Research on: Daniel in the Lion’s Den

Daniel 6:1, 2 (to :), 4-7, 9-12, 14-16, 19-23, 25, 28

The book of Daniel arose out of a crisis among the Jews, and part of its continued appeal is that

it still speaks to those that appear to be in crisis today. The questions Daniel addresses in the

book are: How does one remain faithful to God in the midst of severe challenges? Is

compromise ever justified?

“The vision of a divine purpose gives Daniel the basis for hope and an authority for his plea to

have courage. God is not a mere tribal deity vindicating His own people. There is the

implication that Israel has a world mission. It has a moral plan. It was righteousness which at

the end of the day should stand as power. Every act and every policy had to face the strict

examination of God . . .” (IB 6.356).

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be

over the whole kingdom;

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first:

Daniel has been appointed an administrator – a high official position under the Persian ruler

Darius. “Verses two and three mention 120 satrapies and over them three sarkin, a Persian term

meaning ‘chief minister’ Daniel was appointed one of these sarkin” (NIB 7.88).

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.

The word fault in Hebrew is *shechath* (Strong 7844) which means “corruption.”

“The other two sarkin, presumably Persians, conspired with the heads of the satraps against

Daniel, thus indicating a sense of tension between the Jewish exiles and the Persian nationals”

(NIB 7.88).

The favor of the king uncovered the jealousy of the other officials, and, consequently, court

intrigue follows. They conspire against Daniel.

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.

Since the court officials could not find any fault with Daniel’s “official” life, they turn to his

personal worship and his obedience to the law of his God.

“The last phrase in this verse, the basis of their proposed accusation against Daniel, raises an

issue that has not arisen yet in the entire book: the matter of the law of the Jews. The mention of

the ‘law’ of God was not mentioned even in chap. 3, where one might have expected it. A

reference to the Jewishness of Daniel by specifically mentioning the laws/traditions of the Jews

lends weight to arguments for the significance of ethnic tensions as an important part of the

traditions in Daniel” (NIB 7.89).

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him,

King Darius, live for ever.

“The Aramaic term hargisu, used to describe the group of conspirators who approach the king

has engendered considerable discussion. Did they ‘come in a throng’ in a raucous mass

gathering? The eighteenth-century Quaker Bible translator Anthony Purver rendered it: ‘they

crowded in to the king,’ which captures the image suggested by the term, which includes the

satraps as well as the two other Persian officials” (NIB 7.88).

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellers, 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.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

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.

Daniel does not hide the fact that he is openly defying the king’s decree. The decree makes no

difference to his pattern of prayer.

“THE habit of communing with God, divine Principle, at least three times a day, begets spiritual intimacy with the one Father, divine Love, which fosters trust in Him, and brings the assurance that all righteous prayer will be answered.

“In "Miscellaneous Writings" ([p. 133](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Three+times+a+day%2C+I+retire+to+seek+the+divine+blessing+on+the+sick+and+sorrowing%2C+with+my+face+toward+the+Jerusalem+of+Love+and+Truth%2C+in+silent+prayer+to+the+Father+which+%27seeth+in+secret%2C%27+and+with+childlike+confidence+that+He+willreward+%27openly.%27+In+the+midst+of+depressing+care+and+labor+I+turn+constantly+to+divine+Love+for+guidance%2C+and+find+rest.)) Mrs. Eddy states: "Three times a day, I retire to seek the divine blessing on the sick and sorrowing, with my face toward the Jerusalem of Love and Truth, in silent prayer to the Father which 'seeth in secret,' and with childlike confidence that He will reward 'openly.' In the midst of depressing care and labor I turn constantly to divine Love for guidance, and find rest." Without this confidence, born of the assurance that our heavenly Father, divine Love, was ever guiding her through the deep waters of mortal mind's hatred of Truth, our beloved Leader could never have made the marvelous demonstration of giving Christian Science to the world; nor could she have founded all its activities” (“Habit of Praying,” A. Warendorff, March 10, 1923, CSS).

“If we would live true to our heritage as [children] of God, there is no way other than keeping

close to the Father. That means living in His presence and taking the time to listen to His voice.

It is a great mistake to think that we can drift along and then be ready to meet the crisis when it

comes” (IB 6.439).

