

# *Daniel*

## *From the Lions' Den to the Angel's Den*

Lesson #7 for February 15, 2020

Scriptures: Daniel 6; 1 Samuel 18:6-9; Matthew 6:6; Acts 5:27-32; Mark 6:14-29; Hebrews 11:35-38.

1. In spite of the events of that fateful night when Daniel was called to interpret the handwriting on the wall and was offered the third position in the Babylonian empire, Daniel was somehow recognized by the new Medo-Persian rulers as an outstanding administrator. He was probably put on probation for a period of time to make sure his loyalty was with the new government. But, very quickly, recognizing his administrative skills, they placed him in the highest rank of governors, satraps, and administrators in the new government.
2. Try to imagine how the Medo-Persian governors and administrators must have felt about having a foreigner placed over them. What do you suppose Daniel did to impress Darius the Mede, the new ruler of Babylon and the Medo-Persian empire? Who was Darius?
3. It is important for us to recognize that God's people are not always immediately protected and saved from problems like Daniel was. When the great controversy has fully played out, those who are faithful to God will be the winners. Daniel was vindicated not by the destruction of his enemies, but by his ultimate victory in the kingdom of heaven.
4. It is important for us to recognize parallels between stories like this one about Daniel and the larger background context in which all these stories take place. Jealousy was one of the motivating factors that led Lucifer, later Satan, to challenge the position of Christ in heaven.

Lucifer was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ. Yet when all the angels bowed to Jesus to acknowledge His supremacy and high authority and rightful rule, he bowed with them; **but his heart was filled with envy and hatred.**—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*,\* vol. 1, 18.1 (1870); *The Story of Redemption*\* 14.1; *FLB*\* 67.3; *LHU*\* 18.4.†

5. How serious is the sin of jealousy? What is the relationship between jealousy and covetousness? When we covet something belonging to someone else, we are jealous of that person. And covetousness is one of the sins listed in the Ten Commandments along with murder, theft, and adultery. Compare Genesis 37:11 and 1 Samuel 18:6-9. What factors in these stories make you think of our story for this week as recorded in Daniel 6:1-5?

**Daniel 6:1-5:** Darius decided to appoint 120 governors to hold office throughout his empire. <sup>2</sup>In addition, he chose Daniel and two others to supervise the governors and to look after the king's interests. <sup>3</sup>**Daniel soon showed that he could do better work than the other supervisors or the governors. Because he was so outstanding, the king considered putting him in charge of the whole empire.** <sup>4</sup>Then the other supervisors and the governors tried to find something wrong with the way Daniel administered the empire, but they couldn't, because Daniel was reliable and did not do anything wrong or dishonest. <sup>5</sup>They said to one another, "We are not going to find anything of which to accuse Daniel unless it is something in connection with his religion."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2nd ed., Daniel 6:1-5). New York: American Bible Society.†

6. Do you think there were other administrators from various lands who had been serving in the Babylonian government that were adopted into the Medo-Persian government?
7. Jealousy led those officials under Daniel's control to search for anything they could find to

accuse him. We do not know how long they looked! But, “they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.” (Daniel 6:4, NKJV\*) It is interesting to note that the Aramaic word translated as *faithful* could also be translated as *trustworthy*. In order to find something for which they could accuse Daniel, they must have searched his life very carefully. The one thing that distinguished him from them—other than his very careful and excellent work for which they could not accuse him—was his worship of the true God.

8. If they could accuse him of something in connection with his worship of God, he would be guilty; and they could not be accused! So, what did they do?

