

From the Lions' Den to the Angel's Den



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 6:1–28; Genesis 37:11; 1 Samuel 18:6–9; Matthew 6:6; Acts 5:27–32.

MEMORY VERSE: “So the other supervisors and the governors tried to find reasons to accuse Daniel. But he went on doing the business of the government. And they could not find anything wrong with him. So they could not accuse him of doing anything wrong. Daniel was trustworthy [honest]. He was not lazy and did not cheat the king” (Daniel 6:4, ICB).



Daniel's experience shows us what will happen to God's people in the end times.

THE MEDES AND THE PERSIANS take control of Babylon. Then King Darius the Mede becomes the new king. He sees that Daniel is very wise. So, Darius gives Daniel a job in the new government. Daniel does an excellent job. So, the king makes Daniel one of the top government leaders.

But the other government leaders are very jealous of Daniel's success. Before the story ends, Daniel shows that his heart is loyal to God and to the king. Daniel's loyalty to God makes him someone that other people can trust.

Daniel's experience shows us what will happen to God's people in the end times. Daniel's story also shows us that Satan will attack God's people for their faith. So, we can expect hard times ahead in the war against evil. But we also can trust that good will win. God will save His people. Yes, Satan will blame God's end-time people for the trouble on the earth. But God will show that His people are innocent. They should not be blamed for any crimes.

JEALOUS PEOPLE (Daniel 6:1–5)

Heaven was a perfect place. Even so, “Lucifer was jealous of Jesus. All the angels bowed to Jesus. They bowed down to show that Jesus was their King. Lucifer bowed with the angels too. But his heart was filled with jealousy and hate.”—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, page 14, adapted. The Ten Commandments tell us not to kill or steal. They also tell us not to want things that belong to other people. Our wanting those things makes us feel jealous. A jealous heart is dangerous. It can cause us to do awful things.

Read about people with jealous hearts in Daniel 6:1–5; Genesis 37:11; and 1 Samuel 18:6–9. What bad things happen in each of these stories?

Daniel is an excellent leader. His skills please the king. But the other leaders feel jealous. So, they make a plan to get rid of Daniel. They try to find something that Daniel does wrong. Then they will tell the king about it. But “they could not find anything wrong with him. So they could not accuse him of doing anything wrong. Daniel was trustworthy [honest]. He was not lazy and did not cheat the king” (Daniel 6:4, ICB). Do you see the word written as “trustworthy [honest]”? This word comes from the Aramaic language. This word also can be written as “someone that other people trust.”

Daniel does nothing wrong. So, the jealous leaders cannot blame him for anything. But the leaders also see that Daniel is loyal to God and His law. That gives the leaders an idea. They come up with an evil plan to get Daniel in trouble. The leaders will get the king to pass a law. Then Daniel will be forced to choose between obeying God’s law and obeying the king’s law. The jealous leaders are very sure Daniel will choose to obey God’s law. When Daniel does, then the leaders can get rid of him. They know Daniel very well. They know Daniel will stay loyal to God. That shows us something very special about Daniel. He has a heart full of faith. He is a wonderful example to us!



“Lucifer bowed with the angels too. But his heart was filled with jealousy and hate.”

THE EVIL PLAN AGAINST DANIEL (Daniel 6:6–9)

Read about the king's law in Daniel 6:6–9. What is the king afraid of? How do the jealous leaders use the king's fear to convince the king to pass the law?

The king wants to change the law as soon as he makes it. That sounds silly, right? But the king sees that he fell into a trap. The jealous leaders are smart and sneaky. They know the king is worried about his kingdom. The king has put 120 governors in charge of his new government. This plan will help the government to run better. But the plan is risky too. What if one of the governors decides to turn against the king? Then the kingdom will split up. Darius is afraid of that. So, the jealous leaders get the king to pass a law to “help” the kingdom stay strong. The law says that no one can pray to anyone except the king for 30 days. But the law is really about getting rid of Daniel. The leaders tell the king that everyone supports the law too. That is a lie. Daniel does not know about it.



