

The Book of Daniel

CHAPTER SIX

Daniel in the Lion's Den

The Arms and Chest of Silver: In fulfillment of the revelation given in Daniel chapter two, the Babylonian empire had come to an end. In one night, the Medo-Persian empire overtook Babylon, the head of gold. In the first revelation the names of Babylon's succeeding kingdoms were not given. However, at the close of chapter five we are told the identity of the second world empire, the arms and chest of silver, for in one night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom (5:30-31). Thus, the arms and chest of silver represent the Medo-Persian empire.

The Medo-Persian empire was massive. In fact, it dwarfs the territory controlled by the Babylonians (Daniel 7:5). The Persian empire will prove to be the dominate of the two, as is seen by the bear rising up on one side (Daniel 7:5). The enormous Persian empire extended from India to Ethiopia: Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces;) (Esther 1:1 cf. Isaiah 45:14).



The government of the Medo-Persian empire was that of a constitutional monarchy, the king did not have sole authority, but had to submit to laws and decrees. Once a decree was passed into law, it could not arbitrarily be undone; even the king himself was bound to it (vs. 15). This was the “law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not” (Daniel 6:8,12,15,17).

This form of rule is accordingly shown by Daniel's image to be a weaker, and thereby inferior, form of government. Babylon was a monarchy; the king had total authority and control. This is the gold standard for government as far as God is concerned. Daniel's image, which starts with the single head of gold, moves to the arms of silver, a divided kingdom. It is further broken into legs, representing a four-fold administration, and

eventually it declines to ten kings. Then the singular rock comes and smashes the kingdoms of this world, a kingdom under the sole headship of Christ.

Darius the Mede was the son of Ahasuerus (**Daniel 9:1**). While we are told there is currently no archaeological evidence for such a person, we need not worry, for until 1854 there was no record of Belshazzar until the now famed Nabonidus Cylinders were discovered (*see notes in chapter five*). Thus, we will take the word of God as truthful and accurate, that Darius¹ the Mede did rule at the time of Daniel.

Daniel's Promotion in the Persian Government (vss. 1-3): When the Medo-Persian alliance overthrew the Babylonian empire, it acquired much geographic territory to its kingdom. The Persian empire became the largest that the world had seen. Control of the vast region was maintained by setting up 120 princes (*satraps*²), leaders who would govern the 127 provinces of the realm (**Esther 1:1, 8:9**). These princes would “give account” to three presidents, one of whom was Daniel. These presidents would in turn report to the king all things concerning his kingdom, so the king would have no damage; in other words, they helped him keep his lands in check.

Daniel was now in his 80's. Though a seasoned man, he was preferred above all the presidents and princes because “**an excellent spirit was in him.**” For this reason Darius set Daniel over his entire realm; only the king would be higher in position. This sets forth the relationship between Daniel and Darius, which gives insight to what follows.

The Conspiracy Against Daniel (vss. 4-5): The text does not say what moved the presidents and princes to seek Daniel's death. Perhaps his integrity made it difficult for them to get away with political or religious corruption³. Or it could have been simple jealousy over the fact that a Jew of the captivity was given such a prestigious and influential position (**vs. 13**). Regardless of the reason, Daniel was without reproach, the men could not dig up any “dirt” on him; Daniel was without error or fault in his dealings. Therefore, the plan of the corrupt leadership was similar to that of the Babylonian officials who had tried to topple Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego back in chapter three. They knew Daniel was a man of integrity, and the only area they might find any occasion

¹ This is not King Darius of Persia from the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah.

² A provincial governor in the ancient Persian empire.

³ Read the account of Bel in the Apocrypha, 14:1-22.

against him would be in his faithfulness to the Law of God. Therefore, they sought to make a law that would criminalize right behavior.

The Establishment of a Royal Statute (vss. 6-9): The corrupt leadership first had to deceive the king into thinking that **ALL** the presidents and princes, even the governors' counselors and captains were in agreement. This was a lie, for Daniel himself was suspiciously absent when presenting this to the king.

Following the customary greeting, "**King Darius, live forever**" (cf. **Da 6:21; 2:4; 3:9; 5:10**), the corrupt leadership proposed to the king 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**" (vs. 7). The plan was simple; they knew Daniel would be faithful to his God. They knew he prayed three times a day toward Jerusalem, the holy city, the house of God (cf. **vs. 10; 2 Chron. 6:38; I Kings 8:30, 38, 44**). They knew Daniel regularly petitioned God to have mercy on His people and forgive their sins. Therefore, they deceived the king in making a law that made it illegal for anyone to ask a "petition" of any God or man for thirty days, except the king. If any was accused of disobedience to the commandment, they would be thrown into the den of lions⁴. These corrupt leaders understood perfectly well that the king would be bound by the authority of the royal edict (**vs. 8, 12, 15; cf. Esth. 1:19; 8:8**) and thereby would be powerless to save his trusted friend.

The king, being deceived, made the decree, and signed it into law; the statute was now binding (**vss. 8-9**).

Daniel's Faithfulness (vs. 10): Daniel knew what had been signed into law. However, the new decree did not deter him from continuing to pray for the Jews concerning their homeland. He did as he had always done, "**as he did a foretime**" (**Dan. 6:10**). Daniel prayed according to what was written in Jeremiah. By reading Jeremiah he understood that God would listen to the prayers of His people while in captivity, and following the seventy years, would bring them back into their land (cf. **9:2; cf. Jer. 29:1, 7, 10, 12-14**). Notice the issue of "petition" (**vss. 7, 12-13**) versus the issue of prayer.