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his

God.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree;

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 labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

*“Then the king, when he heard these things, was sore displeased with himself —*Having too late discovered that the princes, in procuring him to sign this decree, had no other end or aim, but to take advantage of it to the prejudice of Daniel. The word  rendered *displeased,*which in Hebrew signifies *to be rotten,*is used in Chaldee for such great distress as preys upon the mind, and occasions rottenness in the bones. The meaning is, that the king was very much troubled, and exceedingly vexed with himself. *And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him* — The LXX. render it,  a very strong expression, implying that his anxiety to save him was so great as to throw him into an agony. *And he laboured till the going down of the sun —*Endeavouring to find out some exception for him from the law, and being in a great strait through the necessity he was under to have the law executed, and the regard he had for Daniel” (Bensen Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

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.

“The counselors repeat the decree that the king had ordered, almost to entrap the king by means

of his answer that the law cannot be changed. Daniel is then charged in words that echo his

status and the status of the Jews throughout the book of Daniel: ‘Daniel, one of the exiles from

Judah.’ Daniel, the foreigner, the defeated, the mere Jew is accused before the king. As in chap.

3, the mixed implication is clear: The foreigner whom the king had trusted has betrayed him by

defying his order. Yet, Darius is troubled by the scenario. . . . Darius ‘set his mind to deliver

Daniel’ (author’s trans.) and made efforts to release him – presumably trying to determine a

legally acceptable way to set Daniel free” (NIB 7.92).

But Darius’ own laws have tied his hands. The law he has just signed cannot be changed.

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.

“There does not need to be a trial to determine the guilt of the accused, because he clearly

confesses. Both the king and Daniel know that he is guilty, and he is thus immediately sentenced

to his fate” (NIB 7.92).

“. . . Daniel’s destruction by lions, . . . will serve as an example to other would-be dissidents.

The hope – indeed, the calculation – is that word will spread quickly among the masses about the

fate of any who disobey the will of the state” (NIB 7.92).

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

“Then the king arose very early in the morning ... - No one can doubt the probability of what is here said, if the previous account be true. His deep anxiety; his wakeful night; the remorse which he endured, and his hope that Daniel would be after all preserved, all would prompt to an early visit to the place of his [confinement](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/6-19.htm), and to his earnestness in ascertaining whether he were still alive” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

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?

Think of the tone of his voice – the anguish he might have felt!

“**Servant of the living God:** this was a commendation both of Daniel and his God, though he served both very coarsely.   
  
**“Is thy God able to deliver thee?** is he omnipotent? surely if ever he will put forth his power, it will be in thy case, for thou servest him continually, thou wilt not be frightened from his service by savage beasts, by ramping and roaring lions; now it will appear what thy God will do for his servant” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

From the darkness of the pit, think of the tone of Daniel’s voice! Would it have been said in

calmness, gentleness, love, and respect?

“Daniel might have indulged in anger at the king, but does not; his sole thought is, God's glory has been set forth in his deliverance” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, www.biblehub.com).

“He does not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his persecutors; but, to show that he has heartily forgiven him” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

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.

The word **innocency** in Hebrew is *zawkuw* which means “purity, innocence (in God’s sight” (Strong’s 2136).

“The grounds for Daniel’s deliverance are two: (a) he was ‘clean,’ i.e., legally innocent and so

blameless before God; and (b) he had committed no ‘crime’ against the king. His loyalty to God

had not suffered from any remissness that would have made him blameworthy, nor his loyalty to

the king from any evil deed or wrongdoing” (IB 6.446).

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.

“The phrase [‘the king exceeding glad’] expresses the opposite of ‘much distressed’ in vs. 14. At

the king’s command, the seals are broken, the stone removed, and Daniel taken up (probably by

a rope). Then it was seen that ‘no harm was found on him.’ The parallel is of course with the

three confessors who came out unharmed from the kiln . . .” (IB 6.446).

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth;

Peace be multiplied unto you.

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.

“Just as Nebuchadrezzar in chapter 3 was moved by the miracle to make a decree in which he

acknowledged the greatness of the God of the Jews and called on all his subjects to respect him,

so Darius moved by this miracle does the same. Indeed, the details of his decree follow closely

the pattern of 3:29 ff., using words and phrases already met with in 2:44; 4:1-3; 5:19” (IB 6.447).

There’s a well-known painting of Daniel facing the window while lions lurk behind him.

Painted by an English artist in 1890, it’s titled, “Daniel’s Answer to the King.” It hung in Mary

Baker Eddy’s Pleasant View and Chestnut Hill homes.

Sources:

The Interpreter’s Bible. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1953.

The New Interpreter’s Bible. Ed. Leander E. Keck. Vol. 7. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

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