Daniel in the Lions' Den

Bible Stories Anthology — Daniel 6

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

Thirty Days

The old man had served kings for more than sixty years.

He had been carried to Babylon as a teenager. He had stood before Nebuchadnezzar and told him his dream. He had read the handwriting on the wall on the night Babylon fell. Now a new empire ruled the world, and the new king had made him one of the three highest officials in the land — and was planning to put him over all of it.

That made him enemies.

They watched him for months. They checked his accounts, his decisions, his dealings. They found nothing. Not a bribe, not a mistake, not a careless word. Finally they said to each other: *We will never catch this man — unless we can catch him in the law of his God.*

So they went to the king with a flattering idea: *For thirty days, let no one in the empire ask anything of any god or any man except you, O king*. The king liked it. He signed it. And under the law of the Medes and Persians, once signed, it could never be changed.

When the old man heard the law was signed, he went home, climbed to his upper room, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, knelt down — and prayed, three times a day, *as he did aforetime.*

His enemies were waiting under the window.

This is the story of Daniel in the lions' den: of a man so faithful that the only charge his enemies could find against him was that he prayed — and of the God who shut the lions' mouths.

The Setting

When. On the night of October 12, 539 B.C. (by the usual reckoning of the Babylonian records), the city of Babylon fell to the armies of **Cyrus the Persian**, almost without a fight. Daniel 5 tells of that night: King Belshazzar held a great feast, drank from the gold vessels taken from God's temple in Jerusalem, and saw a hand write on the wall. Daniel read the writing — *your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians* (5:28) — and **"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain"** (5:30). The next verse introduces a new ruler: **"And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old"** (5:31). Daniel 6 happens early in his reign.

Daniel's age. If Daniel was about fifteen when he was carried to Babylon in 605 B.C. (story 33), he was now in his early eighties. Scripture does not give his age; this is a reasonable estimate from the dates. The young man who refused the king's food in chapter 1 is an old man here — and he has not changed.

Who was Darius the Mede? Scripture calls him **"Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans"** (Daniel 9:1). The words *was made king* suggest that someone higher made him king — that he ruled Babylon under Cyrus. Outside records found so far do not use the name "Darius the Mede," and scholars have offered several identifications:

- **Gubaru (Gobryas)**, the governor Cyrus appointed over Babylon;
- **Cyrus himself**, reading 6:28 as *"in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian"* (the Aramaic word for "and" can mean "even");
- **a Median king** related to Cyrus, as the Greek writer Xenophon describes.

The question is not settled. Critics once claimed Daniel invented Belshazzar, too — until Babylonian records turned up showing that Belshazzar was the son of King Nabonidus and ruled in Babylon while his father was away. This series takes Darius the Mede to be a real ruler whom the outside records have not yet named clearly.

The world. The **Medo-Persian empire** was the "breast and arms of silver" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:32, 39) — the second of the four kingdoms. It became the largest empire the world had yet seen, stretching from India to Egypt. The Persians were famous for their royal administration, their roads and couriers, and their laws.

The exile's end. The seventy years of captivity Jeremiah had foretold were nearly over. In this same **"first year of Darius,"** Daniel read Jeremiah's prophecy and understood that the seventy years were almost complete (Daniel 9:1-2), and he set himself to pray for his people. Within a year or two, **Cyrus** issued his decree allowing the Jews to return home and rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Isaiah had named Cyrus a century and a half earlier: **"Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden"** (Isaiah 45:1).

Where. Babylon, at the court of the new ruler.

Who.

- **Darius the Mede**, ruler over the realm of the Chaldeans.
- **Daniel**, now an old man, one of three "presidents" over the kingdom.

- **The other presidents and princes**, who plotted against him.
- **God's angel**, who shut the lions' mouths.

The administration. The **Mosaic Law**, at the very end of the Babylonian exile, in **"the times of the Gentiles"** (Luke 21:24). The book of Daniel is written partly in Hebrew and partly in **Aramaic**, the international language of the empire; from 2:4 through 7:28 it is in Aramaic — the chapters that concern the Gentile kingdoms. This story is one of them.

