Daniel 6

The Lions' Den:
As He Had Been Doing Previously

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The only thing Daniel's enemies could attack was his faithfulness to God. He kept praying as he always had, went into the den, and God shut the lions' mouths. A life of daily prayer prepared him for a night with lions — and turned a pagan king's decree into praise for the living God.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

DANIEL 6 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions · Green Command / instruction · Sky Key repeated word · Rose Sin / warning · Violet Promise / blessing · Amber Time / place / contrast

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: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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; 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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?

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

28 So this Daniel ★ prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Marked in the text

- **v3** ★ an excellent spirit
- **v4** ★ he was faithful
- **v4** ★ neither was there any error or fault found in him
- **v5** ▲ the law of his God
- **v7** ⇄ the den of lions *(every occurrence)*
- **v7** ◷ thirty days
- **v8** ◷ the law of the Medes and Persians *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ◷ his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem
- **v10** ▮▮ kneeled upon his knees
- **v10** ◷ three times a day *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ▮▮ gave thanks before his God
- **v10** ▮▮ as he did aforetime
- **v13** ⚠ regardeth not thee
- **v14** ⚠ sore displeased with himself
- **v16** ▲ Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee
- **v17** ◷ sealed it with his own signet
- **v20** ▲ the living God *(every occurrence)*
- **v22** ▲ My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths
- **v22** ★ innocency was found in me
- **v23** ★ because he believed in his God

- **v24** ⚠ brake all their bones
- **v26** ▲ his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed
- **v27** ▲ He delivereth and rescueth
- **v28** ★ prospered

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. KJV "princes" are the NASB95's "satraps" and "presidents" are "commissioners"; "which altereth not" is "which may not be revoked." Hebrew Bibles number this chapter one verse higher (KJV 5:31 = 6:1).

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 6:10 (KJV)

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 .

Setting

Babylon has fallen (5:30–31). "Darius the Mede" now governs, and he reorganizes the kingdom: "It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom" (v1), with three commissioners over them, "of whom Daniel was one" (v2). Daniel is past eighty. He has served under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and now the Medo-Persians. (In Hebrew and Aramaic Bibles the verse numbers in this chapter run one higher; 5:31 is 6:1.)

Structure

- vv1–5 — **a man without fault:** "this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom" (v3). His jealous rivals look for something against him, "but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him" (v4). "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God" (v5).
- vv6–9 — **the trap:** they come to the king as a mob, claim that all the officials agree (v7), and propose that "anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den" (v7) — signed "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked" (v8). Darius signs it (v9).
- vv10–15 — **Daniel prays as before:** "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously" (v10). The men find him (v11) and report him (vv12–13). The king "was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him" (v14). But the law cannot be changed (v15).
- vv16–18 — **into the den:** Daniel is thrown to the lions. The king: "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you" (v16). A stone seals the den with the king's signet (v17). The king

spends the night fasting, "and his sleep fled from him" (v18).

- vv19–24 — **"My God sent His angel":** at dawn the king runs to the den: "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (v20). "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him" (v22). Daniel is lifted out, "and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God" (v23). His accusers are thrown in with their families, and the lions overpower them before they reach the bottom (v24).
- vv25–28 — **the king's decree:** "men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (v26). "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" (v27). "So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (v28).

Repeated words

lions' den (vv7, 12, 16, 19, 24); deliver / rescue (vv14, 16, 20, 27); the law of the Medes and Persians (vv8, 12, 15); injunction / document / signed (vv7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15); petition / prayer (vv7, 11, 12, 13); three times a day (vv10, 13); his / your / my God (vv5, 10, 11, 16, 20, 22, 23); serve constantly (vv16, 20); the living God (vv20, 26); find / found (vv4, 5, 11, 22, 23); harm / injury (vv22, 23).

