

Daniel Chapter Six

History. Chronologically, this chapter likely follows close after the events of Daniel 5. In the *purpose* of God, the new political *power* of Medo-Persia governs the known world. Significantly, they employed a different political *policy* to that of Babylon by allowing conquered nations the right to live in their native lands – just at the time the seventy years' captivity was coming to an end (cf. Ezra 6.3). The extreme trial of the lions' den provided further evidence of Daniel's fitness to be entrusted with the great prophecy of the Messiah's coming (9.24-27). No doubt the peace and confidence of Scripture fortified Daniel to stand *firm* and *unyielding* in the worship of God despite the cost (cf. Isaiah 44.28; 45.1; Daniel 9.2, cp. Psalm 57.4).

Ch.7	First year of Belshazzar	553 BC	Daniel aged 70	Vision 1
Ch.8	Third year of Belshazzar	551 BC	Daniel aged 72	Vision 2
Ch.5	Final year of Belshazzar	539 BC	Daniel aged 84	
Ch.6	First year of Darius	538 BC	Daniel aged 85	
Ch.9	First year of Darius	538 BC	Daniel aged 85	Vision 3

Controversy. Daniel 6 concerns a king named 'Darius the Median' (5.31). He has long been a source of controversy as there is no evidence of his name in any secular historical records. All accounts of Babylon's fall in 539BC credit Cyrus the Great of Persia with its conquest. It should be noted that the name 'Darius' is a *dynastic* name (like *Caesar*) and borne by several kings of Medo-Persia. There are *three* main views of his identification:

1. Gubaru, a Median general. The night Babylon was captured, the Medo-Persian army was commanded by *Ugbaru* (Gobryas) who died three weeks later. He was replaced by another general called *Gubaru* who remained governor of the city for 14 years. According to *John C Whitcomb*, he was given the honourable title of 'Darius King of Babylon' and 'made king' (passive) over the kingdom of the Chaldeans by Cyrus (9.1).
2. Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede are the *same* person under different names (Donald J Wiseman). Daniel 6.28 could be translated, '*So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, that is in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*' Dual titles were not uncommon, especially since he was king of both Median and Persian territories. The fact Darius was a *Mede* (9.1) and Cyrus a *Persian* are reconciled by reason of Cyrus' mixed ancestry, having a Persian father and Median mother. The age of 62 was close to that of Cyrus when Babylon fell (5.31).
3. Cyaxares II, a co-regent with Cyrus who died naturally after two years of the fall of Babylon (Steven D Anderson & J Paul Tanner). Darius (his throne name) was officially recognised as the highest power in the realm, but upon his death Cyrus united the Median and Persian kingdoms in a single throne as Cyaxares had no male heir and Cyrus had married his daughter. This argument agrees very well with the writings of the Greek historian *Xenophon* and was the standard Jewish *and* Christian interpretation from the days of Josephus until the 1870s.

Practically. The structure of the book parallels Daniel 3 with Daniel 6. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar would not allow Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to practice their faith in the *public* square. Now Persian law is intruding on Daniel's right to pray in his *private* space (6.10). Thus, these *Aramaic* chapters (Daniel 2-7) illustrate the degrading of Gentile government down through the 'times of the Gentiles'. Every form of falsehood and idolatry is tolerated, but not a preacher of the truth. For faithful Daniel, the law of *government* is in conflict with the law of *God*. There is only one logical outcome, but he will be made to suffer for his convictions.

Christologically. Throughout the chapter there are delightful comparisons with the experience of the Lord Jesus. Daniel will go down into the place of death, only to rise again (in picture) early the next morning. In his latter years, Daniel has become *like* His Master, not only in character, but also in the circumstances of life (as Paul, 2 Timothy 4). Through suffering, God was making men like Christ before He ever appeared on earth! Producing likeness to Christ is the Spirit's work today (2 Corinthians 3.18).