The Story, Told Faithfully

An Excellent Spirit

> **Daniel 6:1** *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;*
>
> **Daniel 6:2** *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.*

"An hundred and twenty princes." The Aramaic word is *achashdarpenayya*, the Persian title we know in Greek as **satrap** — a governor of a region. These were officials over districts within the territory Darius governed. (Later, under Xerxes, the whole Persian empire is described as **"an hundred and seven and twenty provinces,"** Esther 1:1.)

"Three presidents; of whom Daniel was first." The word *first* is not certain in meaning; it may mean *one* of the three or the *chief* of the three. Either way, Daniel was at the very top of the government.

"That the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage." The presidents were auditors: their job was to keep the governors honest so that the king lost no revenue. Of all men in the empire, the one put in charge of watching the money was a Jewish captive in his eighties. That tells us what everyone knew about Daniel's honesty.

> **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.*

"An excellent spirit was in him." The Aramaic *ruach yattira* means a spirit that goes beyond the ordinary, an extraordinary spirit. The queen mother used the same words of Daniel on the night Babylon fell (5:12). It describes his whole character: his wisdom, his understanding, his attitude. As this series understands it, the source of that excellence was God's spirit upon him — Nebuchadnezzar had said, **"the spirit of the holy gods is in thee"** (4:9), describing in pagan words what was really the spirit of the one true God.

"The king thought to set him over the whole realm." Daniel was about to become second only to the king — the same position Joseph held in Egypt (Genesis 41:40-43). And as with Joseph, promotion brought envy.

Nothing to Find

> **Daniel 6:4** *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.*

"Sought to find occasion." The Aramaic *illah* means a *pretext*, a ground for accusation. They did not ask, *Is Daniel guilty of anything?* They asked, *What can we use against him?*

"Concerning the kingdom." That is, in his public work — his administration, his decisions, his handling of money.

"None occasion nor fault." They found nothing. Three reasons are given:

- **"He was faithful"** — Aramaic *mehemen*, trustworthy, reliable. It comes from the root *'aman*, the root of our word *amen* and of the word *believe*.
- **"Neither was there any error"** — Aramaic *shalu*, negligence, carelessness. He did not cut corners.
- **"Or fault"** — Aramaic *shechithah*, corruption. He took no bribes.

Think about what this means. Daniel had served for more than sixty years in the courts of pagan kings. He had handled enormous sums of money. His enemies were determined, organized and had access to every record. And they found *nothing*. Not because Daniel was clever at hiding things, but because there was nothing to hide.

> **Daniel 6:5** *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.*

This is one of the highest compliments ever paid to a man, and it came from his enemies. *The only way we can ever get him is through his faithfulness to God.* They knew Daniel's God came first. They knew he would not compromise. And they decided to make his faithfulness itself the crime.

The same thing would one day be done to Jesus: **"And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none"** (Mark 14:55).

The Trap

> **Daniel 6:6** *Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.*

"Assembled together." The Aramaic verb *regash* is used three times in this chapter (6:6, 11, 15). Its exact sense is debated: it may mean *came thronging*, *rushed in as a crowd*, or *came by agreement, acted in concert*. Either way, these men moved as a pack. Each time the word appears, they are closing in.

"King Darius, live for ever." The customary greeting at court (as in 2:4; 3:9). Flattery opens the door.

> **Daniel 6:7** *All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.*

"All the presidents of the kingdom." This was a lie. There were three presidents, and Daniel was one of them. He had not been consulted. They made it sound as if the whole government had agreed.

"A royal statute … a firm decree." Two expressions for the same thing, piled up to make the law sound solemn and unbreakable.

“Whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king.” The cleverness of the trap lay in its appeal to the king’s pride. For one month, Darius would be the only channel through which anyone could ask anything — of heaven or of earth. He would be, for thirty days, the only mediator between men and God. A new ruler over a conquered people might also welcome a test of loyalty; to his mind, it may have looked like a harmless political gesture. Nothing in it mentioned Daniel. Everything in it was aimed at him.

“Into the den of lions.” The Aramaic *gob* means a *pit*. Persian and Mesopotamian kings kept lions; Assyrian palace reliefs show kings hunting lions that had been kept in cages and released for the royal hunt. Lions still lived wild in that part of the world into the twentieth century. The den was a pit with an opening at the top, large enough to hold many lions (verse 24 describes many people thrown in at once).

