

STORY

The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace - (Daniel 3)

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus, grant me grace to bear whatever persecution may come for Your Name's sake, knowing that no trial can be hotter than the fiery furnace!

VOCABULARY

satrap - A prince with little authority serving an absolute ruler

OUTER AIM

To understand our Lord's training program for His own.

INNER AIM

To realize that our Lord never tests us beyond what we are able to bear.

BACKGROUND

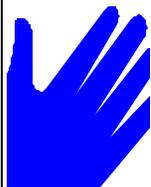
Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great colossus, with him and his empire being the head of gold.

Account - Nebuchadnezzar made an image completely overlaid with gold--not solid gold.

Dimensions--90 feet high and nine feet wide. Erected in the Plain of Dure--province of Babylon. Assembling of all political personages for the dedication of the image. At the sound of the music, all were to fall down and worship the image. The penalty for failing to worship the image was death in the fiery furnace.

The image - represented the man-made god--King Nebuchadnezzar. All the nations had their gods. The gods of the Babylonians outranked the gods of the other nations because they had given Nebuchadnezzar the victory over all other nations and their gods. From worshipping the gods of Babylon, it became easy for Nebuchadnezzar to cross the line and consider himself to be the chief god to be worshiped. So the command to worship the image was a command to acknowledge the gods of Babylon as superior to all other gods and Nebuchadnezzar as the highest and greatest of all gods on the earth. There is reason to believe that King Nebuchadnezzar erected this massive image after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. He, as god, had conquered the God of the Jews. The bowing was thus a religious and civic function. Failing to bow would be the double crime of blasphemy and rebellion.

The Accusation - Certain Chaldeans accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of failing to fall down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar. Accusers were political opponents of the three men. Though enraged by the fact that anyone would dare to disobey his command, Nebuchadnezzar sensed the reason for the charges brought against the three men. He offered them a second chance.



STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, grant me grace to obey the Holy Spirit when He lays on my heart the words of the Scriptures.

PRESENTATION

V. 16: "we have no need to answer you in this matter." No arrogance or fanaticism! The three are simply acknowledging the correction of the indictment made against them and declaring that there is no defense or apology that need be made. They cast themselves utterly upon God. It is a case where they were compelled to serve God rather than man, and for their noble faith they are evidently honored by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews as those who by faith "quenched the violence of fire," Heb. 11:34,"

V. 17: "If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us..." There is here no doubting the omnipotence of the Lord God--His ability to save. The reference is to the "ethical ability" i.e., "the ability limited by the divine holiness and righteousness, not the omnipotence of God as such,"

The Lord could have saved all martyrs down through the ages, but he chose to let most die for their faith. The three repeat their refusal to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar 's image.

Deliverance-Nebuchadnezzar is furious. The furnace was heated the furnace seven times hotter. The three men were bound in their clothes, and thrown into the furnace by Nebuchadnezza's mighty men. The furnace was shaped like a beehive, fueled from the top with an opening on ground level. Mission accomplished, but outcome was entirely different from what Nebuchadnezzar expected.

Nebuchadnezzar, and apparently only he, saw four men walking around in the furnace. The fourth was described by Nebuchadnezzar as "a son of the gods," actually the pre-incarnate Son of God.

Nebuchadnezzar called to the three men to come out of the furnace. There were no bodily burns, their hair was not singed, garments were not burned, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Reaction of Nebuchadnezzar -- His decree: "...that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap, because there is no other God who can deliver like this," v. 29.

Compare Nebuchadnezzar 's word after Daniel revealed his dream and gave the interpretation thereof, 2:41: "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets." Nebuchadnezzar never rose above pagan polytheism.

APPLICATION

1. In our society the parallel of pagan polytheism with its many gods is an appeal to a generic god. As Nebuchadnezzar considered Jahve as one of the gods, on occasion even the greatest of the gods, so the Holy Trinity was considered to be one form of "god."

2. Comfort: No matter what the situation may be, our God is able to save us, but we must always prayer, "Thy will be done."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Ps. 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble,

I Cor. 10:13 - God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

HYMN CHOICES

In the Hour of Trial - TLH #516

If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee - TLH #518