

DAY 4 - JANUARY 11, 2026

The Fiery Furnace and the Lions' Den (Daniel 3 and 6)

Because the themes are so similar, we're combined The Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3) with Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6), even though they are separated in time by many decades and aren't found together in the Scripture text.

The Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3)

Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder during his reign. 15 million baked bricks were used in the construction of official buildings. Sun-dried bricks were easy to make, but would disintegrate in a heavy rainfall, while bricks burned in a kiln were virtually indestructible. Such kilns would be quite adequate to enclose several men.

Q1. (Daniel 3:8-15) Why do the Jews' fellow government officials report them to Nebuchadnezzar? Why is the king so angry? What is his motivation to have people bow to the statue?

Q2. (Daniel 3:16-18) How do the Jews answer Nebuchadnezzar? What is their attitude? How do they witness about their God? Do they face death with resignation or defiance? Characterize their faith.

Q3. (Daniel 3:19-27) What effect does their deliverance have on their government official colleagues? What effect does it have on the king? What kind of glory does God receive?

Q4. (Daniel 3:28-30) How does Nebuchadnezzar sum up their faith and commitment? Are you willing to disobey a command or law to be faithful to God? Are you willing to lay down your life to be faithful to God? What might hold you back?

Lessons for Disciples:

From the Fiery Furnace Account

1. Disciples can't avoid persecution. If God blesses us, others may be jealous. If we stand for what is right, some will resent it. We can't change how others feel about us. If we try to avoid persecution by compromise and flattery, we may be displeasing to God.
2. When faced with an ultimatum, we need to answer clearly and boldly, not like a politician. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered forthrightly. So did Jesus before the high priest (Matthew 26:63-64) and before Pilate (John 18:33-38; 19:11). So did Stephen before he was martyred (Acts 7:51-56).
3. Our faith should be in both God's power and God's will. We don't serve him just because he will deliver us. He is able to deliver, but his purposes are often beyond our understanding. We just trust him.
4. God's angels are constantly around us. Only occasionally are they seen.
5. We need to be willing to lay down our lives rather than betray our God. That's what Jesus meant when he said, "Take up your cross and follow me."

B. Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6) Since the locus of the action seems to be in Babylon, not one of the capital cities of the Persian Empire (Susa, Ecbatana, Persepolis, etc.), Darius is probably a throne-name for the king or governor of the province of Babylon.

As a government official - and as an employee, Daniel is:

1. Trustworthy. He tells the truth and can be counted on to be faithful to his responsibilities.
2. Diligent. He keeps up with all his duties and doesn't let anything slip. He's not lazy.
3. Honest. He doesn't take money or bribes from those trying to break the rules or be preferred over others.

Q5. (Daniel 6:4) What do we learn about Daniel's character qualities as a government official from verse 4? How do such qualities reflect on Daniel's God? Does your employer or supervisor see those qualities in you?

Daniel is:

1. Praying privately. Daniel went to his own house.
2. Praying toward Jerusalem. (1 Kings 8:30).
3. Praying regularly, three times a day (Psalm 55:17).
4. Praying while kneeling, humbling himself before God (1 Kings 8:38).
5. Praying with bowed head. "Prayed" is *ṣelâ*, a generic Aramaic verb "to pray," originally, "bow in prayer."
6. Praying, giving thanks, praising.
7. Praying and petitioning God.
8. Praying seeking God's mercy.

Q6. (Daniel 6:10-11) How would you characterize Daniel's prayer practices? Which of these have you adopted? Which might help your prayers if you adopted them? Execution by being thrown to the animals was not a common form of capital punishment in the ancient Near East. It wasn't made popular until it was introduced in the Roman Empire about the second century BC. However, the den of lions into which Daniel was thrown was perhaps part of a royal zoo. See Heb 11:33.

Q7. (Daniel 6:21-23) How does Daniel use his experience in the lions' den to testify about God? What might have happened if, in his response to the king, Daniel had focused on the injustice done to him? What experience in your life might you use as a testimony of God's mercy to you?

Lessons for Disciples:

From the Lions' Den Account

1. Daniel sets a standard for disciples' character as a government official - trustworthy, diligent, and honest - not corrupt (6:4).
2. Daniel sets an example for disciples by praying three times a day. He prays privately, facing Jerusalem, regularly, kneeling, with bowed head, giving praise, petitioning God, and seeking mercy (6:10-11).
3. God is able to send angels to protect his servants - like the angel that shut the mouths of the lions (6:21).
4. Daniel gives us an example of testifying to the king about God's deliverance.
5. The result of Daniel's example is Darius coming to believe in God - even if he doesn't become a monotheist. The king also ends up promoting Daniel's God to the nation. God can work amazingly as we testify concerning him.