

Jesus and the Lion's Den

Daniel 6 as a Type of Christ

ESV Daniel 5:31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

^{6:1} It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom;

² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.

³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.

⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!

⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked."

⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!"

¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions.

²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!"

²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."

²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions-- they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

(Daniel 6:1-28)

Typology: A Wonderful Tool of Interpretation

In 1845, [Patrick Fairbairn](#), a Scottish Free Church minister and theologian, wrote his now famous *The Typology of Scripture*. He began that book by noting, “[The Typology of Scripture has been one of the most neglected departments of theological science. It has never altogether escaped from the region of doubt and uncertainty ... Hence it is not unusual to find those who otherwise are agreed in their views of divine](#)

truth, and in the general principles of biblical interpretation, differing materially in the estimate they have formed of the Typology of Scripture. Where one hesitates, another is full of confidence; and the landmarks that are set up to-day are again shifted to-morrow.”¹ His book began to change the landscape and many others have since surfaced looking into this rich and important part of God’s purposes in the Bible.

Typology is the study of types. So what are types? Physically speaking, a type is a **print or mark that is made through a beating**. The word is used this way only one time in the NT, when the Thomas said to the other disciples, “Unless I see in his hands the mark (*tupos*) of the nails, and place my finger into the mark (*tupos*) of the nails ... I will never believe” (**John 20:25**). The nails were literally beaten into the body of the Lord and the “mark” was the type, a pattern of the nail if you will. In our day, you can think of how a blank planchet is **struck** in a mint press to create the image of a **penny or a quarter** or on an old fashioned **typewriter** how the letter on the end of a typebar quickly strikes the ribbon when you hit the keyboard and suddenly that **letter is formed** on a piece of paper.

¹ **Patrick Fairbairn**, *The Typology of Scripture: Viewed in Connection with the Whole Series of the Divine Dispensations*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1900), 1.

With a penny, you have an image of Abraham Lincoln that is then struck onto the coin blank. We all know that for an image of Lincoln to be struck onto the coin that a real person named Abraham Lincoln obviously *came before* that image. In this way, the type is representation of someone who existed earlier. Keep this in mind as we define the more common use of the word “type” as it appears in the Bible.

Benjamin Keach said, “The divines understand nothing else by types, but the images or figures of things present or to come; especially the actions and histories of the Old Testament, respecting such as prefigured Christ our Saviour in his actions, life, passion, death, and the glory that followed.”² What’s so interesting about this is that a biblical type works *the opposite of the penny*. With the penny, the type comes *after* the person. With the Bible, the type comes *before* the person. How can that be? Because the one imprinting the type in the Old Testament knows the future exhaustively. As such, typology is a marvelous gift that God has given to his church to prove the veracity of his word and especially of all things concerning Jesus Christ.

² Benjamin Keach, *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1856), 226.

Keach explains that there are **two kinds of types**. You have **prophetic types**, which are things like visions or actions which a prophet sees or undergoes in order to symbolize something in the future. Then, you have **historical types**. These are what I'm interested in here. He says, “**An historical type is the mystical sense of scripture, whereby things acted or done in the Old Testament ... prefigured and [represented] things acted in the New Testament times, with respect especially to Christ.**”³

The word (*typos*) or one related to it (*antitypos*, *tupikos*) is used several times in the NT this way. **Romans** tells us, “**Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type (*tupos*) of the one who was to come**” (**Rom 5:14**). The one to come is elsewhere called the “**second man**” (**1Co 15:47**) or “**last Adam**” (**1Co 15:45**). The typological relationship is put this way, “**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive**” (**1Co 15:22**). **Hebrews**, quoting the LXX of **Exodus 25:40**, refers to the tabernacle and all things surrounding it as types (**Heb 8:5**). **1 Corinthians** says that the many events of the Exodus, including the rock Moses struck and the manna from heaven

³ Keach, 231.

were all types (1Co 10:11). Peter calls Noah's flood a type of Christian baptism (1Pe 3:21).

A common way for the relationship between the two things to be put is that the thing in the new covenant is “better” than the old type. Christ as the “Lamb of God” is a type (John 1:29). As such, his was a “better sacrifice” (Heb 9:23). His was a better priesthood (Heb 5:10). He was a better priest, because he was without sin (Heb 4:15). His offering was in a better temple (Matt 12:6), in heaven itself (Heb 9:24), even as he is the temple of heaven (John 2:21). Therefore, his was a “better ministry” (Heb 8:6) and a “better covenant” (Heb 7:22), for the old covenant was a type of the new covenant. In these ways and many more, the OT shadows and types were given to point people forward to a future fulfillment that completes their purposes.⁴

The story before us today is in some ways the last great story of the book of Daniel. It is also perhaps the best known. In it, Daniel is thrown to the lions. What I want to aim at as we look at this chapter is how this story is very much a type of Christ's death and resurrection. Strangely,

⁴ For a deeper exploration of typology see Douglas Van Dorn, *Christ in the Old Testament: Promised, Patterned, and Present* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Publishing, 2020), 19-24; Douglas Van Dorn, *Waters of Creation: A Biblical-Theological Study of Baptism* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Publishing, 2009), 25-29, 164-67.

