

Daniel in the Lions' Den

by John F. Walvoord

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is a powerful example of faithfulness in the face of adversity, demonstrating the importance of prayer and dependence on God.

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Persecution Faith"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the account of Daniel being cast into the lions' den, emphasizing the importance of God's deliverance and sovereignty in the face of persecution. The chapter highlights the faithfulness of Daniel, the unjust accusations against him, his miraculous deliverance from the lions, and the subsequent judgment of his enemies. Darius acknowledges the power of Daniel's God and issues a decree for all to fear and tremble before Him, recognizing His eternal kingdom and deliverance. The chapter concludes with Daniel prospering under Darius and Cyrus, showcasing God's faithfulness to His people in times of trial.

Transcript

The account of Daniel being cast into the lions' den is one of the most familiar stories of the Old Testament. The fact that such an event should be given the same amount of space in Scripture as the panoramic view of world history recorded in chapter 7 leads to the conclusion that, from God's viewpoint, this was an important event not only to Daniel but to all students of Scripture.

From the standpoint of biblical scholarship, however, more attention has been directed to Darius the Mede, the king of Babylon at this time, than to the events of the chapter itself. The reason for this is that much of the critical unbelief in relation to the book of Daniel is based on what is claimed to be a palpable historical error, for it is claimed that history allows no room for such a person by this name. The alleged error is another important argument used to prove a second-century date for Daniel at which the true facts of four hundred years before would be obscure. The problem has attracted scholars who continue to write entire books discussing the questions involved.

H. H. Rowley, who has written one of the most important scholarly studies on this question, begins his work by saying, "The references to Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel have long been recognized as providing the most serious historical problem in the book."²⁸⁹ The problem to which he refers is that the book of Daniel states that Darius the Mede, at the age of 62, received the kingdom after the death of Belshazzar (Dan 5:31) and was "the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans" (Dan 9:1). In chapter 6 we learn that Darius organized "the whole

kingdom," setting up one hundred and twenty princes and three presidents of which Daniel was the first. The Septuagint translates Daniel 6:28 to read that after the death of Darius, Cyrus the Persian king took control, implying a Median kingdom under Darius which was followed by a Persian kingdom under Cyrus. Sources outside the Bible, however, clearly indicate that this is not the case.

As D. J. Wiseman has itemized, basing his findings on the Nabonidus Chronicle, the actual events went something like this.²⁹⁰ Babylon was conquered by Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, who led the army of Cyrus and entered the city of Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's feast. Nabonidus, who was Belshazzar's father, had fled Babylon the day before only to be captured and later die in exile. When Babylon fell to Ugbaru on October 11, 539 B.C., Cyrus himself had remained with other troops at Opis, and not until eighteen days later, October 29, 539 B.C., did he actually arrive in Babylon. A man by the name of Gubaru was appointed by Cyrus to rule in Babylon. Eight days after the arrival of Cyrus, Ugbaru died. If this precise history of the events following the fall of Babylon is correct, it is obvious that there is no room for Darius the Mede to reign over Babylon. Although there are several explanations, three predominate.

First, the book of Daniel is here historically in error, and the writer has confused Darius the Mede with some other important personage. One of the most important advocates of this explanation is H. H. Rowley, who successively discards identification of Darius the Mede with Astyages, the last of the Median kings;²⁹¹ Cyaxares, the son of Astyages;²⁹² Gobryas, another form of the name Gubaru, or Ugbaru, who led the forces conquering Babylon;²⁹³ and Cambyses, a son of Cyrus.²⁹⁴ Rowley offers rather thorough proof that none of these suggestions are valid and supports the conclusion that there is no reliable evidence that a person named Darius the Mede ever lived, as only Daniel mentions him. Rowley suggests that this ruler was so designated by the author of Daniel because of confusion with Darius the son of Hystaspes, who is associated with a later fall of Babylon in 520 B.C. In a word, Rowley believes that Daniel's book is not reliable historically in its reference to Darius the Mede. This would also support the theory that Daniel the prophet of the sixth century B.C. could not have written the book as he would have had accurate information.

Two explanations have been offered by conservative scholars. Both recognize Darius the Mede as an actual historical character who fulfilled the role assigned him in Daniel 6.