⁴ The punishment of being cast into the lion's den was only for the night. This lends itself to the idea that this judgement was a sort of trial by ordeal, a way to see if the convicted person was guilty of the charges or not. If the individual was guilty then "god" would judge them by allowing the lions to devour them. If they were innocent, they would survive. One can see the error of such a system of judgment.

Darius' Predicament (vss. 11-13): It would seem the corrupt leadership assembled themselves within view of Daniel's window, and just as they had expected, the edict did not deter him from his prayers. After reminding Darius of his decree, the hostile officials informed the king that his right-hand man, Daniel, had violated the edict and was therefore worthy of judgment. Notice how they described Daniel as **"one of the exiles from Judah"** (cf. 2:25; 5:13); this lends insight into their possible antisemitism toward Daniel.

The Desire of Darius (vss. 14 15): Darius, hearing that it was Daniel who had broken the royal decree, became **"sore displeased with himself."** Therefore Darius **"set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him."** This confirms the binding nature of governmental laws within the Medo-Persians realm. This also shows how much Darius respected and valued Daniel, for the king **"laboured"** all day, even to the going down of the sun. And then time had run out.

The day being passed, the corrupt leaders assembled before the king and said, **"Know, O king that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed."** In other words, time is up, there is no way out, deliver the sentence.

Daniel in the Lions' Den (vss. 16-17): Darius is left no recourse but to submit to the decree by bringing Daniel forth and having him cast in the den of lions. However, before Daniel is cast into the lion's den the king says to him, **"Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."** The king's parting words to Daniel are significant; Darius had tried to save Daniel and had failed. All he could do was wait and see if Daniel's God was able to deliver him, and thereby determine him not guilty. The den of lions was most likely a large pit in the ground with an opening above (notice, Daniel had to be lifted out of it, vs. 23 cf. vs. 24 **"bottom"**). The king and his nobles sealed the stone that covered the opening of the den to ensure no one would release Daniel.

Daniel's Deliverance (vss. 18-23): Darius, **"Passed the night fasting: neither was their musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him"** (vs. 18). Darius' compassion and remorse for making such a rash decision is seen throughout this story. Notice he arose **very early in the morning** and **went in haste** unto the den of lions and cried with a **"lamentable voice"** unto Daniel (vss. 19-20). Darius did not send one of his many subjects to go and check on Daniel but went himself to see what had happened to his friend.

Prior to casting Daniel to the lions Darius said, **"Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."** This statement supports the idea that this was a trial by ordeal judgment of sorts that tested whether the convicted individual was truly guilty of the crimes laid against them. Notice the cry of Darius: **"Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"** (vs. 20).

Then out of the midst of the lions' den Daniel says, **"O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouth that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me; and also, before thee, O king, have I done no hurt"** (vs. 21-22). Daniel was innocent in the sight of God and men, for an angel **"shut the lions mouth."** This angel is not identified, it could be just one of the innumerable angels the Lord has at his disposal (**Heb. 12:22**), or perhaps it was Gabriel, who had already appeared to Daniel (**Daniel 9:21-22**). Or perhaps it was the One who appeared in the midst of the fiery furnace (**Daniel 3:25**).

Daniel's response is one of innocence before the king (vs. 2). Daniel had not done the king **"any hurt."** He was faithful to his position, faultless before God and the king himself, and this is why he was delivered from the mouth of the lions (vss. 2, 4). This was one aspect of the accusation, for the corrupt leadership accused Daniel of **"regarding not the king"** (vs. 13). Daniel did not obey the royal edict out of disrespect to the king but obedience to God. Daniel had a faultless record concerning his duties toward the king, and that record spoke for itself.



Then the king was “glad” for Daniel, and he brought him out of the den. The bible says, “no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” (vs. 23). The writer to the Hebrews refers to this event wherein Daniel, by faith, “stopped the mouths of lions” (**Heb 11:33**). Daniel is listed alongside Noah and Job, each having their own righteous walk before the Lord (**Ezek. 14:14,20**). This is what we have before us in chapter six, Daniel’s faith was vindicated.

Destruction of the Corrupt Leadership (24): The men that accused Daniel were cast into the lion’s den along with their wives and children. They were all consumed before they reached the bottom, adding credence to the miracle of Daniel’s deliverance. Daniel’s escape was not due to the lions’ lack of hunger, nor any sickness of the lions or some other nonsense. God delivered Daniel.

Here we have great irony; the corrupt men are cast into the very den they hoped would be the death of Daniel, just as the gallows Haman built for Mordecai would ultimately hang is own wicked neck (**Esth. 5:14; 7:9-10**).

Darius' Decree and Praise of the God of Daniel (vss. 25-28): Darius makes the following decree: “That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel” (vs. 25-26). Darius continues to tell why all men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel stating: “for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions” (**Daniel 6:26-27**).

Darius, whether he knew it or not, was affirming the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar, confirming that God’s kingdom is above all kingdoms, and His kingdom will be forever (**Daniel 2:44**).

Darius praises the God of Daniel, just as Nebuchadnezzar had upon the deliverance of the three Hebrew children (**Daniel 3:29-30**) and following his beastly transformation (**Daniel 4:34-37**). This same change of heart is seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Evilmerodach (**2 Kings 25:27-30**) and in the Persian king Cyrus’ decree for the Jews to return to their land (**Ezra 1:1-4 cf. Isaiah 44:26-28**). **The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. (Proverbs 21:1)**

And so, Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (**vs. 28**). God preserved Daniel in the den of lions, as his three friends were preserved through the fiery furnace.

All the historical accounts contained in Daniel up to this point prepare us for the coming chapters. The history carries with it a prophetic element, leading us into the highly