

Spending the Night with Lions

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Daniel 1:12-21

1. One of the three most righteous men who ever lived; they were righteous under the most difficult of circumstances - Ez. 14:14, 20, 28:3
 - a. Noah, one of only eight in a world filled with great evil
 - b. Job, righteous even though personally targeted by Satan
 - c. Daniel, righteous in the capitol city of the most powerful, pagan empire in the history of the world
2. Daniel, "God is my Judge," was a young royal in Jerusalem taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian serving him and all of the kings through Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, about 65 years
3. His captivity was foretold by Isaiah to King Hezekiah - Isa. 39:6-7
 - a. History records the practice of captor kings making the descendants of conquered kings into eunuchs and forcing them to serve in their courts

- ### B. Daniel rose from a captive, emasculated teenager in a foreign, pagan land to second in command to four of the greatest kings of two of the greatest world empires. Not just a young man who spent the night in the lions' den
1. "The predictions of things to come that relate to the state of the Church amongst the old Prophets, Daniel is most distinct in order of time and easiest to be understood. Daniel is in the greatest credit amongst the Jews, and to reject his prophecies, is to reject the Christian religion."
(Sir Isaac Newton, Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel, 1733)
 2. How did he get there?

I. A GODLY YOUNG MAN

A. Daniel possessed great conviction - 1:12-16

1. He proposed a 10 day controlled experiment.
2. His request was fair and reasonable from a human standpoint. This was a direct expression of Daniel's trust in and devotion to God.
3. God's providential intervention is evident in these four young men.
4. For believers in God there are three realms of morality:
 - a. That which is always right,
 - b. That which is always wrong,
 - c. That which is a scruple of conscience in which the believer is at liberty to choose, guided by his love for God and his fellowman, and on his personal conviction
5. Daniel acted in all three of these realms:
 - a. It is always right to serve God regardless of circumstances of being under pressure by adversaries in government, and it is always right to be courteous and respectful to government even when it is hostile

- c. It is always wrong for a Jew to eat things that would defile them under the Law of Moses, even if it appears to be the only food available; and, it is always wrong to partake of idolatry by eating the foods offered to them
 - d. It is acceptable for conscience's sake to refuse all of the king's food and choose to eat simpler foods instead
 - 6. Believers do not shape their morals, ideals, and ethics to adapt to circumstances, pressures, or non-spiritual needs
- B. Daniel's conviction made him exceptional - Dan. 1:19-21.

II. A GODLY SERVANT OF THE KING

- A. Nebuchadnezzar dreams and calls on Daniel to interpret
 - 1. Daniel served the king while delivering prophecies about the kingdom of God, proving one can do both - Dan. 2:36-48; Matt. 16:18; Heb. 12:28
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by God, and Daniel tells him about his sins and his need to be righteous. One can do both - Dan. 4:24-28, 34, 37
- B. Darius put him over all of the governors in his empire, and Daniel served the king honorably and God faithfully. One can do both - Dan. 6:1-3
 - 1. Daniel's service won the heart of the king, even though Daniel prayed to God in violation of the king's command. One can do right in defiance of civil government and still be appreciated by government - Dan. 6:14
 - 2. Daniel's service created faith in a pagan king - Dan. 6:25-28

Conclusion:

- A. We like to think that Daniel's greatest feat was spending the night with lions.
- B. His greatest works were serving God faithfully as a teenager and serving God faithfully and the king honorably as a man. These were greater lions than the felidae pathera leo in the gob pit - 1Peter 5:8-9