

Darius' Brief Institution of State Worship and Daniel in the Lions' Den



DANIEL 6:1-28

**TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL
HELPS**

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DIVISION II

The History and Destiny of the Nations: Six Pictures Revealed in Daniel's Prophecies, [Daniel 2:1–7:28](#)

Darius' Brief Institution of State Worship and Daniel in the Lions' Den: A Picture of God's People Being Persecuted but Remaining Faithful, [Daniel 6:1-28](#)

[\(Daniel 6:1-28\)](#) **Introduction:** persecuting others—ridiculing, oppressing, harassing, abusing, attacking, or injuring them—is a terrible evil. In God's eyes, persecuting others is one of the worst offenses we can commit, for He commands us to love our neighbors even as we love ourselves.

In the present Scripture, a group of hostile, corrupt government officials oppose and persecute the prophet Daniel. As a result, he is thrown into the lions' den. This story, *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, is one of the most well-known stories in all the Bible. Remember that King Cyrus of Persia had just conquered the Babylonian Empire.

Why then is Darius the Mede said to be the ruler of Babylon here in chapter six? **Keep two facts in mind.**

First, Darius the Mede is not the same as Darius the First, who was ruling Persia when the Jewish exiles returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Second, the identity of Darius the Mede is uncertain.

As pointed out in the former Scripture ([Daniel 5:31](#)), some scholars believe he was a high-ranking Persian official named **Gubaru**. After Cyrus conquered Babylon, he appointed **Gubaru** as ruler over the city of Babylon until he had time to establish a more permanent government throughout the huge empire he had conquered. Other scholars believe that Darius may be King Cyrus himself. Ancient rulers often used different names in different parts of their empires, names that were familiar and accepted by the local populations (see note—[Daniel 5:30](#)).

Among all the attempts to identify Darius the Mede, these two explanations seem to be the best. But whatever position is taken, a spirit of humility is needed until further archeological discoveries and data are uncovered.

This is, *Darius' Brief Institution of State Worship and Daniel in the Lions' Den: A Picture of God's People Being Persecuted but Remaining Faithful*, [Daniel 6:1-28](#).

1. **Daniel's downfall plotted: a picture of living righteously despite opposition and corrupt surroundings (vv.1-9).**
2. **Daniel's faithfulness tested: a picture of being steadfast in daily prayer (vv.10-15).**
3. **Daniel's loyalty to the LORD rewarded: a picture of God's power to deliver His people (vv.16-28).**

1. (Daniel 6:1-9) Persecution, Example, Daniel—Accusation, Example, Against Daniel—Believer, Life of, in Midst of Corruption and Opposition—Righteousness, Example, of Daniel—Compromise, Duty, to Stand Against—Faithfulness, Duty, not to Compromise.

The top officials in the new Persian government plotted Daniel's downfall. Remember that the Medes and Persians had just conquered the Babylonian Empire. After the fall of Babylon, one of the first things the new ruler had to do was to organize a new government. When **Darius** named Daniel to the highest position in the new government, trouble began to brew for the prophet, for other officials became jealous of him.

The drama began to unfold as Daniel's enemies secretly plotted to have him executed:

a. Darius appointed Daniel to be one of his top three officials in the new Persian government (**Daniel 6:1-3**). Persia seems to have followed a policy of appointing local leaders to rule over their own people. The objective was to help the people of the nations they conquered become settled and accept Persia's government as their own. Such a generous policy was far more likely to secure the support of conquered people, which in turn would help Persia maintain control.

Thus Darius' very first task was to search for qualified leaders within the former Babylonian government. Most likely, Darius already knew that Daniel had been the chief adviser to the great king Nebuchadnezzar. For that reason, Daniel was a logical choice to be one of the top three officials. Throughout the kingdom there were 120 district officials or satraps (**the Persian name for the officials**).

Within a brief period of time, Daniel again distinguished himself as a diligent worker, an excellent administrator (**Daniel 6:3**). He was an honest, superior servant of the government—a rarity then and down through the centuries. His exceptional qualities impressed Darius, so much so that the ruler planned to place him over the entire kingdom by making him prime minister.

b. When the other officials heard about Darius' plan, they immediately became envious of Daniel and opposed his promotion over them (**Daniel 6:4-9**). They sought to bring charges against Daniel by seeking to find some corruption in his life or in his handling of government affairs. But they found no corruption or compromise whatsoever. His integrity was impeccable. He faithfully fulfilled his duties without fault or error.