> **Daniel 6:8** *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.*
>
> **Daniel 6:9** *Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.*

“The law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” This phrase appears three times in the chapter (6:8, 12, 15). The book of Esther shows the same custom: a royal decree was **“written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered”** (Esther 1:19), and **“the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse”** (Esther 8:8). The Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily tells of a later Persian king, Darius III, who condemned a man to death in anger, regretted it at once, but could not undo what royal authority had done.

The idea behind such a law was that a king’s word, once given, must be as fixed as the laws of nature. If the king could change his mind, his laws were only as good as his mood. But this meant a king could trap himself by his own words — and that is what Darius did.

As He Did Aforetime

> **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.*

This is the verse the whole chapter turns on. Read it slowly.

“When Daniel knew that the writing was signed.” He knew. He was not caught by surprise. He made his choice with his eyes open.

“He went into his house.” He did not go to the king to argue. He did not organize a protest. He did not go to the street corner to make a show of defiance. He went home.

“His windows being open in his chamber.” His *chamber* (Aramaic *illith*, upper room) was the room on the roof, cooler and more private, used for prayer and rest. The windows were open. Daniel did not open them to make a point; they were already open, as they always were. And he did not close them to hide. Hiding would have been easy: pray in a corner, pray silently, pray in his heart for thirty days. He refused to change anything.

“Toward Jerusalem.” Jerusalem lay in ruins and the temple had been burned nearly fifty years earlier. Yet Daniel prayed toward it. Why? Because at the dedication of that temple, Solomon had asked God, if Israel were ever carried away captive for their sins, to hear them when they turned to Him and prayed

“unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name” (1 Kings 8:48). Daniel was standing on God’s promise. Jonah had done the same from inside the fish: **“yet I will look again toward thy holy temple”** (Jonah 2:4; story 31).

“He kneeled upon his knees.” Kneeling was a posture of humility before God; Solomon himself prayed **“kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven”** (1 Kings 8:54).

“Three times a day.” David wrote: **“Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice”** (Psalm 55:17). In later Jewish practice, the hours of prayer were tied to the times of the temple sacrifices; in the book of Acts we see **“the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour”** (Acts 3:1), and Peter praying **“about the sixth hour”** (Acts 10:9). The Law did not command three daily prayers; this was the habit of godly men.

“And prayed, and gave thanks.” Thanks! A law had just been signed that would cost him his life, and the first thing Daniel did was give thanks. He did not pray only for help; he thanked God, as he had for sixty years.

“Before his God.” Not before the king, not before his accusers. Before *his* God.

“As he did aforetime.” These four words explain everything. Daniel did not suddenly become brave when the crisis came. He simply kept doing what he had always done. His courage in the crisis was the fruit of faithfulness in all the ordinary days before it. A man who has prayed three times a day for sixty years does not stop because of a thirty-day law.

Caught Praying

> **Daniel 6:11** *Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.*

“Assembled” — again *regash*. They came as a crowd, at the time they knew he prayed, to the house where they knew he prayed, and they found exactly what they expected. They knew Daniel’s habits as well as he did. That is a testimony too: his faithfulness was so regular that his enemies could set their watch by it.

“Making supplication.” Aramaic *chanan*, asking for grace and favour. Daniel was doing exactly what the decree forbade: making a petition to God.

> **Daniel 6:12** *Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king’s decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, 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 altereth not.*

Notice their tactic: before naming Daniel, they made the king confirm the law. Only when he had repeated, *it cannot be altered*, did they spring the trap.

> **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.*

The same poison as in Daniel 3:

- **"That Daniel"** — not *the president Daniel*; just *that* Daniel.
- **"Which is of the children of the captivity of Judah"** — a foreigner, a captive, a Jew. They did not mention that he was the most trusted official in the empire.
- **"Regardeth not thee, O king"** — he despises *you*. This was false. Daniel honoured the king (6:21-22). He simply honoured God more.

The King's Distress

> **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.*

"Sore displeased with himself." The Aramaic says *it was very evil to him*. The king understood at once that he had been used. And he was angry with *himself* — not with Daniel.

