

# Christ in all of Scripture

## Daniel in the Lions' Den

Daniel 6

### Read the Passage

<sup>1</sup>It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup>and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup>Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. <sup>4</sup>So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. <sup>5</sup>Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

<sup>6</sup>So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup>All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup>Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." <sup>9</sup>Therefore King Darius signed the written decree. <sup>10</sup>Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. <sup>11</sup>Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. <sup>12</sup>And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, 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 does not alter." <sup>13</sup>So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." <sup>14</sup>And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. <sup>15</sup>Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

<sup>16</sup>So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." <sup>17</sup>Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

<sup>18</sup>Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. <sup>19</sup>Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup>And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup>Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup>My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." <sup>23</sup>Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and



Daniel in the Lions' Den by Briton Riviere



*commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.*

<sup>24</sup>*And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.*

<sup>25</sup>*Then King Darius wrote:*

*“To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:  
Peace be multiplied to you.*

<sup>26</sup>*I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.  
For He is the living God,  
And steadfast forever;  
His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed,  
And His dominion shall endure to the end.*

<sup>27</sup>*He delivers and rescues,  
And He works signs and wonders  
In heaven and on earth,  
Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

<sup>28</sup>*So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*



## Gospel Preview in the Text

Through the story of Daniel in the lions' den, we discover that the language and flow of Daniel 6 foreshadows the greater story of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus found in the four gospels of the New Testament. As this prophetic trajectory is discovered, it becomes clear that Daniel's story is doing more than simply telling how God preserved and prospered a faithful servant who was a bold witness to the true God in the royal court of a pagan king. It is in fact foreshadowing a greater story that will not unfold for another five hundred years! This story, we will see, was arranged and told under the direction of the Spirit of God to anticipate the gospel fulfilled in the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. We begin by noting the accumulating echoes between these stories laid out in the following chart.

<b>DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE FROM THE LIONS' DEN</b>	<b>JESUS' DELIVERANCE FROM THE GRAVE</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Daniel distinguished himself because of the excellent Spirit in him. The king planned to exalt him over all</b> (Dan 6:3).</li> <li>2. <b>Out of envy, Daniel's enemies seek to find accusation against him to condemn him to death</b> (Dan 6:4-7).</li> <li>3. <b>The governors pretend a singular devotion to the king</b>, seeking to condemn Daniel, asking for an injunction of loyalty regarding prayer only to the king (Dan 6:6-8).</li> <li>4. The law of the Medes and Persians made the king's <b>decree irreversible</b> (Dan 6:12).</li> <li>5. Knowing that the injunction was signed, Daniel goes to his upper room and <b>kneels down in three seasons of prayer facing Jerusalem</b> (Dan 6:10).</li> <li>6. The next day (the second day), Daniel's accusers come to the king to charge Daniel with having prayed three times (Dan 6:13). <b>The king knows their treachery and that Daniel is innocent. He undertakes many efforts to deliver Daniel, but he cannot</b> (Dan 6:14).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Jesus distinguished himself because he had the Spirit without measure</b> (John 3:34). <b>The Lord planned to exalt him over all</b> (Luke 1:32).</li> <li>2. <b>Out of envy, Jesus' enemies seek to find accusation against him to condemn him to death</b> (Matt 27:18).</li> <li>3. <b>The chief priests pretend a singular devotion to Caesar</b>, seeking the condemnation of Jesus: "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15).</li> <li>4. Pilate is under an <b>irreversible decree</b> from heaven (Acts 4:27; John 19:11, 19:22).</li> <li>5. Knowing his betrayal is sealed (John 13:18-30), Jesus goes to Gethsemane to pray and <b>kneels down in three seasons of prayer facing Jerusalem</b> (Matt 26:36-45).</li> <li>6. Jesus' accusers deliver him up to Pilate demanding his death. <b>Pilate knows their treachery</b> (Mark 15:10) <b>and that Jesus is innocent</b> (John 19:4). <b>He undertakes many efforts to deliver Jesus, but he cannot</b> (Luke 23:1-23).</li> </ol>



<p>7. <b>Daniel is thrown into a den</b> of lions (on the evening of the second day). <b>A stone is rolled over the mouth of the pit and sealed with the seals of the king's officials</b> (Dan 6:17).</p> <p>8. <b>Early on the morning of the third day</b>, the king arises and goes in haste to the den of lions (Dan 6:19). Daniel reports to the king that God sent his angel to deliver him from death. <b>The king orders the seals broken, the stone rolled away, and Daniel is raised up from the den of death</b> (Dan 6:23).</p> <p>9. Daniel's accusers are thrown into the den, and the lions crush all their bones (Dan 6:24). But for Daniel, <b>not one of his bones is broken</b>.</p> <p>10. <b>The king greatly exalts Daniel, and he sits at his right hand to rule over all the inhabited world of the Persian empire</b> (Dan 6:28).</p> <p>11. <b>The king sends letters to all the peoples of his kingdom, commanding them to worship the God of Daniel</b> (Dan 6:25-27).</p> <p>12. <b>The king's epistle proclaims the sovereignty of the God of Daniel, and tells of his gospel power to deliver from death</b> (Dan 6:26-27).</p>	<p>7. <b>Jesus is crucified and buried in a tomb</b> in the earth. <b>A stone is rolled over the mouth of the tomb and sealed with the seals of Pilate's officials</b> (Matt 27:60, 66).</p> <p>8. <b>Early on the morning of the third day</b>, God sends his angel <b>to break the seals and roll away the stone and to raise up Jesus from the grave of death</b>. Jesus comes forth from the tomb (Matt 28:1-2; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-2; John 20:1-2).</p> <p>9. Jesus is delivered from death. <b>Not one of his bones is broken</b> (John 19:36).</p> <p>10. <b>God greatly exalts Jesus, and he sits at the right hand of the throne, having been given dominion over all the world</b> (Matt 28:18; Acts 2:33; Phil 2:9).</p> <p>11. <b>The apostles send letters to all the peoples of the earth, commanding them to repent and worship the Lord Christ</b> (Acts 17:30).</p> <p>12. <b>The theme of the apostolic gospel is that God is sovereign, and that he has ordained the power of the gospel to deliver from death</b> (Rom 1:4, 16).</p>
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## Prophetic Narrative of the Gospel in the Text