Fairbairn, Keach, and many others overlook this in their detailed analyses of typology. But I'm hardly the first person to see these things here, but it greatly helps us understand [why this story is in this Bible](#) as well as help to prevent us from turning it into some kind of morality play, as if this story exists merely to help you emulate Daniel. No, someone else was a *better* Daniel, and because of it, you can be saved when you do not emulate Daniel because of sin.⁵

Daniel 6: Background and Structure

Let's get our bearings for this chapter. Daniel 6 takes place in the days of [Darius the Mede](#). Unfortunately, we know nothing of a man that fits this description by this particular name outside of Daniel. Clearly, it takes place under a new

⁵ **Going Deeper:** [One more observation about types](#) piggybacks off Fairbairn's comment that people can't seem to agree on what things are types and what are not. It is incredibly easy to see a type where there may not actually one. We are pattern-people who by our nature see faces in clouds and famous people in swiss cheese. we do not need to look for strange hidden types, when deliberate and overt ones are right before our eyes.

Here are [three rules of thumb](#) when looking for types in the OT. **1.** To be identified as a type, there should be an organic relationship between the type and what it foreshadows. Don't look for things like red thread and red blood, as the Church Father's did with Rahab and Jesus' death. Look for relationships like [salvation and salvation](#) (which is in the Rahab story) or [food and food](#) or [a lamb and a lamb](#) or [baptism and baptism](#). We want to see a fuller meaning, not an altogether different meaning. **2.** The nature of the type should be in the main message of the material, not in some incidental detail. **3.** The antitype (the fulfillment) must be greater than the type. If you can do this, then you can be confident you are on solid ground. On this see [Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton](#), *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 165-67.

dynasty—Nebuchadnezzar’s “silver” kingdom as we remember from his dream of the idol. Babylon has been overthrown and “Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old” (Dan 5:31),⁶ and he was “made king” by someone else (9:1). Who might this man be?

Other than the **skeptical view** which says he wasn’t even a real person, which is rooted in that insufferable “**guilty until proven innocent**” view of Scripture that so many Liberal scholars take of Daniel, several suggestions have been offered. One is that Darius was a **localized name for Cyrus** the Great.⁷ If this is the case, then our last verse should be translated, “**So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian**” (Dan 6:28). The difficulty with this is that Cyrus and Darius seem to be different people elsewhere in the book (compare Cyrus in Dan 1:21 and 10:1 with Darius in 9:1 and 11:1). Another option is that he is **Gubaru**, the son of Ahasuerus (Dan 9:1) who entered Babylon with Cyrus on the day of the conquest and was supposedly given the kingdom (“king” in a limited

⁶ The Greek versions begin ch. 6 with this verse.

⁷ **D. J. Wiseman**, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965): 9-18. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/daniel_wiseman.pdf.

sense) of Babylon to rule it as governor.⁸ If this is true, then we know that the events of our chapter take place **within a month** of the writing on the wall, because Gubaru conquered the city on Oct 12 and died on Nov 6. But that isn't much time for Darius to become highly distinguished in Darius' eyes as it tells us (**Dan 6:3**).

The **oldest suggestion** (other than the LXX) dates to Josephus, was held by the Fathers (like Jerome), Reformers like Calvin, but has all but disappeared from modern commentaries. It holds that **Cyrus, who was a Persian, co-ruled Babylon** with a Median king for the first two years of Babylon's fall. That Mede's name is **Cyaxares (II)** in Greek sources. Two years after the end of Daniel 5, he dies and

⁸ **William H. Shea**, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20.3 (Autumn 1982): 229-47.
<https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/AUSS/1982-3/1982-3-04.pdf>.

Wenstrom summarizes the view, "According to Daniel 9:1 Darius 'was *made* ruler over the Babylonian Kingdom.' This suggests that he ruled by appointment, rather than by conquest and thus would have been subordinate to Cyrus, who appointed him. The historical situation leading to this appointment, based on the Nabonidus Chronicle, was that Babylon was conquered by Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, who entered the city of Babylon the night of Belshazzar's feast. After Ugbaru conquered Babylon on October 12, 538 C.C., Cyrus entered the conquered city on October 29 of that same year. Ugbaru was then appointed by Cyrus to rule on his behalf in Babylon. Eight days after Cyrus' arrival (Nov. 6) Ugbaru died. If Darius the Mede is another name for Ugbaru, as is entirely possible, the problem is solved. Since Darius was 62 years old when he took over Babylon (5:31), his death a few weeks later would not be unusual. According to this view ... Gubaru is another spelling for Ugbaru, with the name Gobryas being a Greek form of the same name and appearing in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* 4.6.1-9; 7.5.7-34." **Bill Wenstrom**, "Daniel 6:1-2," Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/35176136/Daniel_6_1_2.

leaving no male heir, his son-in-law Cyrus begins to rule here.⁹ This view makes the most sense to me.

