

Reading: Daniel Chapter 6

Daniel was a very wise man. He was quite an old man, and had a very adventurous life in Babylon, but because of his trust in God, he had come safely through.

Nebuchadnezzar had died and a King named Darius was on the throne, but because Daniel was so wise, he still held a very important position in the palace. This King Darius set 120 princes and rulers over all his land, and over this 120, three more important than the rest, and the first of these there was Daniel, right next to the King in importance. In spite of his high position he was still wise and good and retained his trust in God for guidance.

Unfortunately, these 120 princes and rulers were very jealous of Daniel. They didn't like the fact that the King preferred Daniel, the Jew, above them all. But Daniel was so wise and did his work so well, that they knew they would never be able to find anything about him of which they could complain to the King, and get him removed from his high position. What cruel, unkind men they must have been. We should have thought they would have been glad to have so just and good a ruler over them as Daniel, but no, they were jealous.

So they thought out a plot. They knew the only thing they could find against Daniel was that he put his God first in everything he did, and they knew he had a habit of kneeling down and praying three times every day. So they went to the King and said that in order to show the King's greatness and power, they would like him to make a decree (that is a rule or law) that for 30 days no-one should ask a "petition", that is pray or ask for anything of anyone, save the King. That meant that they could pray only to the King for 30 days, not even to their own idols. Anyone who was found disobeying, was to be cast into the Den of Lions.

The King rather liked the idea, it showed his power and would prove the obedience of his people, so he agreed, and they wrote down the "decree" on a tablet of clay and then, while the clay was still soft, the King took off his ring and pressed the seal on which was his special mark into the clay. When the clay tablet had been baked hard, then nothing could remove what had been written on it, especially the King's special mark.

This made things very difficult for Daniel, for three times a day he prayed to God for help and guidance. The wicked princes and rulers knew that Daniel would still continue to pray to God and when they saw him they went to the King and told him what they had seen. The King was in great distress, he was very upset; he realised it was a cruel plot, and he tried all that day to alter what he had done, but those 120 rulers stood firm and wouldn't hear of any alteration.

So Daniel was cast into the pit where the King kept his royal lions. But the King had a bad night, he wouldn't eat and couldn't sleep. First thing in the morning, as soon as it was light, he set off for the lions' pit to find out what had happened to Daniel.

God had sent an angel into the pit and shut up those savage lions' mouths. Daniel was saved because of his complete trust in God. He wasn't ashamed of kneeling down and praying to his God, and so God had taken great care of him and saved him out of this unpleasant situation. How glad the King was! He couldn't do without Daniel.

So the King made a second Decree, that everyone should fear this God of Daniel who could perform such wonderful works. What a lesson for us not to be afraid of being different from other people.

Point to remember:- God can do all things, even to shutting the mouths of lions.