**Daniel 6:6-9:** <sup>6</sup> So they went to see the king and said, “King Darius, may Your Majesty live for ever! <sup>7</sup>**All of us** who administer your empire—the supervisors, the governors, the lieutenant-governors, and the other officials—have agreed that Your Majesty should issue an order and enforce it strictly. Give orders that for thirty days no one be permitted to request anything from any god or from any human being except from Your Majesty. Anyone who violates this order is to be thrown into a pit filled with lions. <sup>8</sup>So let Your Majesty issue this order and sign it, and it will be in force, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.” <sup>9</sup>And so King Darius signed the order.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

9. Darius, in cooperation with Cyrus, had apparently conceived of ways to decentralize government administration while at the same time keeping all the subordinates loyal.
10. It should be obvious that giving lower level administrators more power and authority is a risk that they might someday think they can do the job of their superior! These schemers against Daniel felt that a petition requiring everyone to worship only the king for 30 days would flatter the king’s vanity and give them a clear basis on which to accuse Daniel.
11. While there is no evidence that Persian kings ever claimed divine status, in contrast to some of their rivals who followed them, they managed to get Darius to sign the decree. Unfortunately, Darius did not think through all the implications before signing.
12. There are a couple of things we need to notice about this law which was signed by Darius.

First, the penalty for transgression is to be cast into the lions’ den. Since this kind of punishment is not attested elsewhere, it may have been an ad hoc [*sic*] suggestion of Daniel’s enemies. Ancient Near Eastern monarchs placed lions in cages in order to release them on certain occasions for hunting. So, there was no shortage of lions to maul whoever dared to violate the king’s decree. Second, the decree cannot be changed. The unchangeable nature of the “law of the Persians and Medes” also is mentioned in Esther 1:19 and 8:8. Diodorus Siculus, an ancient Greek historian, mentions an occasion when Darius III (not to be confused with the Darius mentioned in Daniel) changed his mind but could no longer repeal a death sentence he had passed on an innocent man.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, February 10.‡

13. Daniel had an established habit of going three times a day to the upper room in his house, opening a widow westward toward Jerusalem, and praying to the God of heaven. No doubt, he was in the habit of praying not only about issues in his work but also about himself and his Jewish countrymen and their servile condition. (See Daniel 9.)
14. We do not know how Daniel found out about the order that had been signed by the king. He may have received a copy with the understanding that he would be responsible for enforcing it!
15. There is no question about the fact that he immediately recognized the implications of the new

law. While Darius probably felt that this new law would elevate his position in the eyes of all in his kingdom, he had forgotten about his friend Daniel.

**Of course, the real causes and motives behind the plot lie in the cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil.** At this time (539 B.C.) Daniel already has received the visions recorded in Daniel 7 (553 B.C.) and 8 (551 B.C.). So, he can understand the royal decree, not as a matter of mere human politics but as an instance of this cosmic war.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, February 11.<sup>†</sup> [Why are the chapters in Daniel not in chronological order?]<sup>‡</sup>

16. Were there other Jewish exiles who were also caught by this law? We have no evidence of that. But, Daniel did not hesitate to follow his standard practice of praying three times a day. This is a case of direct conflict between the laws of man and the laws of God. Can you think of other examples in the Bible when something similar took place? (See Acts 5:27-32.)
17. How long do you think it took for these schemers to accuse Daniel? What was the king's response when he realized what they were trying to do? See Daniel 6:11-23.
18. At what point do you think the king suddenly realized that this was a plot to destroy his most trusted worker? Had these conspirators tried to demote or possibly destroy Daniel in some other way earlier? Was this plot led by a person who thought that the position given to Daniel should have been his?

The conspirators soon spot Daniel praying—that is, doing exactly what the decree has forbidden. And as they bring the accusation before the king, they refer to Daniel in a demeaning way: “that Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah” (*Dan. 6:13, NKJV*). **In their eyes, one of the chief officers of the empire, the king's favorite, is no more than “a captive.”** In addition, they pit Daniel against the king by saying that Daniel “does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed” (*NKJV*). Now the king realizes he has been entrapped by signing the decree. The text says that “he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him” (*Dan. 6:14, NKJV*). But there is nothing he can do to save the prophet from the prescribed punishment. The irrevocable law of the Medes and Persians must be applied to the letter. Thus the king, however reluctantly, issues the command to throw Daniel to the lions. But in doing so, Darius expresses some glimmering hope, which sounds like a prayer: “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you’ ” (*Dan. 6:16, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.\** for Wednesday, February 12.<sup>†§</sup>

19. What would you do if you were thrown into a den of lions? Did Daniel know for sure that he would be protected? Did he pray all night long?