One of these explanations, which is quite popular, is that Darius the Mede is the same as Gubaru, the governor appointed over Babylon by Cyrus. This view is strongly supported by Robert Dick Wilson²⁹⁵ and a host of others such as Friedrich Delitzsch, C. H. H. Wright, Joseph D. Wilson, and W. F. Albright.²⁹⁶ John C. Whitcomb, Jr. has attempted to revive this view and answer Rowley.²⁹⁷ Whitcomb distinguishes Gubaru from Ugbaru, both of whom are called Gobryas in some translations of the Nabonidus Chronicle. Whitcomb holds that Ugbaru, identified previously as the governor of Gutium in the Nabonidus Chronicle, led the army of Cyrus into Babylon and died less than a month later. Gubaru, however, is identified by Whitcomb as Darius the Mede, a king of Babylon under the authority of Cyrus. Although sources outside the Bible do not call Gubaru a Median or king of Babylon, nor do they give his age, there is no real contradiction between the secular records and that which Daniel states of Darius the Mede.

The third view, held by the conservative scholar, D. J. Wiseman, has simplicity in its favor. It claims that Darius the Mede is another name of Cyrus the Persian. This is based upon a translation of Daniel 6:28 which the Aramaic permits to read "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian."²⁹⁸ The fact that monarchs had more than one name is common in ancient literature, and

Wiseman's view offers another conservative explanation of this problem in Daniel.

All who discuss the question of Darius the Mede must necessarily found their arguments on a relative scarcity of factual material. Critics frequently appeal to silence as an argument in their favor, as if the absence of a fact from our fragmentary records is a conclusive point. Most Bible-believing Christians feel that, until there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Scripture record itself should be given more consideration than the fragmentary records outside the Bible or, specifically, than the lack of record. K. A. Kitchen has summarized the inconclusive nature of this negative evidence, demonstrating that it does not support the sweeping conclusion that Daniel is in error.²⁹⁹ It must be emphasized that there is no established fact which contradicts a person by the name of Darius the Mede reigning over Babylon if Darius is an alternate name for a known ruler.

Daniel Exalted by Darius

6:1-3 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 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. 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.

With the successful conquest of Babylon and the surrounding territory, it now is appropriate for the new kingdom to organize, both from the standpoint of law and order and from the benefit of taxation which this would allow. In such an organization, it would not be unsuitable to use qualified men who had served previously in the Babylonian kingdom. The conquerors did what they could to set up a friendly relationship with the people in their power; and although Belshazzar was slain, his father, Nabonidus, lived for some years afterward. Even some of the gods of Babylon were honored by the conquerors.³⁰⁰

The organization of the new kingdom is detailed in the opening verses of chapter 6. One hundred and twenty princes or "satraps" were appointed. Some have held that this figure is inaccurate. Montgomery, for instance, says, "The 120 satraps (AV 'princes') is an exaggeration, or at least an inaccuracy. Her[odotus], iii, 89, records that Darius created 20 satrapies, and that king's inscriptions give their numbers successively as 21, 23, 29."³⁰¹ Montgomery goes on, however, to admit that there were 127 provinces according to Esther 1:1 but still insists that Daniel is inaccurate. Montgomery also objects to the "three presidents" as being without parallel.³⁰² The fact is that the appointment of 120 officials to rule such a vast territory and of three presidents to rule over them was not at all unreasonable. Whether or not there were precisely 120 subdivisions of his territory is not indicated, but the need for this number of officials is obvious.

The point of introducing these facts in Daniel's narrative is to give the setting for Daniel's place of honor. Daniel himself was named one of the three presidents who would coordinate the work of the 120 princes. Of them, it was required to give financial accounts and protect the king's interest. In such a function, an honest and capable administrator familiar with the territory and problems of taxation would undoubtedly be of immeasurable benefit to Darius. For this reason, Daniel, according to verse 3, was preferred above the others and had such "an excellent spirit" that the king thought to put all of the princes under him. All of this makes a great deal of sense and actually sets the stage for the supreme test of Daniel which followed.

The Plot Against Daniel

6:4-5 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. 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.

The excellent services and integrity of Daniel soon became a barrier to the ambitions of the princes and presidents with whom he was associated. Daniel's integrity made impossible any corruption, and his favor with Darius aroused the jealousy of his fellow officials. It was only natural under these circumstances that these men, most of them probably much younger than Daniel and anxious to get ahead, should try to find some means of disposing of Daniel. Daniel's faithfulness was such that they could not put their finger on any error or fault in the execution of his office. Some other method must be found if Daniel was to be eliminated. The men themselves came to the conclusion that the only way they could trip up Daniel was to provide a conflict between official regulations and Daniel's conscience and observance of the law of God. Scriptures do not reveal all the machinations which went on behind Daniel's back, but apparently there were numerous conferences and finally a plot was formed.