This probably irritated the other officials to no end. No doubt, many of them were guilty of using their government offices for personal gain. It also seemed that a spirit of anti-Semitism was involved, for they later referred to Daniel as the exile from Judah ([Daniel 6:13](#)).

The very thought that a Jew would be promoted over them must have greatly aggravated these government officials.

Since the officials could find no reason to accuse Daniel before the king, they concluded that the only way to destroy him was to make his religious practices illegal ([Daniel 6:5](#)). They had to place Daniel in a position where he would have to choose between being loyal to the LORD or loyal to the government. After hatching the plot against Daniel, the officials approached the king with their proposal ([Daniel 6:6](#)).

They urged Darius to issue a decree saying that.....

1. every citizen could pray only to the king for thirty days ([Daniel 6:7](#)).
2. any citizen who prayed to any other god or man would be executed by being thrown into the lions' den.

The officials told the king that all the leaders had agreed that the decree should be issued. They also suggested that it would help unify the people around the newly formed government. Of course, Darius' major concern in forming the new government was to secure the loyalty of the newly conquered people. Maintaining the peace was an absolute essential if Persia was to maintain control over the Babylonian Empire.

Thus the proposal had a great appeal to Darius. Furthermore, the 30-day time limit seemed very reasonable, especially for people who prayed to many gods. The officials pressured the king to make the decree a binding law, one that could not be changed or altered ([Daniel 6:8](#)). Seeing the value of their counsel, the king immediately signed the written decree and had it published throughout the empire ([Daniel 6:9](#)). But he had failed to consult the one man he felt was capable of being prime minister, Daniel. Apparently, he thought that Daniel had helped draw up the decree, which the officials had suggested when they claimed that *all the officials* had agreed that the king should issue it. Of course, this was a lie.

Thought 1. Note the strong testimony that Daniel had. The officials were aware of his deep commitment to the LORD and knew that he would remain faithful to that commitment. What a dynamic example for all believers of all generations! Daniel lived a righteous life and was persecuted because of it. No matter where we live, when we obey God's commandments and bear testimony for Him, we will face opposition and persecution. Every day, believers are ridiculed, cursed, bypassed for promotion, denied a salary increase, fired, assaulted, and sometimes even martyred—all because they follow the LORD and refuse to participate in the corrupt practices of the world.

God's Word warns all believers that if we follow Christ, we will suffer persecution:

Matthew 10:16-22 (NASB)

¹⁶ Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

¹⁹ But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

²¹ Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

Matthew 24:9 (NASB)

⁹ Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.”

Luke 21:12 (NASB)

¹² But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.”

John 15:20 (NASB)

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

John 16:2 (NASB)

² They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”

2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Revelation 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Psalms 119:86 (NASB)

“⁸⁶ All Your commandments are faithful; They have persecuted me with a lie; help me!”

Psalms 119:157 (NASB)

“¹⁵⁷ Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, Yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.”

Psalms 119:161 (NASB)

“¹⁶¹ Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Your words.”

2. (Daniel 6:10-15) Faithfulness, Example of, Daniel in the Lions’ Den—Steadfastness, Example of, Daniel in the Lions’ Den—Prayer, Faithfulness in, Daniel—Perseverance, Example of, Daniel in the Lions’ Den.

Daniel’s faithfulness to the LORD was tested. He was forced to choose between his loyalty to God and his loyalty to the Persian government.

a. Daniel was a true prayer warrior and prayed three times a day, probably morning, noon, and evening (**Psalm 55:17**). As is seen throughout this great book, prayer was a big part of his life. He sought the LORD continually—day by day as well as on special occasions and in times of dire need.

Psalms 55:17 (NASB)

“¹⁷ Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.”

b. When Daniel learned about the decree, he knew he was facing a serious dilemma. If he failed to show that his first loyalty belonged to the new Persian government, he would be executed by being fed to the lions. On the other hand, if he compromised his commitment to the LORD by ceasing to pray, he would displease the LORD and lose the LORD’s protection and guidance. Thus his choice was between losing his life on earth or losing the LORD’s daily presence. For Daniel the decision was not that difficult, given that the LORD had always taken care of him, looking after and meeting his every need. And so he made his choice, the choice of courageous faith. **He would obey the LORD rather than men (Acts 5:29)**.