God did not prevent Daniel's enemies from casting him into the lions' den; He permitted evil angels and wicked men thus far to accomplish their purpose; but **it was that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked, and the defeat of the enemies of truth and righteousness more complete.**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings\** 543.3-544.0; *CC\** 255.4.<sup>†</sup>

Although God did not prevent Daniel from being cast into a den of lions, **an angel went in with him and closed their mouths, so that no harm befell him.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,\** vol. 5, 527.1.<sup>†</sup>

20. So, this story had a happy ending for Daniel. But, there are other accounts in the Bible—for example, the story of John the Baptist—in which deliverance was not accomplished. How should

we relate to those stories? For example, see Mark 6:14-29 and DA 221.5-222.0.

21. What impact did this experience have on the king? What do you think of his response?

**Daniel 6:24-28:** <sup>24</sup>Then the king gave orders to arrest all the men who had accused Daniel, and they were thrown, together with their wives and their children, into the pit filled with lions. Before they even reached the bottom of the pit, the lions pounced on them and broke all their bones.

<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to the people of all nations, races, and languages on earth:

“Greetings! <sup>26</sup>I command that throughout my empire everyone should fear and respect Daniel’s God.

“He is a living God,

and he will rule for ever.

His kingdom will never be destroyed,

and his power will never come to an end.

<sup>27</sup> He saves and rescues;

he performs wonders and miracles

in heaven and on earth.

He saved Daniel from being killed by the lions.”

<sup>28</sup> Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.—*Good News Bible*.\*

22. In this story, we have the first king of the new Medo-Persian empire ruling over Babylon following much of the example of Nebuchadnezzar, the former king of Babylon. See Daniel 3:28-29; 4:1-3,34-37.

23. Unfortunately, as noted in verse 24 above, not everyone in the story came away unscathed.

24. There are several things we need to notice about this disturbing problem.

First, we should note that the action is decided and implemented by the king according to Persian law, which includes the family in the punishment of the culprit. According to an ancient principle, the entire family bears responsibility for the offense of a family member. This doesn’t mean it’s right; it means only that this story fits with what we know about Persian law.

Second, we must note that the biblical narrative reports the event but does not endorse the action of the king. In fact, the Bible clearly forbids that children be put to death because of the sins of the parents (*Deut. 24:16*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, February 13. §

**Deuteronomy 24:16:** Parents are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their children, and children are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their parents; people are to be put to death only for crimes they themselves have committed.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**1 Corinthians 4:5:** So you should not pass judgement on anyone before the right time comes. Final judgement must wait until the Lord comes; he will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people’s minds. And then all will receive from God the praise they deserve.—*Good News Bible*.\*

25. Read Hebrews 11:33. What does this tell us about true faith?

**Hebrews 11:33:** Through faith they fought whole countries and won. They did what was right and received what God had promised. They shut the mouths of lions.—*Good News Bible*.\* [Who shut the mouths of those lions?]<sup>†</sup>

26. Do the people that you work with know that you would stand firm for God's law even if your life was threatened? What do we expect to happen in the final days of this earth's history?
27. Why do you think we do not hear anything more about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Were they dead by this time? Or, had they perhaps compromised? Would it be wise for us to be as openly obedient to God's commands as Daniel was?
28. Should Daniel have just avoided the whole issue by praying in private? (See Matthew 6:6.)
29. Having reviewed this episode in the life of Daniel, how do you think Daniel's example in this case impacted others in and around Babylon? Did this lead others to worship the true God? How do you think this story was reported from person to person around Babylon?
30. Why do you think Darius the Mede chose Daniel as one of his chief administrators? Was he fed up with the infighting, the rivalry, and the competition among the others he had dealt with? Was he hoping that Daniel would be "above the fray" and not be pulled into competition with them?
31. There is plenty of evidence from ancient records that competition, rivalry, even intrigue was very common in those ancient governments. Are you surprised? That is a human condition!
32. Muslims bow toward Mecca five times a day and pray in their accustomed way. Should Seventh-day Adventist Christians be doing something similar? We do not have to pray toward any particular location; but, should we be directing our prayers to God?