The Conspirators Secure a Ban on Prayer

6:6-9 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 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. 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. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

The conspirators, having conceived of a plan, lost no time in putting it into effect. In a major appearance before the king, they presented their request. Verse 6 seems to indicate that they all were there, which was a most unusual occasion. Their spokesman, after properly addressing King Darius, represented to him that all the presidents and other officials whom they named in verse 7 had agreed on their petition. Some object to this account as being most improbable, if not impossible, but stranger things have happened. Montgomery notes, "Their ostensibly honorific plea that the king sign a decree that none should make request of god or man except of the king for thirty days appears to many commentators as absurd, and probably for this reason [the LXX] omits the item."³⁰³ But even Montgomery adds, "But these stories are generally reasonable; the terms of the request may be meant as a satiric hyperbole, cf. Jon. 3:8, where the Ninevite king orders both man and beast to put on sackcloth. Behr.'s [Behrmann] position is an entirely sensible one that the implication of the story means a petition of religion (not with Bev. [Bevan] any kind of request), and that this one king was to be regarded for the time being as the only representative of Deity."³⁰⁴

Their petition to the king was to the effect that a decree should be issued that no one could present a petition to any god or man for thirty days except to the king. The penalty for disobedience would be that they would be cast into the den of lions. Under the psychological impact of these officials assembling in such force and presenting such an unusual petition designed to honor Darius and recognize in him divine powers, Darius signed the writing and the decree; and it became a law which could not be changed. The book of Esther (1:19; 8:8) and Diodorus Siculus (17:30) also establish the fact that Medo-Persian law stipulated that a royal edict could not be revoked. The verb translated "sign" (rshm) in verses 8, 9, and 10

can be understood to mean "to draw, to draw up, to inscribe, to write," and hence "to draft," which would be more comprehensive than merely signing.³⁰⁵

As Young and others have pointed out, there is nothing unusual in ascribing to Persian kings worship such as would be afforded the pagan gods. Young observes, "The action of Darius was both foolish and wicked. What led him to yield to the request of the ministers can only be conjectured, but probably he was greatly influenced by the claim of deity which many of the Persian kings made."³⁰⁶ Stuart justifies this situation in these words, "Parsism did not indeed require men to regard the king as a god in his own proper nature, but to pay him supreme homage as the representative of Ormusd. Such being the state of the case, it is easy to see that the account of Darius' behavior, when he was importuned by his courtiers and nobles, wears no special marks of improbability."³⁰⁷ The probability is that Darius regarded this act as a pledge of loyalty to himself and a token of their desire to respect his authority to the utmost.

Daniel's Faithfulness in Testing

6:10-11 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. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

The remarkable faithfulness of Daniel in the face of this decree was similar to that of his three companions in chapter 3 as they faced the fiery furnace. According to the record, although he knew that the writing was signed and that discovery and execution were inevitable, he nevertheless went to his house where his windows were opened in the direction of Jerusalem, which still lay in ruins. The punctuation of the Revised Standard Version of verse 10 is preferable to the American Standard Version and follows the accentuation of the Massoretic text. It carries the implication that his windows were customarily open toward Jerusalem--"he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem."

Then he knelt in keeping with his schedule of coming to God three times a day in prayer and thanksgiving. Daniel in his prayer life followed the inspired instructions of Jeremiah addressed to the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people of the captivity (Jer 29:1). Jeremiah had assured them, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:12). According to Daniel 9:2, the book of Jeremiah was in Daniel's hands. The custom of praying toward the temple in Jerusalem was adopted by Solomon (cf. 2 Ch 6:34-39) and continued until the new instruction given by Christ to the Samaritan woman in John 4:20-24. Prayer thrice daily is mentioned in a Psalm of David (Ps 55:16-17). While Daniel's consistency of life and testimony has been evident throughout the book of Daniel, here we learn the inner secret. In spite of the pressures of being a busy executive with many demands upon his time, Daniel had retired to his house three times a day to offer his prayers for the peace of Jerusalem as well as for his personal needs. This was not the act of a person courting martyrdom but the continuation of a faithful ministry in prayer which had characterized his long life. The scripture observes that he did this as he had done before.

