

CALL to PRAYER -

Pray for our church that we would be strong in faith

Daniel 3:1-18 - Faith Under Fire (part 1)

Intro - Daniel 3 records one of more famous accounts in scripture. Scripture itself list the “fiery furnace” as one of the elite events of people of faith (Heb. 11:33-34). There are a lot of lessons that can be gleaned from this account with some overlooked because we easily pass by these as just *children’s stories*. But this is a faith story & real story with morals to this story. It warns us of the glaring sin of pride resides in people & governments. It encourages us to persevere in our holy faith while under societal pressure /persecution. We also see God’s miraculous preservation & a glorious proclamation of our God being the only true God. But this account is not just about the past... it is also a pattern to prepare us for what will happen in the future. This is a famous account and there just might be some new sights to see as we travel along this familiar terrain.

PRIDE

1. Chapter 3 begins with Neb making a huge image 3:1 (cubit = approx. 18”)
 - a. 10 to 1 ratio – 90’ high/9’ base obelisk like (Washington monument is 10 to 1)
 - b. 6 miles outside Babylon they found a large brick base in the middle of a plain
2. Image of gold
 - a. In Neb’s dream he was the head of gold with inferiors coming after him - 2:37-39
 - b. Neb didn’t like the fact that the dream said his kingdom wouldn’t last.
 - i. Neb makes an image in defiance of, and against, the image in his dream.
 - c. Like the *Tower of Babel*, this image was erected to make a lasting name – Gen. 11:4
 - d. *The Image* was not of a typical “god” but also represents the *government as god*.
 - e. All government leaders assembled to give allegiance - 3:2 (government as religion)
3. Pride
 - a. Proverbs 6:16-17a Top of the list of what God hates is a *haughty look / pride*.
 - b. Neb’s pride on display “*none after me....my kingdom will endure*”
 - i. “*I’m not just the head of gold, I’m the whole thing.*”
 - c. This is *Babylon’s Mystery* attitude toward the end of time - Rev. 18:7 (Is. 47:1,7-8) Ps. 10:6
 - i. a final great world kingdom will be deluded into thinking that it will be lasting.
 - ii. There will also be an image that all will be required to honor. Rev. 13:15
4. The message to be delivered to all mankind and all kingdoms.
 - a. Is. 40:6-8 1] Man & his glory is temporal 2] God determines the timing of our mortality 3] God’s Word is eternal (Nietzsche & Voltaire)
 - b. This is a message we are to major on:
 - i. There is no lasting king or kingdom in this world.
 - ii. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! (Matt. 4:17) Heb. 12:28

PEER PRESSURE

- The dedication of this image was a multi-national, multi-cultural, all-encompassing event.
 - Everybody who was anybody was in on it and involved it. 3:3, 7

- The last king of Judah may have been there at the dedication of the image.
 - Jeremiah 51:59 (a little history about the last 3 kings of Judah)
 - Neb conquered Judah in Jehoiakim's 3rd year- Dan. 1:1 (Kim reigned 11 years - 2 Kings 23:36)
 - Kim remain in power for 8 more years as Neb's vassal king
 - Kim rebelled against Neb and his son Jehoiachin only reigned 3 months
 - In Neb's 8th year, he took Jehoiachin as a captive to Babylon - 2 Kings 24:12
 - Neb makes Zedekiah the new vassal king - 2 Kings 24:17-18
 - In Zed's 4th year he travels to Babylon...maybe for the dedication of the image.
 - Neb had summoned all the rulers of the provinces - 3:2
 - It could have been in Neb's 12th year that the image is set up.
 - 10 years after the dream he had in his 2nd year - 2:1
- 3 faithful guys (in their 20's) standing alone when everyone else is bowing low
 - The royal entourage from the home country plus all the other Jews in captivity
 - All the people from the office
 - Everybody bowed but these 3 - 3:7 Imagine the pressure!
- Peer pressure is real pressure
 - Peter felt it. *"Are you one of His followers?"*
 - Society will pressure us to conform Rom. 12:2
 - The call of the Christian is a call to non-conformity.
 - James 4:4 2 Cor. 6:17 Matt. 7:13-14

PERSECUTED BUT PERSISTANT IN FAITH

1. They were invited to the party but didn't join in the party...so they were persecuted
 - a. 3:12 2 Tim. 3:12
2. Believers should expect it and rejoice in it Matt. 5:10-12.
 - a. They wouldn't bow before temporal kingdom but they inherited an eternal one
 - b. 1 Peter 4:12-14 James 1:2
3. Trials prove and mature our faith
 - a. James 1:2-4 1 Peter 1:7 Rom. 5:3-5
 - b. God has been preparing these 3 for this moment for years
 - i. Captivity, forced assimilation, trial of food, life threatened
 - ii. Their previous trial prepared them for this trial.
4. God provided the courage and the right words.
 - a. 3:16-18
 - b. Matt. 10:18-20 Mark 13:11 Luke 21:12-15
 - c. MLKJ (letter from Birmingham jail) *"one who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty"*
 - d. M. Henry - *"God will either deliver us from death or in death"*
5. The victory that overcomes the world - our faith 1 John 5:4
 - a. Their faith was tried...their faith was active...their faith overcame when:
 - taken as captives... made eunuchs.... re-education... food and drink ... tyrannical decrees (lives threatened)obeying God not government (execution threatened again)