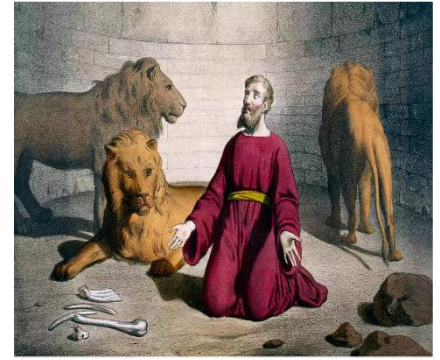




The faith of Daniel and his friends



STUDY FOUR – FAITH AND INTEGRITY

The kings Daniel served were **Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great**. (It is possible that Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great were two different names for the same king.) In this last study, we shall be looking at a crucial event in the reign of Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar.

Read: Daniel 5:1-12

- What do verses 1-4 tell us about Belshazzar?
- We often say that history repeats itself because we don't learn the lessons! Can this be said of Belshazzar, and why?
- Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap (Galatians 6:7). This is a lesson for each of us today.

It is easy to imagine the terror of Belshazzar, and the rest of the revellers, when they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall. Verses 5 and 6 describe the king's reaction: his face turned pale with fear and such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him! One is tempted to say: they would, wouldn't they?

God has a way of getting our attention. Hopefully, not in such an extreme way, but it is a reminder that we cannot do things our own way, ignoring God, and then expect him to say, "no problem"! In Numbers 22 we read the story of Balaam and his ass. Having disregarded God's instructions, the angel of the Lord came and stood in the road in front of the man and the ass. The ass saw the angel, but not Balaam. In fact, when the angel revealed himself, Balaam was told that if the donkey hadn't shied away, the angel would have killed Balaam and spared the donkey! We should always pray that we hear what God is saying to us and see the path he wants us to walk.

Belshazzar would have heard the stories of what happened in his father's reign, but the lessons had completely bypassed him. So yet again, a king cries out in fear for the

enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers, to tell him the meaning of the words. And yet again, none of them could understand it.

- What lesson is there for us in this? Where do we go for help and advice when things go wrong?

Belshazzar must have been extremely grateful when his mother, hearing all that was going on, came into the banqueting hall, with a solution to his problem. Daniel! Or to be more correct the God of Daniel.

Read verses 13-30

The king starts by flattering Daniel and then promising him great honour and wealth if only he can interpret the dream. However, Daniel is a God pleaser not a man pleaser, and verses 17-23 lay out his bald statement:

Daniel answered the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honour to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honoured those he wanted to honour and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace.

But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

"You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honoured the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!"

- What was the meaning of those words written on the wall? (verses 24-28)
- How soon did they come to pass?

Read Daniel 6

- What do verses 1-10 tell us about Daniel?

- Political shenanigans are nothing new! They are rarely sophisticated. Why do you think this is the case?
- We hear people say: *'go for the jugular'* – the vein that carries our life blood. The officials knew the point on which they could bring Daniel down – his God!
- We need to think about this in the coming days. How vital is God to us? Does he come before everything and everyone in our lives? Do we have a weak point(s)?

For once, we hear of a king who regretted his actions (see verse 14). Nevertheless, Darius felt honour bound to carry out the order he had made. Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. We often say this rather glibly but even the King spent the night fasting and couldn't sleep.

"Very early the next morning, the king hurried out to the lion's den. When he got there, he called out in anguish, 'Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you worship continually, able to rescue you from the lions?' Daniel answered, 'Long live he king!'" (verses 19-21)

One can almost hear someone in the background singing: *"Our God is a great big And he holds us in his hands."*

Darius told everyone throughout the kingdom to tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. *"For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end. He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."*

And let us believe as David says in Psalm 48:14, **"FOR THIS GOD IS OUR GOD FOREVER AND EVER; HE WILL BE OUR GUIDE UNTO DEATH"**

Prayer:

"Father God, help us to develop our faith so that it is like that of Daniel and his friends, implicitly trusting and believing in you at all times and in all circumstances."

