (דֵּת)⁸ of his God.⁹

Darius' Injunction

6 Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him,

O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition/prayer (בָּעֵזָר) to any god or man for thirty days,¹⁰ except to you, O king,¹¹ shall be cast into the den of lions.

¹ Gobryas/Gubaru served under Cyrus as satrap of Babylon until 520 bc. The Darius of Hag 1:1 and Zec 1:1 is Darius I the Great who ruled (522-486 bc).

² **Es 1:1** 1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces....

³ No doubt Darius is working under the direction of Cyrus. All governments need competent administration and good governance. Believers are to support this.

⁴ **Da 5:12** 12 ...Because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar.

⁵ As a believer, Daniel is producing results as a high government administrator in an unbelieving nation. Darius and Cyrus surely discussed the subject of Daniel's promotion. **Ge 41:40** 40 You [Joseph] shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you. **Es 10:3** 3 For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus....

⁶ Daniel has 122 enemies, all plotting against him out of jealousy and probably anti-Semitism (v. 13).

⁷ Daniel serves with complete integrity in the best interest of the Persian government. **Eze 14:14** 14 ...Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares Lord Yahweh.

⁸ It is to be a contest between the law of God and the law of the Medes and Persians.

⁹ Would that this would be the case for us. We are to give no offence but the offence of the cross. **Ac 5:29** 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men.

¹⁰ A compromising believer could justify to himself not praying for 30 days.

¹¹ The law prohibits even private religious practice.

8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law (תִּי)¹² of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.¹³

9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.¹⁴

Daniel Prays

10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows¹⁵ in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.¹⁶ He got down on his knees three

¹² What do we do when God's law conflicts with the law of our government?

¹³ **Es 1:19** 19 If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. **Es 8:8** 8 But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked.

¹⁴ Probably the injunction applied only to the province of Babylon, not the entire Persian empire. Darius was probably looking for a pledge of loyalty from his Babylonian subjects. If there are no checks and balances, governments tend to gobble up other institutions.

¹⁵ Windows in the ancient Near East were normally small, high, and covered by a lattice. Daniel was most likely not trying to be seen by others.

¹⁶ This is significant. Daniel knows Jeremiah's 70 years are up and that God will now begin to revive Jerusalem. Cyrus issued his famous decree in 538 bc. The events in this chapter must have happened shortly before or after this great turning point. Maybe the events recorded in Da 6 played some part in Cyrus' decision to send the Jews back to Jerusalem. **Ps 5:7** 7 But I, through the abundance of your loyal love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. **Ps 122:6** 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you! **Ps 137:5** 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! **2 Ch 6:21** 21 And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive. **2 Ch 36:22-23** 22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh 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: 23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him. Let him go up. **2 Ch 6:34-39** 36 If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near, 37 yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity saying, We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly, 38 if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, 39 then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you. **Je 29:1** 1 These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. **Je 29:7** 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Yahweh on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. **Je 29:10** 10 For thus says Yahweh: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **Da 9:2** 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

times a day,¹⁷ prayed (צלה), and gave thanks (יודה)¹⁸ before his God, as he had done previously.¹⁹ 11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition (בעה) and plea (חנן) before his God.²⁰ 12 Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition (בעה) to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked. 13 Then they answered and said before the king, Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah,²¹ pays no attention to you,²² O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed²³ and set his mind to deliver (יזב) Daniel. And he laboured till the sun went down to rescue (נצל) him.²⁴ 15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, Know, O king, that it is a law (דך) of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.²⁵

¹⁷ It is wise to stick to an intentional, regular prayer schedule. There are prayer apps that can help remind us. **Ps 55:16-19** 16 But I call to God, and Yahweh will save me. 17 Evening, morning, and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. 18 He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. 19 God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, Selah because they do not change and do not fear God.

¹⁸ **Da 2:23** 23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might....

¹⁹ The state should not interfere with the private religious practices of its citizens. When pressed by the state not to worship God, a believer may disobey. God's law is greater than man's law. If man's law contradicts God's law, we may disregard man's law. As a busy high government administrator, Daniel never stops his daily spiritual disciplines. He has established a routine with God, and nothing can deter him from this routine. Prayer is the secret to his spiritual life and inner strength.

²⁰ **Mt 10:16-18** 16 Behold, I [Jesus] am sending you [disciples] out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to testify before them and the nations.

²¹ The situation of the Judean exiles seems to have been well known to Darius. Daniel is one of those pesky Jews who won't worship any god but their own. Daniel's enemies hope Darius will hold Daniel's ethnicity/nationality against him.

²² This is false. Daniel pays a great deal of attention to Darius. Daniel was about 15 years old in chapter 1. Now he is about 81-83 years old. But his devotion to God has not slackened in the least. He has the same resolve as [] year old that he did as a 15 year old. **Da 3:12** 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

²³ Herod similarly regretted his decision regarding John the Baptist. **Mt 14:9** 9 And the king [Herod] was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded [John's head] to be given [on a platter].