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The law makes the king the same as a god. For 30 days everyone must pray to the king. Then the king will offer their prayers to the gods. The king fails to see something important. He makes the law to protect his kingdom from evil. But his law is an evil plan to hurt Daniel.

Let us look at two parts of the king's law. The 1st part is punishment. Whoever breaks the king's law will be thrown into the lions' den. In Bible times, kings put lions in cages. Later, the kings let the lions go free when they wanted to hunt them. So, there were plenty of hungry lions in Persia. The 2nd part of the law is power. In Esther 1:19 and Esther 8:8, we read about the “law of the Persians and Medes.” This law cannot be changed after it is made. Not even the king can change it. A history writer from Greece tells us about King Darius the 3rd. (Darius the 3rd is not the same Darius in Daniel.) Darius the 3rd punishes a man with death. Then Darius changes his mind when he learns the man is innocent. But the king cannot stop the man's death. His law cannot be changed.

DANIEL'S PRAYER (Daniel 6:10)

“ ‘But when you pray, you should go into your room and close the door. Then pray to your Father. He is there in that private place. He can see what is done in private, and he will reward you’ ” (Matthew 6:6, ERV).

Read about Daniel's prayer habits in Daniel 6:10. How often does Daniel pray? Why does Daniel decide to pray where everyone can see him?

Daniel has a lot of experience as a government leader. He is loyal to the king. But his loyalty to God comes first. As God's servant, Daniel is the only one in the kingdom who knows the real cause behind the king's law. At first, the king does not see it. For him, the law is a chance to make his kingdom strong. But for the jealous leaders, the law is really a chance to get rid of Daniel.

Of course, there is a bigger reason for what happens between the king and Daniel. The real cause for the king's law is the worldwide war between God and Satan. By this time (539 B.C.), God already gave Daniel the dreams in Daniel 7 (553 B.C.) and Daniel 8 (551 B.C.). So, Daniel can see that the king's law is really part of the war between God and Satan. In Daniel 7, an angel visits Daniel. The angel shows Daniel that Jesus will save His people at the end of time. For sure, this dream gives Daniel hope and courage to pray.

So, Daniel does not change his prayer habits. He continues to pray three times a day. He looks to Jerusalem as he prays. The Persian law says no one can pray to any man or god but the king for 30 days. But Daniel does not hide his prayer life at this time. Daniel stands alone. He is the only one who stands against the king's law. Daniel's prayer life shows that he knows an important Bible truth. He must be loyal to God before he is loyal to the king.

Read an important Bible rule in Acts 5:27–32. Yes, we must obey God, not people. At the same time, why must we be careful when we stand against human law?



Daniel shows that he is loyal to God before he is loyal to the king.

IN THE LIONS' DEN (Daniel 6:11–23)

Read what the king says to Daniel in Daniel 6:11–23. What does the king say to Daniel? How do the king's words show us what he thinks about Daniel's faith in God?

The jealous leaders soon spy Daniel praying. They run to the king. Look at how nasty and mean they are: “ ‘Daniel is one of the prisoners from Judah’ ” (Daniel 6:13, NIV). Really? Daniel is one of the top leaders in the kingdom! He is the king's favorite too. But in the eyes of these jealous men, Daniel is nothing more than a prisoner. Do you see how these men try to turn the king against Daniel too? “ ‘He is not paying attention to the law you signed’ ” (Daniel 6:13, ERV). The jealous leaders go too far. The king now sees the evil trap they made for him with the law. The Bible tells us that King Darius “decided to save Daniel. He worked until sunset trying to think of a way to save him” (Daniel 6:14, ERV). But the king can do nothing to save Daniel from the lions. The law of the Medes and Persians cannot be changed. The king does not want to give the command to throw Daniel to the lions. But he has no choice. Before he gives the command, the king says something to Daniel that shows the hope in his heart. The king's words are the same as a prayer: “ ‘May the God you serve all the time save you!’ ” (Daniel 6:16, ICB).