The **structure of the chapter** is yet another chiasm.¹⁰ This puts **the center of our story** in the **king ordering** Daniel thrown to the lions, but **God ordering** the lions to leave Daniel alone. You can hear in this **a fight**, a battle between God and the king (and behind him, his gods). As such, one writer suggests that we should not think about this as “Daniel in the lion’s den,” but rather “**God and the lions**,” because “**Contrary to popular belief, Daniel 6 is not just a story about Daniel, but also a narrative about the God of Israel.**”¹¹ This is no morality play. This is **a high stakes war in the spiritual realm** and a magnificent conclusion to the court-tales of the first six chapters which culminate not just in God proving his power and his kingdom again, but foreshadowing the coming of this kingdom in the world of men through the God-man Jesus Christ.

⁹ See **Steven D. Anderson**, *Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal*, A revision of the author’s May 2014 Ph.D. dissertation from Dallas Theological Seminary (2014), https://faithsaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Darius_the_Mede_-_A_Reappraisal_ebook.pdf.

¹⁰ **James Bejon**, “Commentary on Daniel :: Chapter 6 (5.31-6.28),” 14. 1-87.... https://www.academia.edu/13351860/Commentary_On_Daniel_Chapter_6_5_31_6_28.

This is one step more detailed than the chiasm in John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 124.

¹¹ **Joseph J. de Bruyn**, “Daniel 6: There and Back Again – A Deity’s Tale,” *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies* 71.3 (2015): 1-2 (1-8). <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/524a/c2daba9f651fc9bc74bae56c4e7ce77a38bc.pdf>.

Ref.	Sec.	Description
5.31	A:	The satraps seek to prevent Daniel's promotion
6.6	» B:	The King passes an edict which prohibits true prayer
6.10	»» C:	Daniel is sentenced to death
6.14	»»» D:	The King (unsuccessfully) seeks to deliver Daniel
6.16	»»»» E:	The King orders Daniel to be thrown to the lions
6.18	»»»» E':	God orders the lions to leave Daniel alone
6.22	»»» D':	Daniel's <i>true</i> deliverer arrives, namely God's angel
6.23	»» C':	The satraps are sentenced to death
6.25	» B':	The King passes an edict which encourages true prayer
6.28	A':	Daniel receives his promotion

Finally, in the overall chiasm of the Aramaic part of Daniel (chs. 2-7), this chapter parallels the Fiery Furnace story.¹²

Comparing Daniel 3 and Daniel 6		
Parallel	Daniel 3—Fiery Furnace	Daniel 6—Lion's Den
Pagan King	Nebuchadnezzar	Darius
Decree	The image which the king causes to stand	The order which the king causes to stand
Jews on Trial	The three Hebrews	Daniel
Setting	Nebuchadnezzar's 'walled plain' ¹	Daniel's walled room
Enemies Conspire	Babylon's mighty men	Medo-Persia's mighty men
Execution	Fiery furnace	Lion's Den
Reward	Three Hebrews promoted	Daniel prospered
Pagan king praises God	Nebuchadnezzar	Darius

¹ This reads Daniel 3:1's "plain of Dura" as a "Plain of the Wall." (see Bejon, "Commentary on Daniel 3," p. 27, n. 98. file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/Commentary_On_Daniel_Chapter_3_3_1_30.pdf.)

The place these two stories serves in the book in this overall Aramaic portion of Daniel is to show that **God's people are**

¹² I've combined the tables in Bejon, 15 and Michael Taut, "Chiasm Parallels Daniel 3/6," (Kona: School of Biblical Studies, 2000), <https://sbsinternational.org/resource-material/daniel/?wpdmdl=1035&ind=1>.

not immune from the hostilities that come from an unbelieving world. God does not promise to take us out of the world, and we should not seek to flee from it. But God does promise that he is always with his people, he will never leave or forsake them, and he will give them the peace to endure anything that comes their way.

Daniel 6: Exposition

Preventing Daniel's Promotion (5:31-6:5)

Our story begins when Darius the Mede has taken possession of Babylon. He is old, between 62-64 (Dan 5:31). He was 62 when he came to power. At that time, he began to appoint “satraps” throughout not just the city, but the whole kingdom of Babylon that had been conquered (6:1). A satrap was a provincial governor and you can tell how large the kingdom was, because he appointed 120 of them.