²⁴ This shows the true heart of Darius.

²⁵ The Persians practice the principle of *lex rex*.

The Lions' Den

16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den²⁶ of lions. The king declared to Daniel, May your God, whom you serve continually,²⁷ deliver (פִּלֵּה) you!²⁸
17 And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed²⁹ it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.
18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting (טָנָה).³⁰ No diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Deliverance

19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste (הִתְבַּהֵּלָהּ) to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish (עֲצִיב). The king declared to Daniel, O Daniel, servant (עֲבָד) of the living (חַי) God (אֱלֹהִים),³¹ has your God, whom you serve (פִּלֵּה) continually, been able to deliver (יָצָא) you from the lions?³² 21 Then Daniel said to the king,

O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel (מַלְאָךְ)³³ and shut the lions' mouths,³⁴ and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless (זָכוּ) before him. And also before you, O king, I have done no harm (חֲבוּיָהּ).³⁵

²⁶ Probably a large pit in the ground with some sort of drainage.

²⁷ Darius knows Daniel serves Yahweh continually.

²⁸ A very great prayer by a pagan king. When human deliverers fail, our divine deliverer will succeed.

²⁹ The stone is probably sealed with wax to show the next morning that no one has tampered with it. **Mt 27:66** 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. **Re 20:3** 3 ...And threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.

³⁰ Darius, though an unbeliever at this point, is truly a great man, humanly speaking. The whole scene is recounted from Darius' point of view, not Daniel's. Da 1-6 is more about God's education of the three kings—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius—than it is about Daniel's education. Daniel's education comes in Da 7-12.

³¹ Are we servants of the living God? Darius calls the God of Israel the "living God."

³² The answer is yes!

³³ This is probably the angel of Yahweh, the incarnate Jesus. **Da 3:25** 25 [Nebuchadnezzar] answered and said, But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods. **Da 3:28** 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

³⁴ **Ps 22:21** 21 Save me from the mouth of the lion! **2 Ti 4:17** 17 But the Lord [Jesus] stood by me [Paul] and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. **He 11:33** 33 ... Who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions....

³⁵ Even in the lion's den, Daniel never bad-mouths Darius.

23 Then the king was exceedingly glad (טֵאֵב), and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him,³⁶ because he had trusted (אָמַן)³⁷ in his God. 24 And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.³⁸

Darius' Decree

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples (עַם), nations (אֲמָה), and languages (לְשׁוֹן) that dwell in all the earth (אֶרֶץ):³⁹

Shalom (שָׁלוֹם) be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear (דָּחַל)⁴⁰ before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God,⁴¹ enduring (קָיָם) forever (עַלְמָם). His kingdom (מַלְכוּת) shall never be destroyed, and his dominion (שָׁרְטָן) shall be to the end. 27 He delivers (יָצַח) and rescues (נָצַח). He works signs (אֵת) and wonders (תְּמִימָה)⁴² in heaven and on earth, he who has delivered (יָצַח) Daniel from the power (יָד) of the lions.⁴³

28 So this Daniel (דָּנִיֵּאל) prospered (צִלַּח)⁴⁴ during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus (כּוֹרֶשׁ)⁴⁵ the Persian (פָּרְסִי).

³⁶ **Da 3:25** 25 ...But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt....

³⁷ A classic example of *Phase Two Faith*. Trusting in God makes us trustworthy (v. 4).

³⁸ There is no naturalistic explanation for Daniel's deliverance. The lions are very hungry. **Ps 141:8-10** 8 ...My eyes are toward you, O God, my Lord. In you I seek refuge. Leave me not defenceless! 9 Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me and from the snares of evildoers! 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely. Those who maliciously accuse the innocent will not go unpunished.

³⁹ Nebuchadnezzar wrote such a letter to the nations (Da 4). Now it's Darius' turn. The first king of both the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires write letters to all their subjects praising the God of Israel. Ironically and surprisingly, they become Yahweh's two great witnesses. **Da 4:1** 1 King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you!

⁴⁰ Arguably, this decree violates the religious freedom of his subjects. One can't really command internal fear of God. Human beings carry free will within themselves. **Ps 99:1** 1 Yahweh reigns. Let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim. Let the earth quake! **Ec 12:13** 13 The end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

⁴¹ V. 20. **Da 4:34** 34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

⁴² **Da 4:2** 2 It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

⁴³ Darius seems to be a believer now.

⁴⁴ God prospers, in a surprising way, those who remain loyal to him. Believers may prosper under any regime.

⁴⁵ Isaiah's prophecy is now to be fulfilled! See *Cyrus*.

Overview

1. This chapter echoes Psalm 2 and recalls Da 3. It has a chiastic structure.
2. Daniel's deliverance typifies the deliverance of the remnant of Israel in the tribulation.
3. The six stories of Da 1-6 demonstrate that Yahweh rules over the kingdom of men, even during the times of the Gentiles. With that principle firmly established, the book of Daniel now turns to God's plans for Israel (Da 7-12).