

“THE BELL”



BANGOR LIBERTY FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

The Wall

In Daniel we have an instance where a great banquet of a thousand people is halted when a disembodied hand appears near a lampstand and writes some graffiti on the plaster wall. Definitely not something that has happened at any party I have attended, but your mileage may vary. There are two things that I want to look at in this story of Daniel and the graffiti: first, the whole episode revolves around examining the life of King Belshazzar; second, notice the deference everyone pays to Daniel.

The chapter begins with the king throwing a party for a thousand of his nobles, while an enemy army is camped outside the walls of the city. The walls of Babylon were legendary for their size and the security they provided to those living inside. The Euphrates river ran through the city providing fresh water in case of an extended siege. Belshazzar was feeling considerably comfortable and content and wanted to demonstrate this to his guests, so he directed servants to go to the vault and retrieve the gold and silver cups and bowls his father, Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem about seventy years prior. As they all drank from these utensils a hand appeared near the lampstand and wrote on the wall. This so upset the king that the bible describes the king as, *“turning pale and was so frightened that his legs began to tremble and his knees were knocking.”* The King James Version says, *“the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other.* Just so we all understand, “so that the joints of his loins were loosed”, is a polite way of saying the king lost control of his bowels. That probably conveys a little better how disturbing this was for the king.

The king summons his wise men, or magi, to interpret what the words mean and promises that the one who does will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. When no one was able to explain this to the king he became even more terrified and grew paler. The nobles and everyone else were baffled but the king’s mother was there and she knew somebody who could help. She tried to calm the king by telling him, *“There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the*

gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. ¹² *He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”*

Daniel is brought before the king and told what to do, he is also promised to be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. This would have brought great wealth and comfort to Daniel who at this time was over eighty years of age. Daniel tells the king to keep his gifts and that he can reward someone else. In other words, “I don’t want what you have, give it to someone else.” Daniel begins by giving the king a history lesson. He reminds him that his father had humbled himself before God and God had blessed him but that when his father had become arrogant God had in turn humbled him. Making him live as an animal in the fields and driving him away from the people. But when Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God’s sovereignty over all kingdoms and everyone, God returned him to his throne and blessed him continually. Daniel then turns to chastise Belshazzar for failing to learn from his father and placing himself before all others. *“You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.* ²⁴ *Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.* ²⁵ *“This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin* ²⁶ *“Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.* ²⁷ *Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.* ²⁸ *Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”* ²⁹ *Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.* ³⁰ *That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain,* ³¹ *and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.”* So, what do we learn from this odd little episode? First, consider the picture you get of Belshazzar, the king. Here was a person who cared about the good things in life. The king was not concerned about an army outside the gates of Babylon because he was arrogant and didn’t think anything bad could

happen to him. He had no respect for God and the things of God. Most importantly he had failed to learn the lessons of his father. Because of that he would lose his life and kingdom that very night. Up until about fifty years ago Belshazzar was considered fictional. He had made such little impact on the world that the world had forgotten all about him.

The second thing we learn comes from the example of Daniel. By this time Daniel is well into his eighties. He has retired from public life and lives very simply. But when a crisis comes to the kingdom or at least to the party who is the one person identified as being capable of resolving the problem that night? Only Daniel. Daniel the man who had stood against the kingdom and refused to change his diet or his worship. The man who had watched as his friends were thrown into a furnace only to be joined by an angel and emerge unscathed from the flames. Daniel the man who would stand before kings and become head over all the kingdom, but who began the story as a Jewish slave exiled from his home. Daniel the man who would pray and have angels come to give him the answer to those prayers.

I think this story in the book of Daniel serves as giant question for us today. Which do we want to be, Daniel or Belshazzar? Would we rather be the king or humble? Do we want to be remembered like Daniel or forgotten by the world like Belshazzar? Do your children know what a humble life looks like? Will they respect God and the things of God when you are no longer there to watch them? These are just some of the questions we should ask ourselves on a regular basis. Unfortunately, when we stop asking the questions it's because we have already chosen the wrong path. I pray we can all be like Daniel and live faithfully and humbly knowing that God is there watching and guiding us all the way.

Queries

9. Do you consistently practice the Christian principles of love and goodwill toward people?" Do you work actively for peace and for the removal of causes of war? Do you endeavor to make it clear to all whom you can influence that war inconsistent with the spirit and teachings of Jesus?

10. Does your attitude toward people of other races indicate your belief in the rights of other races? Do you believe in the spiritual capacity of people of all races, and do you recognize their equality in the sight of God? Are you aware of your responsibility as a Christian to help in the elimination of racial discrimination and prejudice?

LIBRARY LEDGE – More Donations

We have more donations to add to our library. You have all been so very generous and I thank you immensely! The following are being added this month: **The Word of Promise From Jesus, Perennial – Meditations for the Seasons of Life** by Twila Paris, **Your Gift of Love** by Gary Chapman, **Satisfied, First Things First** by Kurt Warner, **The Hand That Paints the Sky** by Joni Eareckson Tada (beautiful pictures) and **How to Stay Christian in College.**

Watch for our library sale this month. We have been given many donations, many I am putting in our library, and many will be put out for sale. Please come look through our selection of books and enjoy your reading.

laboring to extend Christ's Kingdom? Do you use your spiritual gifts in serving humanity as God grants you light to see such service?

Mystery Friend

Our Mystery Friend for September was born in Marshalltown. He/she graduated from Union-Whitten High School and UNI. Their current job is in billing. Our Mystery Friend is the oldest of 3 and the parent of 3. Favorite foods are bacon cheeseburgers, ham balls, and lasagna. He/She has traveled to all 50 states, most of Canadian provinces, two foreign countries. Most people would not know that this person started the first preschool in this area in their home. They commented that they especially like the interaction of all ages 0-100 at Bangor Liberty. This person has a special birthday that end in a 0 in October.

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The answer will be in this Sunday's bulletin and next month's Bell

The Mystery Friend for August was Blake Matney

Coming Activities:

September 22 5th grade Bibles/Golden Ticket presentation.

Next Monthly Meeting will be held on October 6, 2019

Children's Church will be held the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month starting September 22

October is Pastor Appreciation Month.
Start thinking about ways to show appreciation to our pastor!

October 4-6: Man Camp at CQH

October 18-22: Pastor's Retreat & Conference

Sunday School Teachers for Nursery:

September 1 Jo M & Mary D
September 8 Dani J & Chris S
September 15 Mary D & Margaret G
September 22 Kay F & Amber S
September 29 Diane T & Ann N

Deeper Nursery

September 11 Alicia D & Diane T
September 18 Mary D & Kay F
September 25 Lora & Rachel B

Children's Message

September 22 Margaret G
September 29 Dani J

September Ushers

1 Reg M & Bill P
8 Joe F & Rick H
15 Kellen B & Heath N
22 Chris E & Brayden E
29 Bob D & Paul H