Over these, he placed three high officials, “of whom Daniel was one” and all of these 120 had to give account to Daniel so that the king might not suffer loss (2). Remember, Daniel was already highly promoted by Nebuchadnezzar and then just recently even more highly by Belshazzar—he became third in the kingdom that lasted only one evening.

But the Mede did not kill everyone when he came into Babylon. In fact, he and Cyrus took the city without much of a fight, although they did kill some, like Belshazzar.

Darius decided to see how at least some of these former rulers would work out under his authority and he quickly found that Daniel was trustworthy. It tells us “Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him” (3). This carries over the idea from the queen mother that Daniel was full of the Holy Spirit in some unique way.

There is also a point of application here, for Daniel has now served under not one, but two evil empires, at the top of the food chain. He and his friends have never compromised their faith, but neither have they retreated into a Christian bubble, refusing to get involved in these empires because they were not Christian, but full of hypocrisy and sorcery and politics and wickedness. Daniel’s mindset is the opposite of the Amish, the Desert Fathers, monks, and Evangelicals who will only work in parachurch organizations, who retreat from the world. In this, they heeded the words of Jeremiah, their contemporary who was never taken into Babylon, but died 30 years before this event in Egypt.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

(Jeremiah 29:4-7)

In fact, Daniel was so respected and trusted that “the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom” (Dan 6:3). This infuriated the high officials and governors who “sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him” (4). Ah, nothing has changed in politics, has it? Witch hunts and impeachments when they are not deserved are nothing new.

Then they realized, the way you go after a man of integrity is to attack his faith in God. “Then these men said, ‘We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his

God’” (5). Imagine a Christian leader today being brought down in public life not for immoral scandals (usually sex or money or heresy) which have destroyed so many, but because the only thing they would not compromise on were precisely these things because they loved God’s law that much! About the only thing I can think of that even begins to match this in America in my lifetime is the city of Los Angeles trying to take down John MacArthur because he wants to go to church like God commanded. They’ve got nothing else on him. And they hate him doubly for it. That’s Daniel.

King’s Edict Prohibiting Prayer (6:6-9)

They came up with a plot to attack Daniel through his prayer life. It was an attack from the highest level of government who managed to manipulate the only man who had the power to do anything to Daniel—the king. “Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, ‘O King Darius, live forever!’” (6). Sounds like the high queen from the previous chapter. And it is probably just as sarcastic, though certainly smoothed over with a tone of honesty.

“All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions” (7). What did they do? They **appealed to the pagan king’s arrogance** and pride. *If anyone is worthy of worship, o king, it is certainly you!* Not a few politicians in our day taken in the cheers of the throngs with nose lifted up and a haughty smile on their lips as if they, too, thought they were gods. And don’t you think they were being fed those lines behind the scenes by those who truly pull the strings in politics who gave them their power?

Yet, even though this is a modern and ancient temptation, this interpretation is debatable, and we have no evidence outside of this that Persian kings **demand worship**. Thus, some have suggested that they were telling the king to issue a decree that would make him the **sole representative of the deity** for 30 days. “**All prayers to god, or the gods, would need to be channeled through him.**”¹³

¹³ **John H. Walton**, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 546 summarizing **J. A. Montgomery**, *The Book of Daniel*. ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), 270.

This fits the idea that the king represents the god, but more, it fits the larger theme of these chapters that we have a **supernatural battle** going on between Yahweh and the gods of the pagans.

As for a **den of lions**, Liberal skeptics are quick to say that there never was such a thing—animals being kept in pits with small holes at the top? But we know that Mesopotamian kings from Abraham’s time **kept lions in cages and pits**. And just 100 years prior to Daniel we have an Assyrian text called “**the lion’s pit**” which is used as a metaphor for a group of vicious and antagonistic royal courtiers.¹⁴

So they came up with their new law and said, “**O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked**” (8). The king goes along with it and “**King Darius signed the document and injunction**” (9).¹⁵

¹⁴ A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977; K. van der Toorn, “Scholars at the Oriental Court: the Figure of Daniel against its Mesopotamian Background,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. J. J. Collins and P. W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:37–54, esp. 42–53. Both in Walton, *Backgrounds*, *ibid*.

¹⁵ It has been argued that at the heart of this might have been the Persian struggle between **Zoroastrianism** and syncretistic paganism at this time and that the at this time the king’s decree would have only applied to the Persian population, rather than the far reaches of the Empire in modern Egypt, Israel, and Turkey. They were having their own religious war. But Daniel was a senior Persian official, and therefore, he was trapped. See **John H. Walton**, “The Decree of

Daniel Sentenced to Death (6:10-13)

Vs. 10 takes us to Daniel. “When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously” (Dan 6:10). I saw a meme on just this the other day that said, “Why did Daniel purposely pray where the other Babylonian officials could see him? Sounds like he WANTED to get arrested to play the victim and make a scene, smh. Talk about hurting your witness.” My friend who posted it made the point that this is how a lot of Christians are treating John MacArthur right now, as if the reason he is fighting the state on masks and going to church is because he wants attention, because that’s what he craves. If they could meme in Daniel’s day, they would have said the same thing.

