

Daniel 6:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

Analysis

This verse reveals Darius's genuine anguish over Daniel's condemnation. The king "passed the night fasting" demonstrates sorrow and possibly desperate hope that some divine intervention might save Daniel. Refusing "instruments of musick" (entertainment) and losing sleep all indicate deep distress. Unlike conspirators celebrating their apparent victory, Darius suffers torment, recognizing too late his foolish decree's consequences and his valued servant's imminent death.

The king's sleepless night contrasts with Daniel's peaceful rest in the lions' den (implied by his ability to answer the king's morning call, v. 20-21). While earthly power torments itself with worry, the faithful servant rests in divine protection. This demonstrates that peace comes not from controlling circumstances but from trusting God's sovereignty. Darius, with absolute earthly authority, cannot sleep; Daniel, condemned to death, presumably rests in God's care.

The king's fasting and sleeplessness also reveals his recognition of spiritual forces beyond his control. Having exhausted legal options (v. 14), he may have been appealing to Daniel's God for deliverance. This points toward his eventual proclamation (v. 26) recognizing the living God. Darius's misery prefigures how all earthly authority will ultimately acknowledge Christ's lordship, voluntarily or involuntarily (Philippians 2:10-11). Meanwhile, believers rest in divine care even in life's most threatening circumstances (Psalm 4:8).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern royal courts maintained elaborate entertainment including musicians, concubines, and festivities. Kings typically enjoyed luxurious evening meals with entertainment as demonstrations of power and pleasure. Darius's refusal of these normal indulgences indicates extraordinary distress—he abandoned the trappings of kingship in anguish over his condemned servant.

Royal fasting sometimes accompanied religious appeals or mourning. Darius's fasting suggests hope that divine intervention might accomplish what human law prohibited. His behavior throughout Daniel's ordeal (seeking deliverance all day, fasting, losing sleep, rushing to the den at dawn) reveals genuine affection for Daniel and recognition that this righteous man's death would result from the king's own manipulated foolishness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the contrast between Darius's sleepless anguish and Daniel's implied peaceful rest illustrate that peace comes from trusting God rather than controlling circumstances?
2. What does the king's abandonment of royal pleasures in distress teach about earthly power's inability to provide peace when conscience is troubled?
3. How should knowing that even persecutors often recognize the righteous's innocence encourage faithfulness despite opposition?

Interlinear Text

אָ דאָן	אַ ל	מלך א	להיכלה	וב ת	טו ת
Then	went	the king	to his palace	and passed the night	fasting
H116	H236	H4430	H1965	H956	H2908
וידו	לא	הנע ל	קדמ ויהי	ושנת ה	
were instruments	neither	of musick brought	before	him and his sleep	
H1761	H3809	H5954	H6925	H8139	
בד ת	עלוהי:				
went	from him				
H5075	H5922				

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 2:1 (Kingdom): And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

Esther 6:1 (Kingdom): On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Psalms 77:4 (Kingdom): Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.