Contrasts

no fault found in his work (v4) ⟷ fault found only in his faithfulness to God (v5). A law that cannot be changed (v15) ⟷ a God who can deliver (v27). The king's sleepless night (v18) ⟷ Daniel's night with the lions. "Has your God … been able?" (v20) ⟷ "My God sent His angel" (v22). No injury on Daniel (v23) ⟷ the accusers crushed before they hit the bottom (v24). A decree against prayer (v7) ⟷ a decree to fear the God of Daniel (v26).

Chapter theme (my words)

The only thing Daniel's enemies could attack was his faithfulness to God. He kept praying as he always had, went into the den, and God shut the lions' mouths. A life of daily prayer prepared him for a night with lions — and turned a pagan king's decree into praise for the living God.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 6:22–23 (KJV)

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. 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.

Who is Darius? (vv1–3)

Outside the Bible, no "Darius the Mede" appears by that name. Guzik lists the main views: Darius was another name for Cyrus himself; or Cambyses; or Gubaru, the governor Cyrus set over Babylon. He leans toward Gubaru and notes that "Darius" may be a title rather than a personal name. The reorganization — 120 satraps under three commissioners — fits what we know of Persian administration. Daniel rose to the top again. Calvin, in Guzik: "Daniel here is not the herald of his own virtue, but the Spirit speaks through his mouth."

Faithful in his work (vv4–5)

His enemies investigated him and found nothing — no corruption, no negligence. He was faithful (Aramaic *ʾaman*, trustworthy). That's a high bar: excellence in public work is part of a believer's witness (Col 3:23; 1 Pet 2:12). Maclaren, in Guzik: "The world is a very poor critic of my Christianity, but it is a very sufficient one of my conduct." The only way to get Daniel was to make his relationship with God illegal.

The trap (vv6–9)

The officials "came by agreement" — a noisy crowd — and lied that "all" the commissioners agreed, though Daniel, the chief of them, was never asked. They flatter the king with a thirty-day law making him the only one anyone could petition. Under Medo-Persian law a signed royal decree could not be revoked (compare Esth 1:19; 8:8) — which is exactly why chapter 2 described the silver kingdom as inferior: even the king was bound by his own laws.

Daniel prays as before (vv10–13)

Daniel didn't panic, protest or hide. He went home and did exactly what he had always done — "as he had been doing previously" (v10). Three details matter:

- **Windows open toward Jerusalem** — following Solomon's prayer that exiles would pray toward the temple (1 Kgs 8:46–50).
- **On his knees** — humility before God (Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; Eph 3:14). Heslop, in Guzik: "Kneeling is a begging posture and we must all come to God as beggars."
- **Three times a day** — the habit of a lifetime (Ps 55:17).

Morgan, in Guzik: "The occasional is always affected by the habitual." Daniel didn't pray *less* to avoid trouble, and he didn't pray *more* to make a show. He just kept his habit. And notice: he prayed "giving thanks" — with a death sentence signed.

The trapped king (vv14–18)

Darius is "deeply distressed" — with himself — and works until sunset to find a way out. But his own law binds him. Guzik notes his words of faith (v16) and his sleepless, fasting night. The seal on the stone ensures nothing will change "in regard to Daniel" (v17) — it also protects Daniel from anyone who might come to finish him off.

"My God sent His angel" (vv19–23)

The king calls him "servant of the living God" and asks whether his God has been able to deliver him (v20). Daniel answers with a royal greeting and a testimony: God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths (v22; Heb 11:33). He was innocent before God and had done no crime against the king. Guzik calls this "obedient disobedience": Daniel disobeyed an unjust law without rebelling against the king (Acts 5:29; Rom 13:1–7). And the reason given for his deliverance: "because he had trusted in his God" (v23).

The accusers (v24)

The lions weren't tame or full — they overpowered the accusers before they hit the bottom. Guzik: the trap they set caught them (Ps 7:15–16; Prov 26:27). The punishment of their families reflects Persian custom, not God's law (Deut 24:16).