"Set his heart on Daniel to deliver him." The word *deliver* (Aramaic *shezib*) is the same word used in the furnace story (3:15, 17, 28). It runs all through this chapter. The great question is: *who can deliver?*

"He laboured till the going down of the sun." He spent the rest of the day searching for a way out — some loophole, some legal argument. There was none. The most powerful man in the region could not save one old man from a law that he himself had signed. (By custom, punishment had to be carried out on the same day; the sunset deadline may reflect that.)

> **Daniel 6:15** *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.*

"Assembled" — a third time. They pressed in, reminding the king he was trapped. They were no longer flattering him; they were now practically commanding him.

Into the 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.*

"Cast him into the den." No record that Daniel resisted, argued, pleaded or complained. He had already settled the matter in his upper room.

"Thy God whom thou servest continually." *Continually* (Aramaic *bethedira*) — constantly, without a break. Even the pagan king knew Daniel's life was one unbroken service to God.

"He will deliver thee." Is this a statement of faith or a desperate hope? The Aramaic can be read either way: *He will deliver you*, or *May He deliver you!* Either way, the king had come to the point where his only hope for Daniel lay in Daniel's 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.*

"A stone … laid upon the mouth." The pit was closed with a great stone.

“Sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords.” A cord was stretched across the stone, fixed with clay or wax, and stamped with the king’s seal and the seals of his nobles. Anyone who broke the seal would face the king’s wrath. Why two sets of seals? *“That the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.”* The nobles’ seals guaranteed that the king would not secretly rescue Daniel; the king’s seal guaranteed that the nobles would not secretly finish him off. Each side was watching the other. Neither could touch that stone.

So Daniel was put into a pit, a stone was rolled over its mouth, and the stone was sealed by the authority of the state. Hold that picture in your mind. We will come back to it.

A Long Night

> **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.*

“Fasting.” He would not eat.

“Neither were instruments of musick brought before him.” The Aramaic word here (*dachavan*) is uncertain. It has been translated *music*, *diversions*, *entertainment* and even *concubines*. Whatever it was, the king refused the pleasures of the palace that night.

“His sleep went from him.” The king lay awake. The text does not tell us how Daniel spent the night. We are not told whether he slept, prayed, or sat among the lions. But we know where the anxiety was: in the palace, not in the pit.

Very Early in the Morning

> **Daniel 6:19** *Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.*
>
> **Daniel 6:20** *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?*

“Very early in the morning.” The Aramaic says at dawn, *at the first light*. The king could not wait.

“A lamentable voice.” A pained, anguished cry. He expected silence.

“Servant of the living God.” This is the first time in the chapter that God is called **“the living God.”** It will be said again in the king’s decree (6:26). Babylon’s gods were made of wood and stone and gold; the God of Daniel was alive.

“Is thy God … able to deliver thee?” Nebuchadnezzar had once asked mockingly, **“who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”** (3:15). Daniel’s three friends had answered, **“our God whom we serve is able to deliver us”** (3:17). Now another king asks the same question — not mocking, but hoping. *Is your God able?*

My God Hath Sent His Angel

> **Daniel 6:21** *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.*

Out of the darkness came a voice. And the first words were a courteous greeting to the man who had put him there. No bitterness. No *How could you?* Daniel honoured the king even now.

> **Daniel 6:22** *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.*

"My God hath sent his angel." Exactly as in the furnace (3:28), God acted through **His angel**, His messenger. The angel did not take Daniel out of the den. He stayed with him in it and **"shut the lions' mouths."** The book of Hebrews remembers those **"Who through faith … stopped the mouths of lions"** (Hebrews 11:33).

"Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me." *Innocency* (Aramaic *zaku*) means purity, blamelessness. Daniel was not boasting of sinlessness — his prayer in Daniel 9 is full of confession: **"we have sinned, and have committed iniquity"** (9:5). He meant that in this matter, he was innocent before God. Praying to God was no crime.

"And also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." And he was innocent before the king, too. He had broken a law, but he had done the king no harm. He had not rebelled; he had not insulted; he had not plotted. He had simply refused to stop praying.

> **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.*

"Take Daniel up out of the den." He was lifted out — the pit was entered from above.

"No manner of hurt was found upon him." Not a scratch. The same was said of the three friends: the fire had no power on their bodies (3:27).