Daniel was hardly doing this because he wanted to make a political statement. He wasn’t doing it because he craved attention. He was doing it because he loved and was obeying God; it was nothing but what he had always done. Long ago, the Church Fathers, citing Psalm 55:17 (“Evening and

Darius the Mede in Daniel 6,” *JETS* 31 (1988): 279–86, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/31/31-3/31-3-pp279-286_JETS.pdf.

morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.”) recognized this instruction from God’s word and even implemented it into the Christians’ daily practice.¹⁶

Why would Daniel **pray towards Jerusalem**? It is because under the old covenant, God’s **special presence** was in his Holy City, in his Temple, on the ark-throne. This is a similar reason that Muslim’s to this day pray towards Mecca. What’s so interesting though is that Ezekiel tells us that in the days of the captivity, **the Holy Spirit left the temple**—he no longer called this his home. Even more, we have been seeing the Holy God do all kinds of things ... in Babylon! This is **unheard of** for a deity to show his power outside of his allotted territory. You see, there are reasons that Nebuchadnezzar called God the Most High. He goes anywhere and does anything he pleases, because he made heaven and earth—all is his.

¹⁶ **Peter Chrysologus** (c. 380–450): “The psalmist instructs us to allot three periods a day to God when he says, “At evening, at morning and at midday I shall speak what I have to say, and you will hearken to my voice.”¹³ For those three periods ... Daniel diligently beseeched God” (*Sermon 21.6*). “Do not pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel, thus pray: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily [needful] bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for yours is the power and the glory forever.* Three times a day thus pray” (**Didache 8**).

At any rate, this was precisely what the governors wanted Daniel to do. “Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God” (11). That was all they needed. They quickly turned and went back to the palace. “They came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, ‘O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?’ The king answered and said, ‘The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked’” (12). They’ve trapped the king in his own words.

Now they **spring it**. “Then they answered and said before the king, ‘Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day’” (13). They tell him that Daniel did this deliberately, premeditatively, cold and calculating to spite the king.

King Seeks to Deliver Daniel (6:14-15)

Upon hearing the news, “the king was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel” (14). Like Nebuchadnezzar before him, Daniel had made an

impression upon the king. Someone suggests that given the situation in the court here, perhaps Daniel was **Darius' only trusted friend!**¹⁷ That would explain the distress. So, the king sets out to deliver him.

Besides showing you the relationship that had developed between the two in only a short time, this serves another purpose. What we discover is that **the king of Babylon does not have the power** to deliver Daniel! “**Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, ‘Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed’**” (15). Let this sink in. This man has just conquered the mightiest power in world history and yet he does not have the power to save his friend from an edit that *he* signed! Even today we see how **in a society seeking to free itself from the shackles of all law** and order that wicked people are still constrained by law, something which they themselves wrote. This is the power of the law. It is an unyielding, uncaring force which, by itself, has **no capability of giving grace or mercy**. And yet, some people want to be saved by keeping it? How incredibly delusional that is. Even the king

¹⁷ Bejon, 41.

of Babylon now realizes the law's power to save when that salvation goes against its explicit statements of justice.

King Orders Daniel Thrown to the Lions (6:16-17)

The center of our story begins in **vs. 16** and goes through **vs. 21**. It starts with **the king, at his wits end** and out of time, commanding Daniel to be brought and cast into the den of lions (**16a**). The king will keep the train of justice moving, even if it happens through an unjust and/or foolish law.

But he does so with a fascinating addendum to the order. “The king declared to Daniel, ‘May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!’” (**16b**). “Continually” is a reference to Daniel’s constant devotion and supplication which got him here in the first place. The king is not being sarcastic, nor is he joking. This is the **heartfelt prayer** of a man trapped by his own governors, the only one of whom he cares about he has just given the death penalty.

“**And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den**” (**17**). **Remember these words**, because we will come back to them. They are the dark heart of this story; and of another. As he did with the decree, the king sealed the stone with his own **signet ring** and also with that of the lords.

When a thing is sealed, it **cannot be unsealed** by anyone until the time has passed. If anyone tried anything, they would be discovered, because the seal would be broken. This insured “**that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel**” (17b). **The man of God is given over to the ravenous roaring lions.**

God Orders the Lions to Leave Daniel Alone (6:18-21)

That night was long for Darius the Mede. He returned to his palace and “**spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him**” (18). This is a part of the story that **often goes untold**. This pagan king begins to act like Daniel! You fast because you are entreating God to do something. According to his own edict, the king has this right, because he is the king. Unlike Belshazzar, he **does not fill himself with wine**. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, he **does not fall asleep**. While we do not get any specific statement to affirm it, this third great king of the book of Daniel is giving me the impression that Daniel has told him about the Lord and the king has listened!