Prophecy. After religious Babylon is destroyed at the mid-point of tribulation (pictured in Daniel 5), the first beast of Revelation 13 will institute the worship of himself, a man, as God (pictured in Daniel 6). *Smith: Nebuchadnezzar had set up an idol in the place of God; but now Darius sets himself up in the place of God. It is the deification of man.* Those who seek to witness for God during such times will suffer great persecution. Daniel *in* the den presents the remnant as surrounded on every side by various displays of Satan's power (lions). Their destruction will appear imminently certain to human eyes, but for the intervention of God in the appearing of their Messiah (cf. Psalm 18.43-44, 48-49). Daniel delivered *from* the den pictures the faithful remnant of Israel preserved through great tribulation and brought into the reign of Messiah (as typified in Cyrus). *Gaebelein: When the remnant is delivered of the lion's mouth, then another Cyrus shall appear on the scene, one Greater than Cyrus who will gather the sheep.* Cf. Isaiah 44.28; 45.1.

The Position of Daniel [vv.1-3]

v.1: A re-organisation of the administration (according to Persian principles) of any new kingdom is paramount. Darius therefore appointed 120 'princes' or 'satraps' (cf. Esther 1.1, c.50 years later). The satraps (protector of the kingdom) were responsible for the administration of law and order and collection of state taxes. **v.2:** They were responsible to three 'presidents' (chiefs) whose role it was to ensure all taxes were collected without loss of state revenue (fraud). Darius appointed Daniel as 'one' (not 'first' as AV) of these presidents, seeking, according to Persian policy, to retain the services of influential and effective members of the former administration. **v.3:** Yet Daniel 'was continually distinguishing himself' thus Darius sought to promote him over the 'whole realm' (entire kingdom). His secret was 'an excellent spirit' – probably the thought of a *commendable* attitude in the power of the Holy Spirit (cp. 4.8, 18; 5.12, 14). Christians should be diligent and hard-working in their employment, with a good attitude, labouring as if under the watchful gaze of the Saviour (Romans 12.11; Ephesians 6.6; Colossians 3.22).

The Plot against Daniel [vv.4-9]

v.4: Beware of *perils* attached to secular *promotion*! Whenever a person is lifted to a place of prominence, there is always a price to pay. The employer demands his measure of lifeblood! But Daniel was also subject to intense *envy*. This may have been a case of anti-Semitism (v.13), or his integrity restricting their corruption, but, in any case, the world always hates those who are faithful to God (John 15.19). Thus, they sought some occasion wherewith they might accuse Him (cp. Mark 3.2). One can imagine, in a modern context, *trawling* through his papers, *hacking* his emails and *tapping* his phone but he was 'whiter than white'. He was 'faithful' (trustworthy) in his position of responsibility and no 'error' (negligence) or 'fault' (corruption) could be found. There was no sin of omission *or* commission! **v.5:** Daniel was 'blameless' both *officially* and *morally* (cf. 1 Timothy 3.2; Titus 1.6). Their only hope was to catch him in his total commitment to his God (cp. Mark 14.61-63). All they could accuse was his godliness. **v.6:** Having identified the area of potential success, the accusers wasted no time. It seems the action of vv.6-25 takes place in 24 hours, from sunrise of one day to sunrise of the next. Probably a representative delegation of the remaining two presidents and the princes 'assembled together' (in unity) before the king. **v.7:** Their suggestion was based on deception as certainly not 'all' the presidents had consulted together! Daniel probably knew nothing of their conspiracy at this time. They sought a 'royal statute' (even a 'firm decree') that 'whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days' except of Darius should be 'cast into the den of lions'. The 'petitions' in view are likely religious, prayer requests. The suggestion is that Darius should be recognised as the sole mediator between men and gods for a period of 30 days. *One mediator between gods and men, the man Darius the Mede! DR Davis: Daniel's sterling character forces them to resort to 'Darius Appreciation Month' in order to eliminate him.* Failure to observe the decree would result in the 'den of lions'. The state religion was Zoroastrianism which involved the worship of Atar the fire-god. It was therefore sacrilegious to use fire for execution. Alternatively, Persian kings were well-known for their love of hunting lions, and they needed to be fed! The 'den' (or 'pit') was an underground cavity consisting of two compartments with a door controlled by chains from an overhead (vertical) ventilation shaft. **v.8:** Once a law was established, it could not be altered. Note the decline in Gentile rule from *autocracy* (Nebuchadnezzar) to *bureaucracy*. **v.9:** Beware of the adulation of ungodly men. With calculated haste (cf. Isaiah 28.16) the king is flattered into vainly signing the decree, an action which he was soon to regret (v.14).