"Because he believed in his God." Here is the reason, plainly given. The Aramaic verb *he'emin* (believed, trusted) comes from the same root *'aman* used of Abraham: **"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness"** (Genesis 15:6). Earlier in the chapter Daniel was called *faithful* (*mehemen*, 6:4) from the same root. The man who was *faithful* to God was also the man who *believed* God. Faithfulness and faith grow from the same root.

The Pit They Dug

> **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.*

This verse is hard to read, and the Bible does not soften it.

"Those men which had accused Daniel." The Aramaic again uses the idiom *"which had eaten the pieces of Daniel"* — which had slandered him (as in 3:8; story 33). Those who had tried to devour Daniel with their words were devoured themselves.

"Them, their children, and their wives." This was Persian justice, not God's. Persian kings were known for punishing whole families: the Greek historian Herodotus tells how Darius I seized a nobleman named Intaphernes together with his sons and his close kinsmen on suspicion of rebellion (*Histories* 3.119). God's Law to Israel forbade exactly this: **"The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin"**

(Deuteronomy 24:16). Scripture records what Darius did; it does not say God commanded it or approved it. The guilt for the wives' and children's deaths belongs to the king who ordered it — and to the men whose plot brought it on their own households.

"The lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." *Or ever* means *before*. The lions caught them in mid-air. This detail answers anyone who might say the lions were not hungry or not dangerous. The same lions that had been harmless all night with Daniel were savage in the morning. Daniel's deliverance was not luck. It was God.

The scriptures had said it long before: **"He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made"** (Psalm 7:15). **"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him"** (Proverbs 26:27). It is the same reversal as Haman, hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

The Living God

> **Daniel 6:25** *Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.*
>
> **Daniel 6:26** *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.*
>
> **Daniel 6:27** *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.*

A second decree replaced the first. The first had said, *Pray to no god but through the king*. The second said, *Tremble before the God of Daniel*.

"He is the living God." The living God — in contrast to the idols of Babylon and Persia.

"Stedfast for ever." He endures; He does not change, unlike the kingdoms of men.

"His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." These are almost the words Daniel had spoken to Nebuchadnezzar: **"shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed"** (2:44). And they are almost the words of Daniel's vision in chapter 7, where **"one like the Son of man"** is given **"dominion, and glory, and a kingdom … his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed"** (7:13-14). A pagan king, without knowing it, was proclaiming the kingdom of the Messiah.

"He delivereth and rescueth." The answer, at last, to the question of the chapter.

> **Daniel 6:28** *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Daniel lived to see Cyrus's decree that sent the Jews home (Daniel 1:21; 10:1). Ezekiel, his contemporary, named him with Noah and Job as one of the three most righteous men of history (Ezekiel 14:14). He did not go back to Jerusalem himself, as far as the record shows; he was an old man, and he served God where God had put him. He would rest in the grave until the resurrection, as the angel promised him at the end of his book: **"But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days"** (Daniel 12:13).

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

Sought for an accusation and found none. Daniel's enemies searched his life for a fault and found none. Jesus' enemies did the same: **"they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words"** (Luke 20:20), and in the end, **"sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none"** (Mark 14:55). Pilate himself said, **"I find no fault in this man"** (Luke 23:4).

A ruler who wanted to release him, and could not. Darius **"laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver"** Daniel. Pilate, **"willing to release Jesus, spake again to them"** (Luke 23:20), and **"from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend"** (John 19:12). Both rulers were trapped by men who used the ruler's own power and pride against him.

The stone and the seal. Daniel was put into a pit; **"a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it."** Jesus was laid in a tomb, a great stone was rolled to the door, and his enemies **"made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch"** (Matthew 27:66). In both cases the seal of the state said: *what is in here stays in here.*

Very early in the morning. The king came to the den **"very early in the morning."** The women came to the tomb **"very early in the morning the first day of the week"** (Mark 16:2) — the very day Jesus had already been raised (Matthew 28:1-6). The king found Daniel alive. The women found the tomb empty, and an angel who **"rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it"** (Matthew 28:2).

The difference. Here the picture breaks, and the difference matters. Daniel was saved from death. Jesus went all the way into death. Daniel came up alive the next morning; Jesus was dead and buried, and God raised him from the dead **"according to the scriptures"** on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4). Daniel would die later and rest in the grave until the resurrection. Jesus was raised to die no more, and ascended to God's right hand: **"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him"** (Romans 6:9). These pictures are this series' observation of a striking parallel; Scripture does not name Daniel 6 as a type of the resurrection.

