

FIRE IN THE FURNACE PT. 1

Daniel 3:1-18

Intro: Life is filled with trials. There are ups, and there are downs. There are mountain top experiences, and there are times when we are in the deepest of valleys. What is life but a series of storms: you are either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or headed into a storm. Even Christians experience storms on the sea of life.

Daniel and his three friends had been promoted to administrative positions in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar because Daniel had received from Jehovah God the interpretation of the king's dream. What a great blessing to have things going well for a while. But things are about to change for the three friends of Daniel. Their faith is going to be tested. Remember that faith that cannot be tested is faith that cannot be trusted.

As we have already found out, the Book of Daniel is a filled with prophecy. The trials of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego foreshadow the day when the Anti-Christ, in like manner of Nebuchadnezzar, will force the whole world to worship an image of himself.

I. VSS. 1-7, THE IMAGE OF GOLD

A. VS. 1, This image of gold is a reflection of the one in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two. In the dream, the head of the image was gold which spoke of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom in light of world history. The image of Daniel three is all gold. The king, in Babylon, was seen as the incarnation of his god. The king was to be worshiped as a sign of loyalty. The king wanted to project his sovereignty. His actions speak of much of what we see in our day which includes pride in achievements and the deification of man.

1. The height and breadth of the image. A cubit is about 18 inches. Sixty cubits by six cubits corresponds to the image of the latter days in Revelation 13:14 and the worship of the Beast.
2. Those who refuse to worship the image are to be killed: Daniel 3:6; Revelation 13:15-16. Worship and submission to the images of Daniel and Revelation have political and religious ramifications.

3. The plains of Dura, probably an area on the plain outside Babylon, were where the image would be visible for miles.
 4. Pride was the motivation for the king building such an image. He saw himself as supreme ruler and his government as the only one. He wanted no detractors. He wanted everyone in the world, as seen in the image being gold from top to bottom, to follow him and his policies and religion.
- B. VS. 2, All of the top officials are required to be at the dedication of the image. The whole of government was to submit to the king, his image, and his policies. No one else mattered. In the last days during the tribulation, all people will be forced to bow down to the image of anti-Christ. His policies and religion will be universal; yet, there will be a remnant of the elect (Matthew 24:31).
- C. VS. 3, Here is a gathering of the politicians, as well as the military leaders, all in their official garb. They are at Dura for the dedication of the image and to show their willing support and worship of Nebuchadnezzar.
- D. VS. 4-5, The herald gives the order from the king.
1. VS. 4, Some see the herald as the king's Chaplain, his religious pawn who does and says as instructed. It is sad when the preacher is controlled by a certain faction in the church. The people, nations and languages speaks of the vastness of the united kingdom of the king.
 2. VS. 5, At the sound of the music from the national orchestra, the officials are to fall down and worship the image. Nebuchadnezzar was dictating worship. True worship must come from the heart and must be as the scripture says: "In spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). The music that you listen to tells a lot about your worship.
- E. VS. 6, An ultimatum was issued: obey and live, or disobey and die. A decision must be made. For the three Hebrew children, who represented the Jewish population of Babylon, their decision would have a far reaching result. Would they conform or would they stand by faith in God and not bow?

1. Most folks today are crowd followers; they have no backbone: "Everybody is doing it!"
 2. The world that we live in today is filled with secular humanism that demands that the child of God bow to socialism and secularism.
 - a. Are you willing to stand firm against the world and its lies? Are you willing to pray at school and to be one who will confront the humanist with the Bible?
 - b. How do you stand when it comes to homosexuality, gay marriage, adultery and drunkenness? Can you take the heat?
 3. "Cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace"-Nebuchadnezzar was a cruel man. Zedekiah, king of Judah, was made to watch his children put to death by Nebuchadnezzar, after which he was blinded.
- E. VS. 7, Everyone bowed with the exception of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They stood, and they stood out. Christians are held to a higher standard than the world. We are not to be worldly in dress, activity and word. Exodus 20:4-5 instructed the three Hebrew children not to worship any graven image, and they obey the commandment of God.