The Prayers and Piety of Daniel [v.10]

v.10: This verse provides a window *into* the secret power of this man. *Our spiritual lives will only be as proportionately strong as the depth of our private experience with God.* Here is a man of no compromise. It is not a question of a positive sin which he will not commit, but of a positive duty which he will not omit. This was no minor religious inconvenience, but a matter of keeping the first commandment (Exodus 20.3).

- **Private** (went to his house). Private life dominated by prayer. *Character is what a man does when he is alone.*
- **Purity** (his windows being *customarily* open). With lattice work. There was no barrier between him and his God (Psalm 66.18). Holy hands are a prerequisite for public prayer meetings (1 Timothy 2.8).
- **Place** (in his chamber). Literally, 'an upper room' suggestive of luxury and status. This was Daniel's 'closet' (Matthew 6.6). He soared above the commotion and distractions of street level being occupied with God in heaven.
- **Promise** (toward Jerusalem). In *obedience* to the word of God and *assurance* of Divine promise (1 Kings 8.46-49). Jerusalem was the longing of his heart being the place of the Lord's name (Jonah 2.4). Daniel was not at home in Babylon! *Wiersbe: Most of the world begins the day looking toward the world and hoping to get something from it, but the Christian believer looks to the Lord and His promises and enters each new day by faith.*
- **Posture** (kneeled upon his knees). Suggestive of *submission* and *subjection* to the will of God (1 John 5.14). Our true position as beggars before the throne of grace.
- **Period** (three times a day). As was also the practice of *David* (Psalm 55.16-17) and the *apostles* (Acts 3.1; 10.9). These occasions were determined by the hours of sacrifice in the temple, though all such sacrifices had long ceased.

- **Praise** (prayed and gave thanks). Suggestive of *worship*. Let us never forget to give *thanks* even in the most difficult of circumstances (cp. Luke 22.17; Philippians 4.6). He also makes ‘supplication’ (v.11) which may be a special request for Divine help and intervention *or* a general appeal for God’s favour upon His life.
- **Practice** (as he did aforetime). The signing of the decree did not make for a special, urgent prayer time. This was part of his normal, everyday routine. He had developed a spiritual discipline and holy habits.

The Prosecution and Punishment of Daniel [vv.11-18]

v.11: By pre-arrangement the ‘men’ assembled to find Daniel praying, as expected. **v.12:** With delight they accuse Daniel before Darius, taking opportunity to demean his heritage and devotion to the king (v.13). Of course, Daniel was a loyal and devoted servant, rendering to Darius and to God what was their due (Mark 12.17). **v.14:** Darius recognises the folly of his actions, being ‘sore displeased with himself’. Under Persian law, the sentence for a crime must be executed the day it was passed, so the king worked until sundown to remit the sentence, seeking to find some loophole in the law (cp. John 19.12). Throughout the whole scene, Daniel is silent (cp. Isaiah 53.7). He waits for God to search his heart by way of trial before stating his innocence (v.22). *Smith: The problem that Darius sought to solve was, how to carry out the desire of his heart and yet maintain the law to which he had put his hand. It couldn’t be done. God, alone, in His dealings with the sinner can reconcile the claims of righteousness with the sovereignty of grace. On the ground of the death of Christ grace reigns through righteousness.* **v.16:** At sundown, and with great regret, he commands for Daniel to be ‘cast’ (thrown) into the den of lions. In such a short time Darius had clearly noticed Daniel’s outstanding and consistent devotion to his God. Even Darius was confident in Daniel’s God – expressing the confident prediction, ‘He *must* save you’. Perhaps Daniel had told him of the mighty miracles of God in the past. **v.17:** The ‘stone’ secured the ‘mouth’ (entrance) of the den and was ‘sealed’ with the ‘signet’ ring of both the king and his government officials (lords). The double seal meant the approval of both Darius and his lords was required before the stone could be removed. So also the sepulchre of the Lord Jesus was secured by ‘sealing the stone’ and ‘setting a watch’ (Matthew 27.66). In both cases man thought to secure their end by making intervention and rescue impossible (Dennett). **v.18:** The typical comforts of the king’s palace were denied as Darius mourned for Daniel. Whilst the king enjoyed no music, Daniel *rejoiced* in the word of God (Joshua 1.5). Darius couldn’t sleep, but Daniel *rested* in the providential hand of God (cf. Acts 12.6).