Of special interest are the details relating to his prayer life. The opening of the windows to Jerusalem was symbolic of his hope that someday the children of Israel would be able to return to this city of God. Later in chapter 9, Daniel's effective prayers were the prelude for the return under Zerubbabel. His posture in prayer is also indicative of his dependence upon God as a suppliant. The fact that he did this three times a

day, not simply morning and evening or once a day, is also most enlightening. No doubt the thought also had crossed Daniel's mind concerning having his windows open. Why could not he pray in secret and thus avoid breaking the king's decree? To Daniel apparently this was subterfuge, and he did not swerve whatever from his usual customs in prayer.

Of great significance is the fact that even his enemies anticipated that this would be Daniel's response. Quite confidently, they assembled to witness his prayers and to have a basis for charging Daniel before the king. By prearrangement, they gathered in a place where they could observe and hear him, according to verse 11. What a testimony Daniel had that even his enemies knew he would be faithful to God although it would cost him his life.

Daniel Accused Before Darius

6:12-15 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. 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 has signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 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. 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 conspirators, with the evidence that Daniel had violated the decree, now crowded once again into the king's courtroom. The punctuation and translation of verse 12, "concerning the king's decree," is better than the Revised Standard Version rendering, "concerning the interdict, 'O king!'" The Revised Standard Version is based on the theory that the king had to be addressed at the beginning of the sentence. Probably what is recorded in Scripture is, in any case, an abbreviated summary of the conversation. God in the King James Version should probably be rendered "god," that is, any deity. They began by asking the question whether the decree had been signed. The king assured them that it had been officially executed, and "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" the decree was the law of the land. With this assurance, they then proceeded to accuse Daniel, introducing him not as a president in an honored position, but as "of the children of the captivity of Judah." They accuse Daniel of disregarding the king and his decree, and doing so three times a day as he offered prayer to his God.

Their confidence in making this accusation was probably bolstered by the justification for the decree in the first place. No doubt the Scriptures do not record all the conversation between King Darius and the officials who had asked for the decree. It is probable that they had justified the decree as a means by which all the peoples in the kingdom would be forced to recognize Darius as their ruler and present their petitions to their deities in Darius' name. There was little in this that would be offensive to a pagan who worshiped many gods, and it could have been a useful device to ascertain any in the kingdom who were still in a state of rebellion against the king.

Now that the trap was sprung on Daniel, however, the king immediately saw through the decree. Instead of being angry with Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar had been with Daniel's companions in chapter 3, the king realized that he himself had made a mistake and attempted in every legal way to find a loophole by which

Daniel could be delivered. His labors, however, were in vain. The officials once again assembling before the king at the evening of the day reminded the king that the law could not be changed according to their customs and beliefs. As the representative of the gods, the king, having decreed, would have to execute the decree. There was no way out but to issue the command that Daniel should be cast into the lions' den.

Daniel Cast into the Lions' Den

6:16-17 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. 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.

In keeping with the decree which he had signed, Darius then issued the formal command to cast Daniel into the lions' den. Prior to its execution, however, it is most remarkable that the king said to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." This may be translated, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he must deliver thee." This is more accurate than the Revised Standard Version rendering, "May your God... deliver you." The idea is that the king is saying, "I have tried to save you but have failed. Now your God must save you."³⁰⁸ Observable in this assurance of Darius is the deep impression that Daniel's personal piety and faithfulness to God had made upon the king and that this impression had brought about Darius' own conviction that Daniel's God would come to his rescue in Daniel's extremity.

The decree, however, is executed. Daniel is cast into the den of lions and a stone is brought upon the mouth of the den sealed with the king's signet as a token of execution and fulfillment of the decree. No human hand could interfere, not even that of Darius himself.

Keil gives an interesting account of a lions' den such as has been found in more modern times. Keil observes, "We have no account by the ancients of the construction of lions' dens. Ge. Host, in his work on Fez and Morocco, p. 77, describes the lions' dens as they have been found in Morocco. According to his account, they consist of a large square cavern under the earth, having a partition-wall in the middle of it, which is furnished with a door, which the keeper can open and close from above. By throwing in food, they can entice the lions from one chamber into the other, and then, having shut the door, they enter the vacant space for the purpose of cleaning it. The cavern is open above, its mouth being surrounded by a wall of a yard and a half high, over which one can look down into the den. This description agrees perfectly with that which is here given in the text regarding the lions' den."³⁰⁹ Keil goes on to explain that there was a door in the wall surrounding the cavern through which both the keepers and the lions could enter except when the stone was in place. This accounts for the fact that Darius was able to converse freely with Daniel before the stone was removed from the door.

