

The Most High God & Humility - Daniel Study - Chapter 4

It is obvious from reading Daniel chapter three that Nebuchadnezzar, though influenced by Daniel, did not fully embrace Daniel's God. Nebuchadnezzar built a 90-foot-high, 9-foot-wide statue made of gold, which may have resembled the one from his dream, and placed it in the plain of Dura. Then, he commanded everyone to bow down and worship the image or be thrown into the fiery furnace. In his dream, (chapter 2) he and Babylon were represented by the head made of gold, but this entire statue was made of pure gold. It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar was making a bold statement that he was not planning on giving up his power to anyone or any god.

Is there someone in your life that is fighting for control or power?

They may know the truth, but still cling to control their lives themselves! God may use you, by a test of faith, to witness to this person. Do not be afraid of the tests; God is using you to impact others.

Does control and power have a grip upon your life? How is God speaking to you through this passage?

The Fiery Furnace

Read Daniel 3:1-15. There was an official ceremony announcing worship to the statue. All the high-ranking officials were present. At the ceremony, when everyone heard the sound of the music, they were to bow and worship the statue. Anyone who did not bow would be considered a traitor and be thrown into the furnace. The king wanted total allegiance and would tolerate nothing less. Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (their Babylonian names), were faced with a life and death decision. Remember, they had high ranking positions and were treated well because of their role, but now their faith in God was being tested. They could have easily bowed down and lived a prosperous life by the world's standards, but their lives were not about prosperity in this world, and they were willing to give it all up.

When the King found out that they would not bow to the statue, he was furious. He confronted the three and reminded them of the consequence for disobeying. Put yourself in their shoes as they stand before the most powerful man on the planet.

Fiery Faith

Read Daniel 3:16-18. What faith! I am blown away by the courage of these three young men, probably just teenagers. They had fiery faith to match the fiery trial. Notice they were willing to trust God whether He saved them or not.

“The God we serve is able to save us from it (furnace), and he will rescue us from your hand, O King. But if he does not, we want you to know, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

They came through in the clutch. When their faith was on the line, they hit a home run. I am in awe whenever I read this story. This is better than the best highlight ESPN has ever seen. In the game of life, this was a monumental home run, one for the ages.

A Fantastic God

Read Daniel 3:19-30. Nebuchadnezzar became so angry, his face turned red. He ordered guards to tie up Daniel's friends and to heat the furnace to seven times the normal temperature. Nebuchadnezzar personally went to the furnace to watch them burn. The furnace was so hot, the guards died when they threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace. Once the disobedients were thrown in, the King noticed not three, but four, people walking around the furnace. The fourth looked like a son of the gods. Nebuchadnezzar called for them to come out and when they did, everyone examined them to find that not a hair on their heads was burned. They did not smell of smoke.

Note: The Babylonians believed that their gods had sons. Nebuchadnezzar saw an angel or deity (a son of the gods) assisting Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He recognized this as a divine deliverance overriding his decision to kill these three young men. Many scholars believe that this divine appearance was the pre-incarnate Jesus, the Son of God.

Nebuchadnezzar praised God and commended these men for their willingness to risk their lives for their God.

“Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel (deity) and rescued his servants! They trusted him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God”
3:28,29

Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree declaring that anyone who spoke against the God of Israel would be killed and their houses turned into rubble. God used the faith of these men to influence the most powerful man on earth. God provided grace to his people who were still under his judgment. His people lived in peace, although they were in a foreign land under Gentile rule. These men were a testimony to the King, but also to the Jews that had forsaken God. Their faith was an inspiration to trust God alone. Israel was guilty of making alliances with the Pagan nations of Assyria and Egypt for protection and prosperity. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah stood with boldness to call Israel to trust God alone and not make alliances with other nations, but they would not listen. The miracle of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was a reminder to the Jews that they should have listened to and obeyed God.

What lessons have you learned from the fiery furnace?

Are you willing to lay down all your pride and self ambition to trust God alone? If yes, write out a statement of commitment that will help keep you accountable. In this, include your non-negotiables. If you are meeting in a small group, you can craft a statement together and then be willing to stand with one another as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Memory Verse: Daniel 3:17-18 *“...the God we serve is able to save us from it (furnace), and he will rescue us from your hand, O King. But if he does not, we want you to know, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

TALKING POINTS: THE FIERY FURNACE & FIERY FAITH

Main thought:

Fiery trials require fiery faith.

Key Scripture:

Daniel 3:16-18

Discussion questions:

1. What tests your faith? What have you learned about God and yourself from the tests?
2. How can you absolutely trust God like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

COACH'S TESTIMONY: THE FIERY FURNACE & FIERY FAITH

Tommy Bowden, Former Head Football Coach University of Clemson

Tommy Bowden is an example of needing fiery faith to meet fiery trials.

The locusts are buzzing again. These creatures are a different breed—antennae and wings are replaced by notepads and recorders—although quite frankly, locusts and sports writers probably rank fairly close on Tommy Bowden's list. The noise coming from the latter is not making life any easier for Clemson's head coach.

“This is my third year on the hot seat, so I'm accustomed to it,” said Bowden, who is in his ninth year with the Tigers. “It seems like it's every odd year. Every year I don't win [Atlantic Coast Conference] Coach of the Year, it seems like I hear ‘Hot Seat.’ It's like West Virginia—you know, the locusts come every 17 years.”

Technically, West Virginia's 17-year locusts are not locusts at all, but periodical cicadas. But that's beside the point. So, too, is Bowden's success at Clemson to many denigrators. Judging by winning percentage and bowl appearances, he is one of the top coaches in the program's rich 111-year history. But that hasn't stopped some media members and Clemson fans from treating him like a piñata.

“In this profession, you are remembered for what you did last year,” Bowden said. “If you lost last year, that's what you are. If you win this year, you won't be.”

“Christianity has helped me prioritize my life,” he said. “Football is a huge priority, it's just not the priority. When I experience difficulty, I know where to turn.”

Bible Reference:

Daniel 3



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