

Daniel and the lions (Daniel 6)

Some of the kings of the Israelites were very bad and very unfair. They did not love God and they did not love the people they led and they did not keep the Israelites safe.

There was a very big and powerful ruler called Nebuchadnezzar – let's call him King Neb. He ruled over a massive area of land called Babylon. It was more than one country – it was lots of nations that he had won in battle. King Neb wanted to win the land that the Israelites lived in and to have the Israelites as his people to rule over.

One day, King Neb did take over the land of the Israelites and he took many of the Israelites back to his land, Babylon. He was particularly interested in the young people who he hoped to train to be useful Babylonians. One of these was a man called Daniel. Daniel and his young friends were taken to Babylon to be trained to be Babylonians. Daniel never forgot God. Even though he was far from his home, he continued to follow God's teaching and to speak to God in prayer.

God gave Daniel a gift. Like Joseph years before, God gave Daniel a special understanding of dreams. One night, King Neb had a troubling dream. He was in bed and he had a dream that made him really frightened and none of his assistants could help him. Daniel came to see King Neb and he was able to help him to understand his dream. So the King liked Daniel and respected him.

*Daniel worked for King Neb and the king who followed him **and** the king who followed **him**, who was called King Darius. This is where this story begins, when Daniel was working for King Darius, King of Babylon.*

Daniel had been a very good worker and King Darius liked Daniel so much he was planning to make him Prime Minister for the whole of Babylon. Some of the other leading men in the country gathered together to have a meeting. They hated Daniel because they were jealous of the way the king respected him and they wanted to get rid of him. They wanted to accuse him of something to get him into trouble. At their meeting they put their heads together and came up with a plan.

They knew that Daniel worshipped God so, one day, they went to King Darius and made a suggestion to him. They said, "Let's make a new law that everyone has to pray to you and not to anyone else, and if they don't they will be thrown into the lions' den" – they knew that Daniel would not stop praying to the one true God and so he would be thrown into the lions' den. They stood together and looked pleased with themselves for coming up with this evil plan.

King Darius listened to these men and decided that this sounded like a good idea. He was pleased they thought he was so important. So, the wicked men who hated Daniel went away to make this new law.

Daniel heard about this new law and it made him sad but he continued to pray to God because he knew that God was still in control in this foreign land. So he went to his room, knelt down in front of the window and prayed to God, in the same way that he had always done. He did this three times every day.

The other leading men saw him and they were very pleased – they had finally managed to trap him; he was sure to be killed now. Daniel's enemies took him to the king. They said to King Darius, "We must throw him into the lions' den because he has broken the law".

The king did not want Daniel to be killed by the lions because he liked Daniel but, because he had passed the law, he had to do what it said. He walked up and down in his palace because he knew he had been tricked into doing a terrible thing.

So King Darius's soldiers came to get Daniel and Daniel was thrown into the lions' den and a stone was put over the entrance so that he could not get away.

The next morning, rather early, the king ran to the lions' den and called out, "Daniel, did God save you?"

Then Daniel replied, "Yes, O king, God sent an angel to close the lions' mouths!"

The king was very happy, and realised that God had saved Daniel, so he made a new law that everyone should believe in the one true God, who saved Daniel.