The king’s response cannot be disassociated from what comes next. “**Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions**” (19). This is not the act of a man

overcome by despair. This is an **act of hope!** What kind of absurd faith would make someone like this, a pagan king, act this way?

His hope is evidenced in the next statement too. “**As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, ‘O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?’**” (20). Given the parallels with chapter 3, my thought is that **Darius has heard about the fiery furnace**, has learned about Daniel’s impossible ability to **know someone else’s dreams**, and he is **on the brink of true conversion**. That’s the only thing that explains his actions. **He has heard the good news of Daniel’s God**, presumably from Daniel himself.

Then Daniel said to the king, “**O king, live forever!**” (21). Daniel has gone down into the ground a dead man and he has come out of his tomb alive!

Angel Does Deliver Daniel (6:22-23)

He answers the king **from the bottom of the pit**. “**My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him;**

and also before you, O king, I have done no harm” (22). There are several things here. First, it says that he was saved because he was **found blameless** before the LORD, and also before the king. Ligon Duncan is right to say, “**Daniel is not claiming to be sinless, Daniel is not claiming to never have done anything wrong, but Daniel is saying, in the heat of the moment, I chose God, and I’m innocent before Him ... and the king.**”¹⁸ Yet, it is also important to remember here that I began this sermon with the idea of **typology, because Daniel is a type of someone else.**

Second, Daniel was **delivered by the instrument of an angel.** It literally says, “**His angel.**” It doesn’t say “one of his angels.” Given all the parallels with previous chapters, this leads me to believe that this is **the same person who was in the fiery furnace** who was there called on like a son of the gods. This same person has also appeared in prophecy as **the Stone** that destroys the world kingdoms, as **the Hand** that wrote on the wall, and as **the Name** that Nebuchadnezzar blesses. He will appear again in the next chapter under yet a different title. It is none other than Jesus in the OT. Christ is Daniel’s deliverer, his savior.

¹⁸ **Ligon Duncan**, “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” *Reformed Theological Seminary* (Jan 18, 1998), <https://rts.edu/resources/daniel-in-the-lions-den/>.

This leads to the third and most important part of this. God saved him. Christ is God. But Christ does not act alone here. He never does. *God* sent his Angel. What other god can come into the heart of Babylon, through a sealed tomb, full of lions, and do such a thing? Even the mighty king of Babylon couldn't do it. But the God of Daniel can!

Satrap's Sentenced to death (6:23-24)

Upon hearing this good news, “the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den” (23). No harm was found on him, the lion's did not touch him, “because he trusted in his God.” Does not Hebrews say, “By faith ... they stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). I'm usually quick to point out that God does not always spare his people from persecution and death at that hands of evil people. The entire Bible is filled with that. **But sometimes**, on a few occasions, Scripture forces us to consider that in fact faith is such a powerful thing that God hears prayers and stops the evil in its tracks so that it will do no harm. I wonder, are you so conditioned in this thinking the former that it never crosses your mind that sometimes God wants to show mercy like this and even more, that he is powerful enough to do it? **Faith does not**

look to die (even Jesus prayed “take this cup from me”), though it is more than willing to do for Christ’s sake.¹⁹ Faith looks to God for deliverance. And it trusts this God because loves to deliver.

At this moment, **the tables turn**. The hunters become the hunted. In the same breath as Daniel was set free, “The king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions-- they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces” (24). The king did not want anyone related to these wicked men being able to rise up in the future and commit a coup.

The amazing thing about this verse is that it shows just what God had accomplished in saving Daniel. For those lions who had not been fed were nevertheless still hungry. They were so hungry that the people were eaten before they

¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch wrote in the second century, “From Syria even to Rome I fight with beasts: not that I am devoured by brute beasts, for these, as you know, by the will of God, spared Daniel, but by beasts in the shape of people, in whom the merciless wild beast himself lies hid and pricks and wounds me day by day. But none of these hardships ‘move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself,’ in such a way as to love it better than the Lord. Wherefore I am prepared for [encountering] fire, wild beasts, the sword or the cross, so that only I may see Christ my Savior and God, who died for me. I therefore, a prisoner of Christ, who is driven along by land and sea, exhort you: “stand fast in the faith,” and be steadfast, “for the just shall live by faith”; be unwavering, for “the Lord causes those to dwell in a house that are of one and the same character.” EPISTLE TO THE TARSANS 1.²⁶¹⁹

ever hit the bottom of the pit. That's God's power to save, even against the power of hell which is never satiated with devouring the wicked.