The Preservation of Daniel [vv.19-24]

v.19: Ancient Babylonian custom demanded that a tortured prisoner be pardoned (and released) if he had not died by the next morning. **v.20:** The king cried with a ‘lamentable’ (sad) or ‘anguished’ voice, clearly fearing the worst. Yet God had preserved His servant! **v.22:** Daniel gives testimony to his *personal* relationship with God (cf. Psalm 22.1, 2, 10). An ‘angel’ had been sent to ‘shut the lions’ mouths’. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had experienced deliverance at the hand of the same Angel in the fire (3.28). Now He has delivered from the mouth of the lion. This is surely the same One who knew the *fire* of Calvary and there experienced the *roar* of the lion (Psalm 22.13, 21). What communion Daniel must have enjoyed that night with his Lord! Daniel claims that his preservation and deliverance is evidence of his ‘innocence’ before God. He had been judicially *cleared* of any unfaithfulness towards Him and any ‘hurt’ (wrong) towards the king. **v.23:** In a clear foreshadow of resurrection, Daniel is taken ‘up out’ of the den having fully satisfied the claims of the law (cf. Matthew 5.17). He had done the king ‘no hurt’, thus the lions left him *untouched* – and all because of his unflinching, unwavering faith in God (Hebrews 11.33). *Spurgeon: Why did the lions not eat Daniel? One half of him was grit and the other half backbone.* Contrast the ‘Lamb as it had been slain’ who will bear the marks of Calvary to all eternity (Revelation 5.6). God’s people are not always delivered from martyrdom. Isaiah was sawn in half; Paul was beheaded. But God’s servant is *immortal until* his work is done – and Daniel’s service was not complete (cf. 9.1-2; 10.1)! **v.24:** For the *third* time in the chapter, Darius ‘commands’ (cf. v.16, 23). The same fate of the ‘den of lions’ is decreed for those who had themselves acted like lions – the word ‘accused’ literally means ‘to consume by eating’ (cf. Proverbs 11.8). The ‘children’ and ‘wives’ of the accusers suffered the same fate. According to Persian law, ‘On account of the guilt of one, all his kindred must perish’. The law of God clearly prohibited such a practice (Deuteronomy 24.16; Ezekiel 18.20). The ferocious nature and hunger of the lions is undoubted given they ‘overpowered’ (mastery) and ‘crushed’ the bones of all those thrown into the den before they reached the bottom.

The Praise of Daniel’s God [vv.25-28]

In a decree reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar (4.1-3), Darius extols the God of Daniel. It is as though God is giving two powerful witnesses to His captive people – their God is still able! Darius declares the God of Daniel to *real* (living God), *reliable* (steadfast for ever), *reigning* (His kingdom), *rescuing* (who hath delivered Daniel) and worthy of *reverence* (tremble and fear). Through the total devotion of one man, the God of heaven is honoured. **v.28:** So ‘this Daniel’ prospered, the demonstrative pronoun referring back to v.3. The man who was due *promotion*, continued to ‘prosper’ (enjoy great success) in the reigns of both Darius and Cyrus. God honours those who honour Him (1 Samuel 2.30).