**Psalms 55:17:** Morning, noon, and night

my complaints and groans go up to him,  
and he will hear my voice.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**1 Kings 8:35,38,44,48:** <sup>35</sup> "When you hold back the rain because your people have sinned against you, and then when they repent and face this Temple, humbly praying to you,... <sup>38</sup>listen to their prayers. If any of your people Israel, out of heartfelt sorrow, stretch out their hands in prayer towards this Temple,..."  
<sup>44</sup> "When you command your people to go into battle against their enemies and they pray to you, wherever they are, facing this city which you have chosen and this Temple which I have built for you,... <sup>48</sup>If in that land they truly and sincerely repent, and pray to you as they face towards this land which you gave to our ancestors, this city which you have chosen, and this Temple which I have built for you...."—*Good News Bible*.\*

33. It is interesting to notice that Daniel did not perceive any conflict between serving the God of heaven and working as a faithful public servant.
34. The most startling thing about this story, of course, is the fact that Daniel was not attacked by the lions. We have already read about the three friends of Daniel being preserved in the fiery furnace on the plain of Dura. As we discussed earlier, not every story of God's faithful friends ends as well. We need to remember to watch out for the most dangerous "lion" of all:  
**1 Peter 5:8:** <sup>8</sup> Be alert, be on the watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.—*Good News Bible*.\*
35. Like Peter and John as recorded in Acts when they were brought before the Sanhedrin, Daniel always placed his service to God above his service to men.
36. The laws of the Medes and the Persians supposedly could not be changed. And God's law, of course, cannot be changed either. So, here we have an immovable rock butting up against an irresistible force!

**Daniel 6:17:** <sup>17</sup>A stone was put over the mouth of the pit, and the king placed his own royal seal and the seal of his noblemen on the stone, so that no one could rescue Daniel.—*Good News Bible*.\*

This double sealing was intended to ensure that Daniel's fate remained unchanged. As plausibly suggested by a commentator: "The accusers, who likely were present and wanted the lords' signet seal used, would have desired in this way to insure against the possibility of the king himself sending men to rescue Daniel; and the king would have wanted to insure against these accusers' trying to take Daniel's life some other way, if the lions did not."—Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 169.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 95-96].

But the vindication of Daniel implied the condemnation of those who plotted against him. This outcome is the dark but necessary side of vindication. —*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 96.\*

37. Is it really true that vindication of God's true people must, of necessity, lead to the condemnation and destruction of God's enemies? And was it really necessary for the wives and children to be killed along with the perpetrators? Was that God's will?
38. We recognize that in some cases, for example, in the case of outright war, in order for God's side to win, the other side must be destroyed. But, is that always the case?
39. We are happy to see that Daniel's innocence and faithfulness was rewarded. However, did that necessitate the death of all his enemies? Did God recognize that if those people were left alive, they would take matters into their own hands, and, eventually, Daniel would be destroyed? How many people do you think actually died as a result of this whole debacle?
40. What implications does this story have for our lives today? Should our young people be considering the possibility of public office?

Dear youth, what is the aim and purpose of your life? Are you ambitious for education that you may have a name and position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,\* August 19, 1884, par. 3; *Messages to Young People*\* 36.1; *FE*\* 82.2; *1MCP*\* 367.4.

41. Have you ever been tempted to think that you should enter politics? Do you know of politicians who are or were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and who have been an example like Daniel?
42. Are there certain kinds of public office which are incompatible with Christian life?
43. As the final issues are drawn up and the Devil is doing everything he possibly can to confuse and mislead even the elect, how do we know for sure that we are being loyal to God's side in every case? (Matthew 24:24)
44. Be sure that the Devil is going to do his very best to make these decisions as difficult as possible. He will make it appear that you are doing God's will when you are really doing Satan's will. We must be very discriminating in our evaluations of such things.
45. What things did Daniel do that we should do no matter what our calling and election may be?

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\*Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Text in brackets is added. §Italic type is in the source.

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