King's New Edict Encouraging True Prayer (6:25-27)

Upon their demise, the Median King Darius, like the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar before him made a proclamation. It was “to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth” (25), and this is what he said,

Peace be multiplied to you.

I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

(Daniel 6:25b-27)

This is a subtle beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies that God will be glorified and his glory will cover the face of the earth as the water covers the sea. He is beginning to gain that for himself through this exile which put his people in the

heart of Babylon. He does it through **his name**: All those under my rule are to tremble in fear before the God of Daniel. He does it through **his eternity**. He alone is the living God, enduring forever and his kingdom will know no end. He does it through **his sovereignty**. His kingdom shall never be destroyed. He does it through **his power**. He is deliverer and a rescuer, delivering Daniel from the hand of the lions. He does it through **his signs and wonders**. He is a doer of signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth.²⁰

Daniel Receives His Promotion (6:28)

The end of the story sees Daniel prospering during the reign of Darius and extending on into the much longer reign of Cyrus the Persian. We will see in the last chapter that Daniel actually gets to leave if he wishes, because God kept the man alive to a ripe old age after saving him from the lions.

Daniel 6 as a Type of the Lord's Passion

Now that we've gone through the story, I want to show you why I believe it is recorded for us in the Bible. Long ago, Aphrahat explained,

²⁰ See the chart summary in Bejon, 62.

Daniel also was persecuted as Jesus was persecuted.... Daniel they cast into the pit of lions, and he was delivered and came up out of its midst uninjured; and Jesus they sent down into the pit of the abode of the dead, and he ascended, and death had not dominion over him. Concerning Daniel they expected that when he had fallen into the pit he would not come up again; and concerning Jesus they said, “Since he has fallen, he shall not rise again” (Ps 41:8). From [harming] Daniel the mouths of the ravenous and destructive lions were closed; and from [harming] Jesus was closed the mouth of death, [though] ravenous and destructive of [living] forms. They sealed the pit of Daniel and guarded it with diligence; and they guarded the grave of Jesus with diligence, as they said, “Set guards to watch at the tomb” (Mt 27:64) When Daniel came up, his accusers were ashamed; and when Jesus rose, all they who had crucified him were ashamed.

(Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 21.18)

This is [the definition of typology](#). The Church Father understands that this story of Daniel in the lion’s Den is a type of Christ’s death and resurrection. He is not alone. Sinclair Ferguson says,

The narrative bears an uncanny resemblance to an event centuries later when a greater conspiracy took place against

another innocent who was declared guilty and condemned to death (Matt. 26:59–60). Jesus’ tomb was also sealed as a preventive measure by his opponents: “On the next day ... the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember, while he was still alive, how that deceiver [cf. “one of the captives” in Dan. 6:13] said, “After three days I will rise.” Therefore command that the tomb be made secure....’ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard” (Matt. 27:62–66). Their efforts to prevent the Resurrection were in vain—just as were the efforts of the governors and satraps of Babylon to prevent the “resurrection” of Daniel from the den of lions. Work done for the kingdom of God, however, is never in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).²¹

Let me take you through a list of types and antitypes that find fulfillment in Jesus.

²¹ **Sinclair B. Ferguson** and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Daniel*, vol. 21, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1988), 127–128. Ian Duguid also see it. “This also points us to the way in which Jesus fulfilled Daniel 6. Like Daniel, Jesus was falsely accused by his enemies and brought before a ruler, Pontius Pilate, who sought unsuccessfully to deliver him from his fate, before handing him over to a violent death. Like Daniel, Jesus was condemned to die, and his body was placed into a sealed pit so that his situation could not be changed by human intervention. Jesus’ trial went even deeper than Daniel’s, however: he did not merely suffer the threat of death, he went down into death itself. Although Jesus was innocent, he suffered the fate of the guilty ones. There was no angel to comfort him with the presence of God in his pit: on the contrary, he was left in the blackness utterly alone and abandoned by God, suffering the fate that we, the guilty ones, deserved. His body was left entombed in the icy grip of death for three days before the angel finally came to roll away his stone.” **Iain Duguid**, “Daniel’s Heavenly Hope,” *WTS* (July 29, 2016) <https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/the-hope-of-the-lions-den/>. See also the excellent chart and summary in **Bejon**, 66-69.