One mediator. The decree made Darius, for thirty days, the only one through whom any man could make a petition. That was a lie and a trap. But God has, in truth, set one man in that place — not for thirty days but for ever: **"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"** (1 Timothy 2:5). He does not shut the door of prayer; he opens it. **"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"** (Hebrews 4:16).

The Son of man and the kingdom. In the very next chapter, Daniel saw **"one like the Son of man"** come **"with the clouds of heaven"** to **"the Ancient of days,"** and receive **"dominion, and glory, and a kingdom"** (Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus took that title, *the Son of man*, as his own, and at his trial said, **"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"** (Matthew 26:64). As this series understands it, the coming of the Son of man *to* the Ancient of days in 7:13 fits the ascension, when **"a cloud received him out of their sight"** (Acts 1:9), and he was exalted to God's right hand. The kingdom Darius unknowingly proclaimed, **"that which shall not be destroyed,"** is the kingdom God has given to His Son.

To the Grace Administration

Pray without ceasing. Daniel prayed three times a day, every day, for his whole life. The believer today is told, **"Pray without ceasing"** (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"** (Ephesians 6:18). Daniel prayed toward a ruined city because of God's promise; we pray in the name of the risen Christ, **"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him"** (Ephesians 3:12).

Prayer with thanksgiving. Daniel **"prayed, and gave thanks"** when the law was signed. **"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"** (Philippians 4:6).

A life that leaves accusers with nothing to say. Daniel's enemies could find **"none occasion nor fault."** Paul told Titus to show **"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you"** (Titus 2:8). Peter wrote: **"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God"** (1 Peter 2:12). The goal is to be **"blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"** (Philippians 2:15). If the world must accuse a believer, let it be for his faith and nothing else.

Faithfulness can bring trouble. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Daniel's honesty was what made him a target. Faithfulness does not guarantee an easy life.

Respect for rulers, but God first. Daniel greeted the king respectfully even from the den. He did not rebel or insult. But when the law of man forbade prayer to God, he obeyed God. The apostles answered the same way: **"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye"** (Acts 4:19).

The roaring lion. Peter warns, **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"** (1 Peter 5:8). Paul, near the end of his life, wrote: **"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me … and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion"** (2 Timothy 4:17). Whether he meant Nero, or death, or the adversary, the words echo Daniel. **"If God be for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:31).

Habits made in peace carry us in crisis. "As he did aforetime." The time to build a life of prayer is before the decree is signed.

To the Topic of Integrity

- **Integrity is what your enemies cannot find against you.**
- **Integrity in money and work** — no negligence, no corruption.
- **Integrity in private** — the same man in the upper room as in the palace.
- **Integrity does not hide** — the windows stayed open.
- **Integrity does not show off** — Daniel did not go to the street to protest.
- **Integrity does not change with the law** — "as he did aforetime."
- **Integrity respects authority** — "O king, live for ever."
- **Integrity leaves the outcome with God** — "because he believed in his God."

The Main Takeaway

When Darius the Mede set Daniel, now an old man, over the kingdom, the other presidents and princes searched his life for a charge and could find "none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful," so they said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God"; they flattered the king into signing a decree, under the law of the Medes and Persians which could not be altered, that for thirty days no one should ask a petition of any god or man except the king, on pain of the lions' den; Daniel, knowing the writing was signed, went home, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, knelt, "and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime"; the king laboured all day to save him and could not, Daniel was cast into the den, a stone was laid on its mouth and sealed with the king's signet; at dawn the king ran to the den and cried, "is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?" and Daniel answered, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths"; he was taken up with "no manner of hurt ... because he believed in his God," his accusers were thrown to the lions, and the king decreed that all men should fear "the living God, and stedfast for ever." A life of steady faithfulness gives enemies nothing to use but our devotion to God — and the God we serve continually is able to deliver.

