

Lions' Mouths Shut

Key Verse: *“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”*
—Daniel 6:22

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 6:1-28

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME

in the book of Daniel that we find an account of Jews being sentenced to death for practicing their faith. All four—Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego [their Babylonian names], and Daniel—had been taken to Babylon before the destruction of Jerusalem because they demonstrated excellence that could be used in King Nebuchadnezzar’s service. (Dan. 1:3-7) That excellence was immediately displayed when they refused to defile themselves with the royal food and wine, insisting on a simple diet of vegetables and water.

The result: “In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.”—vss. 8-20, *New International Version*

Our previous lesson, as well as today’s, both involve conspiracies against these four faithful Hebrews. (Dan. 3:8; 6:13) In both accounts they were given inescapable death sentences, and the two narratives state that they were saved from death by the mighty power of God. This would have been believable by Israelites, who knew that God did so to save those specially used to accomplish his purposes.—Ps. 34:7; 91:11

Babylon had been conquered by Medo-Persia, whose king was Darius. The king was impressed by Daniel's performance as one of three administrators looking over the affairs of the kingdom. Because "an excellent spirit" was in Daniel, Darius planned to make him ruler "over the whole realm."—Dan. 6:3

This caused the overlooked administrators to begin plotting against Daniel, but they concluded, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." (vs. 5, *NIV*) They appealed to the king's vanity and position of power to enact an edict that anyone asking a petition of any god or man other than Darius for thirty days should be thrown into the lions' den. The conspirators said to the king that "all" had agreed to this proposal. In this, however, they had lied to Darius, for he was unaware that Daniel was not among the "all."

The Prophet Ezekiel later wrote that only Noah, Daniel, and Job could save themselves through their righteousness if they were in a country that God determined to destroy because of their sins against him. (Ezek. 14:14,20) Now facing a den of lions reserved for executing enemies of the state, God had determined to save Daniel because of his righteousness. Quoting Daniel 6:21-23 from the *New International Version*, we read: "Daniel answered, May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty. The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. ... No wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

Daniel gave all glory to God in this experience. It was divine power that shut the lions' mouths because of Daniel's innocence. Peter tells us God will shut the mouth of that "roaring lion," the devil, if we are vigilant and sober-minded when he attacks.—I Pet. 5:8 ■