- 1-2. The Great King of the Medes and Persians ruled all the inhabited world, from India to Ethiopia. His 120 satraps<sup>1</sup> (governors) oversaw the entire kingdom. Persia developed an elaborate courier

<sup>1</sup> The number 120 (10x12) is an amphiptyonic number with cosmological significance in the ancient East and the Mediterranean basin. Twelve is the number of lunar months in the year and the count of the



system of mail delivery to reach the limits of so vast an empire. This fact becomes important with respect to the decree sent out by the king recorded at the end of Daniel 6. King Darius discerned the remarkable Spirit in Daniel and so he planned to make Daniel the second ruler in Persia, elevating him over the 120 satraps and the other two commissioners to the right hand of the king. This prompted the envy of the rival rulers, who plotted Daniel's death. Jesus, too, was filled with the Spirit of God. The Father intended to exalt Jesus to the right hand of his heavenly throne, and the chief priests became envious of him, plotting his death.

3. The governors conspired to accuse Daniel falsely, pretending to be singularly loyal to the king. Likewise, the chief priests falsely accused Jesus to Pilate, pretending to be singularly devoted to Caesar.
4. The king of Persia was deceived into issuing a foolish injunction that was used to condemn Daniel, if he prayed to any god or man but the king. When Daniel knelt to pray, as was his custom, he was condemned to death by the law of Persia, which could not be revoked. Just as even the Great King Darius could do nothing to release Daniel, so Peter told us that Pilate was under constraint to do what God's purpose had decreed beforehand (Acts 4:27).
5. Daniel's custom was to pray three times a day, facing Jerusalem. The first time Daniel knelt in prayer, he was a dead man. His rivals observed him for the entire day, so they could report to the king the next (second) day that Daniel had defied the king's injunction by praying three times (Dan 6:13). Jesus too prayed at the beginning of his passion in Gethsemane. The garden, on the slopes of the Olivet mountain, faces Jerusalem. Jesus, like Daniel, had three seasons of prayer before his arrest.
- 6-7. Daniel's accusers charged him before the king. Recognizing their treachery, the king did all he could that day to release Daniel, but was constrained by the higher power of the law of the Medes and Persians. At last, on the evening of the second day, the king gave command for Daniel to be lowered into the pit of the lions. The den was subterranean, that is, it was in "*Sheol*". The king told Daniel that only his God could deliver him. So the king had a stone rolled over the mouth of the den and he sealed it with the seals of his officials. Jesus too was crucified and buried in a tomb, in the underworld, in "*Sheol*". A stone was rolled over the mouth of the tomb, and it was sealed by Pilate's command with the seals of the Roman officials.
8. Early on the morning of the third day, Darius rushed to the den and cried out to Daniel. Daniel spoke and said that God had sent his angel to deliver him from the power of death. The king gave command, and the seals were broken, the stone rolled away, and Daniel raised up out of the den of death. Similarly, early on the morning of the third day, the disciples rushed to the tomb of Jesus. God had sent his angels to break the seals and roll away the stone. Jesus had been raised up out of the tomb of death.

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constellations encircling the North Star. It represents cosmic completeness. It represents the universal rule of the Great King.



9. The Persian King ordered all of Daniel's false accusers to be cast into the den of lions. The lions crushed all their bones. But Daniel was delivered from death unharmed. Not one of his bones was broken, just as was also to be true of Jesus, after he was delivered from death (John 19:36).<sup>2</sup>
10. Daniel was exalted to the right hand of the Great King to rule without rival over his world empire. Jesus too was given the right hand of Power, the heavenly throne of his father David, from whence he rules without rival over all the world.
- 11-12. The Great King acknowledged the sovereign and saving power of the God of Daniel. So he sent an epistle to all the people of his world empire commanding them to the singular worship of the God of Daniel, who alone is sovereign and alone has power to deliver from death. After Jesus was delivered from death, epistles went forth from the Lord's apostles to command all men everywhere to worship the Lord Jesus alone, for his gospel alone has the sovereign power to deliver from death!

## Gospel Takeaways from the Text

1. Only God himself could inspire so perfect a word of Scripture, a word that so amazingly foretold the passion of the Savior 500 years beforehand!
2. Daniel is often celebrated for the courage of his faith, and he is a remarkable man for his integrity and faithfulness. But only Jesus truly tasted death for us. Only he overcame death and the grave! Daniel is a shadow type of Jesus, but Jesus is the dazzling light of our true Hero! Jesus has not only delivered us from the lion's mouth but has also broken the jaw of the lion who would have devoured us! (1 Sam 17:34-35; 2 Tim 4:17; 1 Pet 5:8).
3. We are a part of a grand narrative—a gospel narrative—that is bringing about the kingdom dominion of the Lord Jesus in all the earth. Even our suffering, even false accusations and the envy of our enemies, even when they say all manner of evil against us falsely, even the power of world empires like Persia and Rome—all this will be made to praise the Lord of our salvation as our God shows that he is indeed the singularly sovereign Savior of the world! If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31).

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel 6:24 should take its place alongside Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 as prophetic of the deliverance of God's Paschal Lamb with unbroken bones!