The King's Lament for Daniel

6:18-20 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. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 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?

Quite in contrast to Nebuchadnezzar who showed no compassion for Daniel's three companions when they were cast into the fiery furnace, Darius manifests unusual concern. Although he was accustomed to brutality and execution of criminals and ordinarily did not give the matter a second thought, in this case there was something about Daniel that had involved the king emotionally. While the king had stated to Daniel in verse 16, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee," it is quite clear that he did not have any real faith in Daniel's deliverance but only a remote superstition perhaps arising out of stories which had come to him of the escape of Daniel's companions earlier in Babylonian history as well as of other phenomenal deliverances of the people of Israel. In keeping with his grief for Daniel, the Scriptures record that the king fasted, did not have the usual entertainment of music, and was unable to sleep. The expression instruments of music is in doubt because the meaning of the word is uncertain. Rosenthal suggests as a translation the word table,^{310 311} supported by the Arabian translation and Rashi (commentary). The meaning would be tables on which to serve food. In the present state of knowledge, the Revised Standard Version rendering "no diversions," although indefinite, is the best that can be done. In any case it was most unusual for the king to spend a night in this fashion. Probably never before in his entire life had the king had such an experience.

As the day was dawning and in the dim light of early morning, the king went in haste unto the den of lions. Probably being unable to see because of the early morning light and the shadows of the lions' den, the king called out to Daniel. The form of address is also most remarkable. He describes Daniel as the "servant of the living God" and raises the question once again, "is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" That the king thought that there was a possibility of it is substantiated by the fact that he came to the den of lions early in the morning and called Daniel. That he had little actual faith, however, is shown in the "lamentable voice" in which he called Daniel. The Aramaic for "lamentable" is *âsîb*, meaning "sad," hence the Revised Standard Version reads "tone of anguish." He feared that there would be nothing but silence and the growl of the lions in response to his call.

Daniel's Deliverance

6:21-23 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 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. 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.

In response to the king's inquiry and to his astounded ears, the calm voice of Daniel arose from the lions' den with the usual courteous greeting, "O king, live for ever." Most people in Daniel's predicament would have immediately cried out for deliverance from the lions. But Daniel, after his greeting, informs the king that the lions' mouths have been shut by an angel sent by God so that the lions were not able to hurt him. Daniel attributes this not only to the power of God but to the fact that Daniel was innocent of any crime either to God or to the king.

The Scriptures record that the king was overjoyed at the deliverance of his favorite counselor and immediately gave order that Daniel should be taken up out of the den of lions. Although the Scriptures are not explicit, it may be that by this is meant that Daniel was lifted by means of ropes out of the den directly, without taking time to remove the stone with the necessary prelude of enticing the lions to another part of the cavern first so that they would not escape. To the unbelieving eyes of the king and his servants, Daniel was found to have no hurt whatever because of his faith in God (Heb 11:33). Just as the flames had not

been able even to bring the smell of fire upon Daniel's companions in chapter 3, the lions were not permitted to touch the prophet of God.

Daniel's Enemies Destroyed

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.

The sad end of Daniel's accusers is recorded as an act of divine justice upon the enemies of the prophet of God. According to the Scriptures, Daniel's accusers with their wives and children are cast into the lions' den and immediately devoured by the lions. Such barbarity is common in the ancient world, and not without parallel even in God's divine judgment upon the wicked as illustrated in the judgment of the Lord upon Dathan, Abiram, and Korah when they and their families were swallowed up in an earthquake (Num 16). The punishment meted out conforms to the injunction about the treatment of false witnesses in the law (Deu 19:16-21). This principle of *lex talionis* is also illustrated in the case of Haman (Est 7:9-10).

Some critics have pointed with ridicule to the impossibility of casting one hundred and twenty officials plus their wives and children into one lions' den. Montgomery, for instance, regards this "tragic denouement" as "indeed absurd," as well as the entire story.³¹² The Septuagint, apparently in an effort to counter this criticism, makes the victims only the two men who were presidents with Daniel, and, therefore, his principal accusers.³¹³ The Scriptures themselves do not say that all the princes and presidents were cast into the den of lions, but only those who accused Daniel, that is, the ringleaders. This served notice on the rest, if they had any further inclination to plot against Daniel, that they too might experience the wrath of the king as well as the judgment of God. The experience of the false accusers of Daniel is another illustration of God's faithfulness to the basic Abrahamic Covenant where God promised to bless them who blessed Abraham's seed and to curse him who curseth them (Gen 12:3).

