

Old Testament Stories

"DANIEL in the Lion's Den"

Daniel 6

☞ What would you like to praise God for today?

☞ Pray for God's guidance as you study



1. Commentators think that Daniel was now in his 80's. Most of his life had been spent in a foreign land. Read the following passages. What qualifications or experiences would you list on Daniel's resume for his employ with King Darius? Read Dan. 1:1-4;6;8;17;19-21.
2. What was his employment future under King Darius? Dan 6:3
3. How did Daniel's co-workers feel about him? (6:4-5) Do you think it was hard for Daniel to respect his co-workers?
4. How might the fact that this was a new government, recently established, had any impact on King Darius' decisions and the ensuing events of Daniel 6?
5. What does the satraps' description of Daniel in verse 13 reveal about their opinion of him?
6. Why didn't Daniel change his behavior when he learned of the new law? (6:10)
Read 2 Chronicles 6:38-39.
7. What often keeps you from standing up for something you believe in?
 - a. apathy b. ignorance c. fear d. time e. peer pressure e. consequences f. other
8. Having captive lions on the palace property was not uncommon. Why did the satraps suggest this as punishment for any who don't outwardly respect King Darius' new rule? Why did they limit the new law to only thirty days?

9. What was the king's response to the obvious trap that was set for Daniel? 6:14-20
Does he become a believer? (6:23-28) Why do you think so?
10. How did God provide for Daniel at his most vulnerable moment? What do you imagine it was like to spend a night in a den full of hungry lions.
11. What indicators do we have that these were *wild*, NOT *tame*, lions? (6:24)
12. Read 1 Peter 5:6-10. Peter was also subject to persecution. What guiding principles does he offer to Christians under attack.
- Principle #1: _____ v.6
- Principle #2: _____ v. 7
- Principle #3: _____ v.8
- Principle #4: _____ v9a
- Principle #5: _____ v.9b
- Principle #6: _____ v.10
- Can you think of any other principles Peter offers in this passage?
- Does this story of Daniel remind you of any other Bible stories or passages?
13. Who in your life who is hard to love? How does Daniel's experience challenge you in your Christian walk towards them?
14. When in your life have you experienced God in the midst of a "lions' den" of skeptics, critics, etc.? How has God alone been your lifeline?

Prayer: For one another

LIFE GROUPS

A safe place to build friendships and grow spiritually.

- L** ♦ Learn..... applying Biblical truth for everyday living
- I** ♦ Invite.....welcoming others to our fellowship
- F** ♦ Fellowship.....nurturing Christ centered caring relationships
- E** ♦ Evangelism..... reaching others with the hope of Christ



DID YOU KNOW?

Lions were common predators in Old Testament times. The Bible is full of references about lions from Genesis to Revelation. And although the Asiatic variety in the Middle East were slightly smaller than the African version we are familiar with, they were still formidable.

Lions were revered for their dedicated stalking, stealth, and fearlessness. They are highlighted in Proverbs as the king of beasts (Prov. 30:30). Their image is used to convey might and regality. A man who had killed a lion was indeed a proven warrior. This is why David referred to his faith strengthening experience of killing a lion as a shepherd (1 Sam. 17:34-36). Later, one of David's premier warriors was lauded for his ability to face and kill a lion at the bottom of a slippery, snowy pit (2 Sam. 23:20). It took incredible courage to face a lion and even more strength to subdue one.

The fascination with lions was such that Solomon incorporated two of them into the armrests of his throne. Another set adored each of six steps descending from the dias. The Sphinx in ancient Egypt consists of a lioness body with the head of a human. The Egyptian war goddess (Sekhmet) was the reverse – lion head on a human body. Stylized lion panels decorated the palace walls in Darius I palace in Suza (local of the story of Esther).

Even God uses the lion to help picture himself (Hos. 5:14; 13:7,8; Amos 3:8; Rev.5:5) and the strength of the godly (Ps. 91:9-13; Prov. 28:1). It is not surprising then that C.S. Lewis used a loving but regal lion character "Aslan" to portray God in his parabolic series The Chronicles of Narnia.

However respected, lions were also a source of sport. "The Assyrian kings were famous hunters of lions, elephants, ostriches, wild bulls and other beasts. . . . The sport had both religious and political implications: as a successful hunter, the king proved that the gods favored him and that his power was therefore legitimate."

"The Syrian plain was often the scene of the Assyrian royal hunt, but lions were also caught in Africa and brought to Assyria, where they were kept in game reserves until the hunt. The hunts were carefully orchestrated. . . . The king killed the lions from his chariot with a bow or spear. Sometimes the king was shown on foot, killing the lion by holding the mane and thrusting a sword into his prey. The hunt became a public event. After the hunt, as part of a religious ceremony, the king poured a libation over the dead lion to atone for the harm he had done them and to appease their angry spirits. He also recited a devotional speech attributing the success of the hunt to his patron goddess. At the end of the hunt the servants picked up the dead animals. The formal hunt was continued by the Persian kings. The popularity of this sport is attested to by both information in the tablets and lifelike hunting scenes carved on countless Assyrian palace walls."

For our study, it is worth noting that lions probably were kept for sport at or near the palace in Babylon (the Assyrian capitol). King Darius may himself have looked forward to, or already participated in some of these staged hunts that Persians also enjoyed. Such a "den of lions" probably consisted of a pride who were fed minimally awaiting the sport of the king. It was to such a place that Daniel, and later his accusers, were ushered.

There are a few other insights to note concerning lions and Daniel. One being that Daniel's experience facing a pride of hungry lions is echoed in Christ's experience on the cross. The

prophetic Psalm 22 we read a specific and prophetic description of Jesus' crucifixion. As he hangs on the cross Jesus faces his enemies whom he describes as "roaring lions" (v. 13; Mark 15:31-32). It seems an interesting parallel between the two men – one physical, one figurative. The Apostle Paul may also refer to the story of Daniel in 2 Timothy 4:17. He wrote: "*The first time I was brought before the judge, no one was with me. Everyone had abandoned me. I hope it will not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength, that I might preach the Good News in all its fullness for all the Gentiles to hear. And he saved me from certain death.*" In the original Greek the term translated here as **saved from certain death** actually meant saved "**from the mouth of a lion.**" Could Paul have been reaching back to the faith example in Daniel as he faced formidable enemies. It seems possible.

Finally, the ferocious lion of today and yesterday will not always be – scary. He will probably retain his regality. But the Bible offers him a future without being a predator. Isaiah 11:6 describes the calves and yearlings (currently top wild lion prey) as being safe in the presence of lions and that a small child will be able to securely lead this king of beasts. Isaiah 65:25 promises, "*The lion will eat straw like the ox. . . . In those days, no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!*" Hard to believe. But God isn't done redeeming the animal kingdom, even as He is still redeeming the heart of man.

--excerpt taken from: Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia by K.R. Nemet-Nejat