Acts 5:29 (NASB)

“²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”

The law of God is higher than the laws of civil authority. Therefore when the law of the Persian government opposed the law of God, Daniel made the choice to obey the LORD. He refused to compromise his integrity and commitment to the LORD. He continued his daily prayer time and went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem.

This was his daily place of prayer because Solomon's temple had been located in Jerusalem, and the temple symbolized the very presence of the LORD on earth. Thus, as was his custom, Daniel knelt and gave thanks to the LORD just as he had always done. But, unknown to Daniel at the time, a number of the officials were spying on him.

c. As witnesses of Daniel's violation, the officials wasted no time reminding the king of his decree and its penalty ([Daniel 6:12-15](#)). And the king confirmed that the law of the Medes and Persians was irrevocable. Therefore, the decree stood. It could not be repealed. When the king confirmed this fact, the officials felt that their plot was successful. They now had Daniel in a bind from which he could not escape.

The officials made **three charges** against Daniel:

1. that he was a Jewish loyalist, a man who gave his first loyalty to the Jews and their God
2. that he committed treason, deliberately betraying the king and his law
3. that he continued to pray to his God three times a day

When the king heard these charges, his reaction was not hostile as the officials had hoped. Instead of reacting against Daniel, the king became extremely distressed because he knew he had been manipulated by these jealous cons he carried out on the very eve of the arrest, for Darius had only until sundown to rescue him. Somehow the corrupt officials heard about the king's efforts to save Daniel, and rushed back into his presence. They reminded him that the law of the Medes and Persians was irrevocable ([Daniel 6:15](#)). It could not be repealed. Daniel had to be executed.

Thought 1. What an example Daniel is! Consider how steadfast he was in his daily prayer time. He was willing to die before he would miss one single session of prayer! **How many of us even *have* a daily time of prayer? How many of us consider the LORD important enough to set aside a daily time to worship, share, and fellowship with Him?** Far too many of us minimize prayer, turning to the LORD only in times of need and desperation. But not Daniel. He was steadfast and persevering in his commitment to seek the LORD.

1) Listen to what God's Holy Word says about our continual need to seek His face in prayer:

[Matthew 7:7-8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ **Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

⁸ **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."**

[Matthew 26:41 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴¹ **Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

Luke 18:1 (NASB)

“¹ Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.”

John 16:24 (NASB)

“²⁴ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”

Ephesians 6:18 (NASB)

“¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB)

“⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 4:2-3 (NASB)

“² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving;

³ praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NASB)

“¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.”

James 5:13-14 (NASB)

“¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

1 Chronicles 16:11 (NASB)

“¹¹ Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually.”

2) Listen to what God’s Holy Word says about our being steadfast in prayer and service for the LORD:

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB)

“⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.”

Philippians 1:27 (NASB)

“²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NASB)

“⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

⁹ But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

2 Peter 3:17-18 (NASB)

“¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Joshua 23:8 (NASB)

“⁸ But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.”

3. (Daniel 6:16-28) Loyalty, Results of, Deliverance—Faithfulness, Results of, Deliverance—Deliverance, Example of, Daniel, from Lions’ Den—Rescue, Example of, Daniel, from Lions’ Den—Power, of God, to Deliver—God, Power of, to Deliver.

Daniel was loyal to the LORD and greatly rewarded. The LORD delivered him from the lions’ den. What happened next is one of the most suspenseful dramas ever recorded in literature.

a. Darius reluctantly pronounced the sentence, and Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den (**Daniel 6:16-17**). But note a touching scene: the king spoke to Daniel and expressed the wish that his God would rescue him. Note the king’s reference to Daniel’s *continually worshipping* the LORD. The king was well aware of Daniel’s faithfulness to the LORD, and for some reason the king believed that Daniel’s God could rescue him from the lions. This suggests that Daniel had been bearing a strong testimony to the king, perhaps sharing the wonderful promises of the LORD and His mighty works down through history on behalf of those who truly believed in Him.