The Decree of Darius

6:25-28 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 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. 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. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Much as Nebuchadnezzar had done in chapter 3 and again in chapter 4, Darius issued a decree to be sent throughout his entire domain calling on men everywhere to fear the God of Daniel. The inscription in which the decree is addressed to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" is quite similar to Daniel 4:1. It may be in both instances that Daniel was the actual penman acting under command for the king, or it may be that the unknown penman is following the usual form of letter writing. In both cases, the king took for granted that the world was at his feet, and he used extravagant language including the entire world in his address. The expression "Peace be multiplied unto you" is identical to that found in Daniel 4:1, and almost reminds one of the letters of Paul in the New Testament.

The decree was short and to the point calling on men everywhere in the kingdom of Darius to "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel." Daniel's God is described as the living God, One who is steadfast, whose

kingdom shall not be destroyed and whose dominion continues to the end. The Revised Standard Version rendering "enduring forever" is probably more explicit than "stedfast for ever." The point is that in a rapidly changing situation--that is, the Medo-Persians overcoming the Babylonians--God does not change. Again, this is remarkably similar to Daniel 4:3. In substantiation of this ascription of sovereignty and power, God is described as One who is able to deliver and rescue, who is able to work signs and wonders both in heaven and in earth, and who has confirmed this by delivering Daniel from the power of the lions. Verses 26-27 are in the form of a hymn in the original. Once again throughout the world of Daniel's day, the tidings were carried of the great God who is living, powerful, everlasting, and greater than the gods of the pagans.

The chapter closes with a brief historical note that Daniel continued to prosper in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Here again critics have attempted to claim an inaccuracy. The probable explanation is, as has been previously pointed out, that either Darius was a governor under Cyrus and later delivered the kingdom to him, possibly at his death, or that Darius and Cyrus were the same person with the word and understood as meaning "even."

Although the pointed claim of this chapter that God is able to accomplish miracles in delivering His servants from death is couched in such terms as to arouse the unbelief of those already predisposed to question the Scriptures, this chapter is a profound illustration of how God cares for His people. Although historical and to be accepted in its literal portrayal of an event, it is also parabolic like chapter 3 and is a foreshadowing of the ultimate deliverance of the people of Israel from their persecutors in the time of the great tribulation at the end of the times of the Gentiles. When the power of God is finally demonstrated at the second coming of Christ, the persecutors of Israel and the enemies of God will be judged and destroyed much like the enemies of Daniel. Like Daniel, however, the people of God in persecution must remain true regardless of the cost.

289 H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*, p. 8.

290 D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 9-18.

291 Rowley, pp. 30-36.

292 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-43.

293 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-29.

294 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

295 R. D. Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, pp. 128 ff.

296 Rowley, p. 19.

297 J. Q. Whitcomb, Jr., *Darius the Mede*.

298 Wiseman, p. 14.

299 K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, pp. 30 ff.

300 Wiseman states that the temple ritual was restored when agreement for the surrender of Babylon was reached (Ancient Orient and O.T., p. 10).

301 J. A. Montgomery, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 269.

302 Ibid.

303 Ibid., pp. 269-70.

304 Ibid., p. 270.

305 F. Rosenthal, A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic, p. 96.

306 E. J. Young, The Prophecy of Daniel, p. 134.

307 Moses Stuart, A Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 171.

308 C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 216.

309 The concept of "must deliver" is derived from the imperfect tense which in the Aramaic may be used in a way identical to the use of the imperfect in Hebrew to denote obligation (for the Hebrew usage, see P. P. Jouon, Grammaire de L' Hebreu Biblique, p. 305). The tense is imperfect, not jussive as the RSV translators have construed it, because when the form is imperfect the suffix is preceded by -(i)nn, as it is here, whereas in the jussive imperative the suffix is attached directly to the verb (see Rosenthal, pp. 54-55).

310 Rosenthal comments, "other traditional guesses consider the word a pi. fem.: concubines, food, musical instruments, perfume" (Grammar, p. 81).

311 Rosenthal, p. 81. For further discussion, see Montgomery, pp. 277-78.

312 Montgomery, p. 278.

313 Ibid.

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