COMPARISON OF DANIEL 6 AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST

	Vs.	DANIEL	JESUS	Vs.
Set Over Kingdom	Dan 6:3	“The king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”	“My Father assigned to me, a kingdom.”	Lk 22:29
Royal Robes	Dan 5:29	“Daniel was clothed with purple.”	“They clothed him in a purple robe.”	Jn 19:2
Betrayal	Dan 6:4	“The presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel.”	“That moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.”	Mt 26:16; Mk 14:11
			“The Pharisees (Jewish leaders) went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus”	Mk 12:14
			“The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour.”	Lk 20:19
			“They sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.”	Jn 10:39
Group Conspiracy	Dan 6:7	“The administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said...”	The chief priests and the officers ... cried out in a loud voice, “Crucify! Crucify!”	Jn 19:6
Blameless	Dan 6:4	“They could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.”	“I [Pilate] find no guilt in him.”	Jn 18:38
Public Worship	Dan 6:10	“He went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem.”	“I have spoken openly to the world... I have always taught in synagogues or at the temple where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.”	Jn 18:20
Prayer for Help	Dan 6:11	“[They found] Daniel making petition and plea before his God.”	“Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if	Mk 14:35

			possible, the hour might pass from him ... Yet not what I will, but what you will."	
Trumped up Charges	Dan 6:13	"Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."	"Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.'"	Mt 26:65
Ordinance	Dan 6:16	"Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."	<i>The same takes place during Jesus' trial.</i> "We have a law, and according to that law ..."	Jn 19:7
Legal Punishment	Dan 6:12	"O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"	"... he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." "What is your judgment? They answered, 'He deserves death.'"	Jn 19:7; Mt 26:66
Handing over to the Judge	Dan 6:15	"Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, 'Remember, O King, that according to the law... no decree or edict that the kind issues can be changed'"	"If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you [Pilate]."	Jn 18:30
Found Innocent	Dan 6:22	"I was found blameless before [God]; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."	"You take him and crucify him. As for me, I [Pilate] find no basis for a charge against him."	Jn 19:6
Deliberate, Willful Conviction	Dan 6:14	"When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed."	"Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was	Mt 27:24

Against the Truth Tweaks Conscience			beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."	
	Dan 6:18	"Sleep fled from him."	"Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I [Pilate's wife: tradition names her Procular or Claudia] have suffered much because of him today in a dream."	Mt 27:19
Tries to Save the Accused	Dan 6:14	"When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him."	"Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up."	Mt 27:17-18
Kill Him Anyway	Dan 6:16	"So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lion's den."	"[Pilate] took Jesus and had him flogged. Finally, he handed him over to them to be crucified."	Jn 19:16
Set in a Tomb with a Stone	Dan 6:17	"A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. . ."	"He took the body and . . . laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away."	Mt 27:59-60
Tomb Sealed	Dan 6:17	". . . and the king sealed it with his own ring."	"Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.' So they went and made the	Mt 27:65-66

			tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.”	
Thrown to the Lions	Dan 6:16	“Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions.”	“They open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.”	Ps 22:13
Saved from the Lions’ mouths	Dan 6:22	“My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me.”	“Save me from the mouth of the lion!”	Ps 22:21
Rush to See God’s Salvation	Dan 6:19	“At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lion’s den”	“On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.”	Jn 20:1
			“Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.”	Jn 20:3-4
Resurrection	Dan 6:23	“[The king] commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him.”	“He is not here, for he has risen.”	Mt 28:6
Exceeding Gladness	Dan 6:23	“He [Darius] was exceedingly glad.”	“When the disciples saw the Lord, they were glad.”	Jn 20:20
Villains Die Violent Deaths	Dan 6:24	“Those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions--they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and	“Now this man [Judas] acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.	Act 1:18

		broke all their bones in pieces.”		
Exaltation	Dan 6:28	“Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”	“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”	Jn 20:17

Extraordinary!

Through Daniel, **God’s Name is honored, God’s sovereignty, his eternality, his power, and his wonders are praised.** But through Jesus, God shows himself infinitely greater of honor and power through these attributes. For you specifically, you have to understand, like Darius did, that law-keeping cannot result in salvation from the pit of hell and the lions that lay in wait there. Of course, neither can law-breaking. The law shows no mercy.

But Jesus, who was handed as the Psalm says over to ravenous lions but delivered not from the potential of death, but from actual death in a resurrection of his body has made it possible. He has conquered the powers of hell, the gods of Babylon, the punishment of the sins of mankind. And he did it by unsealing a tomb from the inside out. This is **the good news of Daniel’s God** who was with him in the den of despair. It is the **good news of Jesus Christ** who was crucified, died, and was buried, and the third day he rose

again from the dead. This news has been going out to the whole world, to every language, nation, and tongue. It is going out to you.

While the lions shut their mouths, The Lion of Judah is right now calling you to trust in him. He is calling you to persevere in the fight of the ages, as he puts all his enemies under his feet. He is calling you to pray like never before. To trust as you've never trusted before. And to look for his deliverance from sin, death, and the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion. If you will do this, by God's power to bring the dead back to life through his Holy Spirit and Word, then you may be assured that you belong to him and that he will never leave or forsake you.

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