Darius's decree (vv25–28)

A Medo-Persian ruler now calls the empire to fear the God of Daniel — "the living God and enduring forever," whose "kingdom … will not be destroyed" (v26) — echoing Nebuchadnezzar's confessions (4:3, 34). Guzik traces Daniel's path through the chapter: plotted against, praying, persecuted, protected, preserved, prospering. Many see a picture of Christ: a righteous man condemned by jealous rulers through a law that couldn't be changed, sealed under a stone, and brought out alive at dawn (Matt 27:18, 62–66; 28:1–6).

Word study (Aramaic)

- **satraps — *ʾachashdarpan* (H324):** a Persian provincial governor.
- **commissioners — *sarak* (H5632):** a chief, overseer.
- **extraordinary — *yattir* (H3493):** surpassing, preeminent.
- **ground of accusation — *ʿillah* (H5931):** a pretext, occasion.
- **faithful — *ʾaman* (H540):** trustworthy, reliable — the root of "amen."
- **corruption — *shechath* (H7844):** a fault, corrupt act.
- **came by agreement — *regash* (H7284):** to throng, come together tumultuously.
- **injunction — *ʾesar* (H633):** a binding decree, interdict.
- **revoked — *ʿada* (H5709):** to pass away, be changed.
- **roof chamber — *ʿillith* (H5952):** an upper room.
- **kneeling — *berak* (H1289):** to kneel; also to bless.

- **giving thanks — *yeda* (H3029):** to praise, give thanks.
- **petition — *baʿu* (H1159):** a request, prayer.
- **deliver — *shezib* (H7804):** to rescue, set free.
- **shut — *segar* (H5463):** to close, shut.
- **innocent — *zaku* (H2136):** purity, innocence.
- **trusted — *ʾaman* (H540):** to believe, trust.
- **living — *chay* (H2417):** alive, living.

Cross-references

1 Kgs 8:46–50; Esth 1:19; Esth 8:8; Ps 5:3; Ps 7:15–16; Ps 34:7; Ps 55:16–17; Ps 91:11–13; Prov 26:27; Matt 6:6; Matt 27:62–66; Luke 18:1; Luke 22:41; Acts 4:19–20; Acts 5:29; Acts 12:5–11; Phil 4:6–7; Col 3:23; 1 Thess 5:17; 2 Tim 3:12; 2 Tim 4:17–18; Heb 1:14; Heb 11:33; 1 Pet 2:12; 1 Pet 5:8.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 6:4–5 (KJV)

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. 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.

Command to obey — keep the habit

Daniel didn't start praying when the crisis came; he kept praying the way he always had (v10). The night in the den was won in sixty years of mornings, noons and evenings on his knees. I'll set my prayer times and keep them — not as a law, but as a lifeline. For the men I disciple, a daily rhythm of prayer and the Word is what holds when the lions come.

Sin to confess — a faith that hides

Daniel left his windows open. I'm tempted to keep my faith private when it might cost me — at work, with family, online. I'll confess where I've closed the windows, and ask God for quiet, steady courage, not showy defiance.

Warning to heed — the accusers

Some people will look for anything to use against me. If they search my life, will they find corruption or negligence — or only faithfulness to God? I want to give them nothing to find but Jesus. And I must not become an accuser myself; the trap they set caught them (Prov 26:27).

Promise to trust — "My God sent His angel."

God doesn't always keep me out of the den, but He can shut the lions' mouths. "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them" (Ps 34:7). For the man walking into a courtroom, a prison yard or a hard conversation: the God who shut the lions' mouths goes with you (2 Tim 4:17–18).

Example to follow — faithful at work, faithful to God

Daniel's coworkers couldn't find a single fault in how he did his job. My work — for clients, for my business, for the ministry — should be so honest and excellent that the only charge left is "he serves his God."

Worship

He is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders. A pagan king said it; I say it with my whole heart.

Prayer

Living God, You shut the lions' mouths. Build in me a daily habit of prayer that holds when the pressure comes. Make me faithful in my work and unashamed of my faith. When I face the den, let me trust You as Daniel did — and let my life lead others to fear and worship You. Amen.