God sends His angel to protect Daniel.

The Bible does not tell us what Daniel does in the lions' den. For sure, he prays. God honors Daniel's faith. He sends His angel to protect Daniel. In the morning, Daniel is not hurt. He is ready to go back to work. Ellen G. White says, “God does not stop Daniel's enemies. They throw Daniel to the lions. God allows the evil angels and men to do their work. God lets their plan happen so that He can save Daniel in a powerful way. Then everyone will see how badly God's enemies lose the war against Him.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 543, 544, adapted.

Daniel's story has a happy ending. But what about stories that do not have happy endings (read Mark 6:14–29)? How should we understand these stories?

THE KING HONORS GOD (Daniel 6:24–28)

The king praises God in Daniel 6:24–28. What does the king say about God?

Darius praises God. His praise is an important part of the story. Darius shows us that he understands that God is in control. As we saw, Nebuchadnezzar also praised God (Daniel 3:28, 29; Daniel 4:1–3, 34–37) Darius honors God the same as Nebuchadnezzar. But the king also makes a new law. He commands everyone to “fear [obey] and respect the God of Daniel” (Daniel 6:26, ERV).

Yes, God works a miracle to save Daniel’s life. God rewards Daniel’s faith too. The evil men are punished. Everyone sees that God is very powerful. He controls everything. This story shows us an example of what will happen worldwide in the end times. God will save His people. God will punish evil. The Lord’s power and honor will be shown to everyone on earth and in heaven.

Read Daniel 6:24. What problem do you see in this verse? Why is it a problem?

The problem is the wives and children. As far as we know, they are innocent. But they get thrown to the lions along with the jealous leaders. How do we explain that? First, we need to know that Persian law says a king can punish wrongdoers. That includes their families. In Old Testament times, if one person does wrong, the whole family is responsible for the crime. Does that make this idea right? No. It just helps us to understand how things were done under Persian law. Second, we must remember that the Bible is honest. It often tells us about things it does not accept. The Bible says it is wrong to kill a child because of its parents’ sins (Deuteronomy 24:16).



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Hebrews 11 is named “Faith’s Hall of Fame.” And for good reason. It shows us the faith and the mighty works of God’s people. Hebrews tells us that some of God’s servants “closed the mouths of lions” (Hebrews 11:33, ERV). For sure, this verse shows us Daniel. Daniel’s story is wonderful. At the same time, we must remember that not all heroes of faith escape death as Daniel does. Hebrews 11 also shows us that many people suffer and die for their faith. God asks some of His servants to witness for Him by dying for their faith. Daniel’s story does not teach us that God always will work a miracle to save everyone who is in trouble. As we said, many men and women have died because of their faith in Jesus. But Daniel’s story teaches us an important rule: God is in control of everything that happens. At the Second Coming, He will save all His children from sin and death. We will learn more about this idea in the next chapters of Daniel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jean-Paul Sartre was a famous French thinker. He said that humans try hard to be the same as God. How does Sartre’s idea help us understand why King Darius falls for the trap the jealous leaders make for him? Why must we be careful not to fall into the same trap? Why is it so dangerous? What are other ways we humans try to be the same as God?
- ② Do people see that you are loyal to God and His law? What if someone asked the people who know you this question: “Will [your name] stay loyal to God if his or her faith will cost his or her job or even life itself?” What do you think their answer will be?
- ③ What do you see in Daniel that makes him a loyal servant of God? Why can God use him in a big way to do His work on the earth? With God’s help, how can you be the same as Daniel?
- ④ What if Daniel decided to change the way he prayed? Can you think of any reasons why Daniel should have done that? Or is that a bad idea? If yes, why?



At the Second Coming, God will save all His children from sin and death.