- **Be faithful in your work** — let no one find "error or fault."
- **Pray regularly,** with thanksgiving, as your habit.
- **Do not hide your faith** — and do not parade it.
- **Respect rulers; obey God first.**
- **God is the living God,** able to deliver.
- **The stone and the seal could not keep God out.**

For Our Learning — The People

- **Daniel (Belteshazzar).** "God is my judge." Carried to Babylon as a youth in 605 B.C.; served Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus; one of three presidents; cast to the lions and delivered.
- **Darius the Mede.** "Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes" (9:1), about sixty-two years old (5:31), ruler over the realm of the Chaldeans; identity outside Scripture not settled.
- **The presidents and princes.** Officials of the new government who plotted against Daniel and died in the den with their families.
- **The king's lords.** Nobles whose seals were set on the stone.
- **God's angel.** Sent to shut the lions' mouths (6:22).
- **Belshazzar.** Last king of Babylon, slain the night the city fell (5:30).
- **Cyrus the Persian.** Founder of the Persian empire; issued the decree for the Jews' return (Ezra 1:1-4).

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **Satraps** — Persian provincial governors.

- **Auditors over governors,** so the king "should have no damage."
- **"O king, live for ever"** — the court greeting.
- **The law of the Medes and Persians** — a signed royal decree could not be revoked (Esther 1:19; 8:8).
- **Signing and sealing** — royal decrees written and sealed with the king's signet ring.
- **Upper rooms** on flat roofs, used for prayer and privacy.
- **Praying toward Jerusalem** (1 Kings 8:48).
- **Kneeling to pray** (1 Kings 8:54).
- **Three times of prayer daily** (Psalm 55:17).
- **Royal lions** kept in pits for hunts and punishments.
- **Sealing a stone** with cord and clay or wax impressed with signets.
- **Fasting and refusing entertainment** in distress.
- **Punishing whole families** — a Persian practice (Herodotus 3.119), forbidden in Israel (Deuteronomy 24:16).
- **"Ate the pieces of"** — Aramaic idiom for slander (6:24).
- **"Peace be multiplied unto you"** — the greeting of a royal letter.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Repetition** — "the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" (6:8, 12, 15), stressing how trapped the king was.
- **Repetition** — "assembled" (6:6, 11, 15), the pack closing in each time.
- **Repetition** — "thy God whom thou servest continually" (6:16, 20).
- **Synonymia (words of like meaning)** — "a royal statute … a firm decree" (6:7); "occasion nor fault … error or fault" (6:4).
- **Idiom** — "accused," literally "ate the pieces of" (6:24), meaning slandered.
- **Idiom** — "his sleep went from him" (6:18), he could not sleep.
- **Polysyndeton (many ands)** — "He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth" (6:27).
- **Merismus (the whole by its parts)** — "in heaven and in earth" (6:27), meaning everywhere.
- **Synecdoche (the part for the whole)** — "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" (6:25), meaning all within the king's realm.
- **Antithesis (contrast)** — the king sleepless in his palace; Daniel unharmed among the lions (6:18-22).

What the Bible Actually Says

- **Darius set Daniel among three presidents** over 120 princes.
- **Daniel had "an excellent spirit,"** and the king planned to set him over the whole realm.

- **His enemies found no fault** in his work; they chose to attack his faith.
- **They lied** that “all the presidents” had agreed.
- **The decree forbade petitions** to any god or man except the king for thirty days.
- **Daniel knew it was signed,** and prayed three times a day toward Jerusalem, with thanksgiving, “as he did aforetime.”
- **The king tried all day to save him** and could not.
- **A stone sealed the den** with the king’s signet and his lords’.
- **The king fasted and could not sleep.**
- **God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths.**
- **Daniel was unhurt “because he believed in his God.”**
- **The accusers and their families were thrown to the lions** by the king’s command.
- **Darius decreed that all should fear the living God.**
- **Daniel prospered** under Darius and Cyrus.
- **The Bible does not say** how Daniel spent the night, or who Darius the Mede was in outside records.

God’s Will and Intent

- **God wants His people faithful in ordinary work and in prayer.**
- **God hears the prayers of His people,** whatever men forbid.
- **God is the living God,** stedfast for ever.
- **God is able to deliver** — from lions, from fire, from death itself.
- **God turns the plots of the wicked back upon them.**
- **God’s kingdom shall not be destroyed.**
- **God raised His Son, Jesus Christ,** from the sealed tomb on the third day and exalted him at His right hand, and through him has opened the way of prayer to all who believe — one mediator between God and men.