After Daniel had been thrown into the lions’ den, the king had a stone placed over the den’s mouth (**Daniel 6:17**). Then he stamped the stone with the royal seal of his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles. The royal seal indicated that the king’s authority stood behind the execution; therefore, the death of the guilty was irrevocable.

b. Darius returned to his palace a troubled man, very distressed and filled with anxiety (**Daniel 6:18**). He had been forced to execute his most trusted and capable official, all because he had been misled by a group of conspirators. The more he thought about the situation, the more disturbed he became. He spent the night without eating or being entertained. Unable to sleep, he tossed and turned all night long. Then at first light of dawn, Darius rushed to the lions’ den (**Daniel 6:19-20**).

Apparently he had already ordered the seal to be broken, for when he arrived at the den, he immediately called out to Daniel in the hope that he was still alive. He wanted to know if Daniel's God had been able to deliver him from the lions.

c. To Darius's surprise, Daniel answered ([Daniel 6:21-22](#)). The LORD had sent His angel to protect him from the mouths of the lions.

There were **two reasons** why they had not hurt him:

1. Daniel was blameless before God and the king ([Daniel 6:22^b](#)). He had not betrayed God or Darius, but rather honored both of them.
2. Daniel had trusted the LORD ([Daniel 6:23^c](#)). Thus the LORD delivered him, and Daniel was thereafter counted among the great heroes of the faith ([Heb. 11:33](#)).

Hebrews 11:33 (NASB)

“³³Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions.”

d. Joy flooded the king's heart, and he immediately ordered Daniel lifted out of the lions' den ([Daniel 6:23](#)). Standing in stark amazement at his chief official, the king could find no injury on Daniel. Again note the reason: because Daniel had trusted in the LORD, completely relied upon Him.

e. The king's reaction to the LORD's deliverance **was twofold** ([Daniel 6:24-27](#)).

First, he immediately had the corrupt officials and their families executed ([Daniel 6:24](#)). These men were the true traitors of the king. They had conspired to deceive the king and to have his most trusted adviser executed. Consequently, they were to reap what they had sown, suffer the very execution they had sought for Daniel. They and their families were thrown into the lions' den. Most likely, Darius had the wives and children executed in order to prevent revenge from any of the family members. Executing families along with criminals was a policy followed by many ancient rulers.

Second, Darius issued a proclamation declaring that all people must fear and reverence the LORD, the God of Daniel, because:

1. He is the living God who endures forever
2. His kingdom and rule will never pass away
3. He delivers and saves ([Daniel 6:27](#))
4. He works miracles
5. He rescued Daniel from the lions

f. Although Daniel was at least **80 years old** at the time of this event, he continued to serve faithfully during the reigns of Darius, who ruled over Babylon, and Cyrus, who ruled over the empire (**Daniel 6:28**). Throughout the remaining years of his life, he continued to prosper under the guidance of the LORD.

Soon after Daniel's amazing deliverance from the lions, Cyrus released the Jewish exiles and allowed them to return to the promised land under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Through this miracle, the Jewish exiles knew that the power of God was at their disposal. If they placed their trust in Him, He would look after them. No matter who or what stood against them, the LORD would deliver them and give them the strength to overcome and rebuild their cities, communities, homes, and temple.

Thought 1. What a lesson for us! If we truly trust the LORD, He will deliver us through the trials of life. No matter what opposition or persecution we may face, the LORD will give us the strength to overcome—all because we trust Him. The LORD's power will carry us through any and all trials.

This is the wonderful promise of God's Holy Word:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

“¹³No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 (NASB)

**“⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;
⁹indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;
¹⁰who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.”**

2 Timothy 4:18 (NASB)

“¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NASB)

**“¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
¹⁵and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”**

2 Peter 2:9 (NASB)

“⁹ Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.”

2 Samuel 22:2 (NASB)

“² He said, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.”

Job 5:19 (NASB)

“¹⁹ From six troubles He will deliver you, Even in seven evil will not touch you.”

Psalms 91:3 (NASB)

“³ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence.”

Psalms 107:27-33 (NASB)

“²⁷ They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end.

²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses.

²⁹ He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed.

³⁰ Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven.

³¹ Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!

³² Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders.

³³ He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground.”

Isaiah 46:4 (NASB)

“⁴ Even to *your* old age I will be the same, And even to *your* graying years I will bear *you!* I have done *it*, and I will carry *you*; And I will bear *you* and I will deliver *you.*”

Jeremiah 1:8 (NASB)

“⁸ Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.”

Daniel 6:27 (NASB)

“²⁷ 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.”