II. VSS. 8-12, THE IMAGE RENOUNCED

- A. VS. 8, The friends of Daniel are "accused" by the Chaldeans. The word "accused" means: "To eat the pieces of." The Chaldeans wanted to bring harm to the Jews.
 1. When you go against the crowd, when you do not conform to its ways, you often feel the heat.
 2. We need to be willing to stand out from the crowd, to be stand outs for Jesus, to be obedient to our higher authority.
- B. VS. 9, This is an appeal to the king's ego, an ego that was inflated. It was also a recognition of his claim to deity.
- C. VSS. 10-12, The agitation of the Chaldeans.

1. VSS. 10-11, The decree of Nebuchadnezzar was the result of his arrogance and pride. He had conquered nations and gobbled up the spoils of war. Because of his depraved nature, he was driven to do what so many in the past have done. Success was not enough, for the flesh cries out for more, even to be worshipped and adored. Man in his depravity thinks he is above the law of God and makes his own rules while breaking God's.
2. VS. 12, These certain Jews are the three who chose to make a stand for Jehovah God.
 - a. "Have not regarded thee"- They could not serve the image and serve the God of heaven. Their allegiance was to the true and living God. The question for you and I today is this: "Who do we owe and give our allegiance to? "Chose you this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua 24:15).
 - b. The gods of Nebuchadnezzar were false and represented the demonic force behind the Babylonian kingdom (2 Corinthians 4:3-5).

III. VSS. 13-18, THE IMAGE CONFRONTED BY FAITH

- A. VS. 13, The king was upset and went into a rage at the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to worship the image.
 1. The world throws a fit when the Christian does not bow down to its evolutionary theory or to its climate change lies. The heathen rage because they will not submit to the Word of God (Psalm 2:1-4).
 2. Can you imagine how these young men must have felt at their arrest? How could they bear up? Warren Wiersbe say: "True faith isn't frightened by threats, impressed by crowds, or swayed by superstitious ceremonies. True faith obeys the Lord and trusts Him to work out the consequences" (Vol. 3, 264).
- B. VS. 14, Note the words: "Is it true...?" How could you refuse to worship the image that I have set up? Why would you not? The world does not understand why we

refuse to fall for their glitz and glitter. We need to know what we believe and stand true to our convictions, even when they are unpopular and divisive.

- C. VS. 15, It was bow or burn, submit to the evil one or suffer the consequences. They were to be cast immediately into the fiery furnace if they would not bow. The king says: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"
1. The world does not know our God, the true and living God. It is when we stand up that He is revealed to those around us.
 2. You and I have a responsibility of getting the Gospel out to a world that asks: "Who is the God?"
- D. VS. 16, These young men did not need a conference; their minds were made up. They had decided for Jehovah a long time before. They knew the Word of God, and they could not worship any false god.
1. Young and old alike need to have the courage of their convictions.
 2. God told Joshua to, "be strong and of good courage..." (Joshua 1:9). We need to be strong and courageous in the world we live in.
- E. VS. 17, These men were not afraid to take a stand for God. How about you? They would trust Him come what may. They contrast the gods of Babylon to the God they served, knowing that their God could save them if He so chose. They served an able God, a mighty God. Dear lost friend, my Lord and Savior, my God is able to save you from hell fire. Trust Him today.
- F. VS. 18, This verse is very instructive to our generation. A generation willing to serve God as long as He does things they want Him to.
1. The question here is not, can God; but it is will God. God does not always will to keep us out of the furnace. There are times when He goes through the fire with us. Are you ready for a NO answer from God?
 2. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego believed in everlasting life, life after death. They believed in

Paradise. If they perished in the fire, they would be with the Lord and out of the hands of the king.

Conclusion: How strong is your faith? Can your faith be tested? Can it be trusted?

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