

DISCERNING DANIEL

Trial By Fire

Text: Daniel 3:1-21

Introduction: The portion of God`s word through Daniel that we examine today is probably the best known of all the stories and prophecies of this great man of God. It is found in the third chapter, and I call it the “Trial By Fire.”

When the events of Daniel chapter 2 came to an end, all was well with our four young men who had been _____ and brought from _____ to Babylon: Daniel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah. They had been made a part of the _____, the wise men of Babylon. They had proven themselves as men of faith and prayer. They had also been instruments to demonstrate the great wisdom of the One True and Living God, who not only created the world but who _____ its destiny and the destiny of all who live upon it.

Following their revelation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s startling dream and its interpretation, Daniel and his friends were all promoted. Daniel was made to be the _____ of the Magi and became a personal counselor to the king. Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah, known in Babylon as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were given authority over the _____ of Babylon. Thus they served in the government of the powerful King Nebuchadnezzar for the next _____ years, all the while maintaining their faith in the one true God.

Later, and at a time when apparently Daniel was out of the country on a mission for the king, an event occurred which brought fear and trembling to the heart of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

Daniel 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Outside the city of Babylon, on the plain of Dura, a large circular plain often used for _____ events, an unusual construction project had begun. The pagan King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his artisans to build a golden statue _____ feet wide and _____ feet tall. As the colossus rose from the ground day by day during the construction, the rumor abounded that Nebuchadnezzar was building it so that everyone in the kingdom might _____ the image in honor of Nebuchadnezzar and his pagan gods.

When the structure was finally complete, the worst fears of the trio were confirmed. Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed a day in which every government _____ would join him in a special place before the statue on the plain in the presence of all the people. Nebuchadnezzar had assembled the royal _____ and before all the people had his heralds proclaim,

Daniel 3:4-6 4 “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds

of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

So when Nebuchadnezzar gave the signal and the royal orchestra played, all the people gathered on the vast plain before the imposing image and powerful king, _____ in worship of Nebuchadnezzar and his gods. That is, all but three: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Others of the Magi, probably _____ of the Jews in their midst, reported the lack of homage paid by the three. They were summoned into the presence of the king.

Daniel 3:13-14 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

A better translation of “is it true?” is “is it _____?” that you do not worship the gold image? Here was a chance to escape, to _____. To say they did not understand or make some other excuse. Nebuchadnezzar continued,

Daniel 3:15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

Everyone knew the _____ Nebuchadnezzar was talking about. It also was there on the plain of Dura and its customary use was for the making of _____ for the vast construction projects of the kingdom. But it had been used before as a chamber of _____, and the Babylonians were known for burning their prisoners to death. This was no idle threat but a very present danger, and the three men knew it well. Yet their response was calm and determined.

Daniel 3:16-18 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Notice that the response of these three faithful men was not _____ or rude. Their faith and their loyalty was in God. They knew God could deliver them from the furnace, but they did not know for sure that He _____. They knew for sure He would deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar, whether through a miracle or _____.

Take note also that they were not _____. They were willing to _____ for doing right. This is also what the _____ did later when commanded not to preach in the name of Jesus. They willingly accepted their _____ sentence from those in authority. (Acts 4-5)

Daniel 3:19-21 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and

cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

And why did the Almighty God cause this account to be recorded in His Word? Certainly not merely for our _____ like some short story to be read with amusement and forgotten. He has preserved it for us because it communicates a _____ sorely needed by every man, woman, teenager, boy, and girl on the face of the earth.

Here it is. Listen; write it down; memorize it; know it. **PRINCIPLE: GOD PERMITS _____ IN THE LIVES OF HIS CHILDREN.**

God _____ this trial by fire to come upon His children.

- He could have _____ the building of the image.
- He could have _____ the furnace.
- He could have had them to be _____ as was Daniel.
...but instead, _____ permitted it to happen!

When adversity happens, especially when it is of great _____, enough that we would label it tragic, well-meaning people will sometimes say, “Don’t _____ God. God did _____ do this.”

Sometimes, that statement is true in the sense that God did not _____ it to happen. A drunk driver hits a teen on a bicycle riding to church and kills him. Did God _____ that to happen? Of course not. God condemns _____, and if the man had not _____ God, he would not have killed the teen. In the law, God even prescribed the death penalty for _____ homicide in an attempt to cause people to be very _____ and protective of life. So, in this sense, we can very honestly say, “God did not _____ that.”

However, I believe that this kind of analysis and comment (which at times I myself have been guilty of making) – I believe this kind of comment _____ the primary truth we all need to understand, even when we are in the midst of pain over some tragic happening.

It may be correct to say, “God did not _____ this,” but, concerning all things, including the most tragic of tragedies, we must admit “God _____ this to happen.” We must remember:

- God is all _____ (omnipotent). He can do anything.
- God is all _____ (omniscient). He knows everything, including the future.
- God is everywhere _____ (omnipresent). There is no place God is not.

The consequence of this truth is that nothing happens without the _____ of God. God can _____ anything from happening that He chooses.

Rather than seeking to be comforted or trying to comfort others by _____ God of responsibility for adversity and tragedy, a more biblical approach is to remember that

God has _____ and _____ that go beyond our limited knowledge and understanding.

Isaiah 55:9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

One of the primary purposes of Scripture is to reveal to us the _____ of God and to teach us His _____ and show us His _____. The more we learn of these things revealed in the Scripture, the more we can _____ the higher purposes of the Almighty. When we see what God did in the lives of others who lived before us, we can understand more clearly what He is doing in our own lives. When we read in Scripture why God did certain things in the past, we can discern much about what He is doing in our day and time.

In our study of Daniel next week, we are going to examine three _____ of God in allowing adversity in the lives of His children. We will also consider the marvelous, miraculous outcome of this particular adversity in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

For now, we should ask this question: _____ else among believers in Scripture did God allow to experience great adversity, even tragedy in their lives?

What about _____?

- He was sold by his brothers into slavery.
- He was falsely accused and _____.

How about _____?

- Sent by God to preach a message for _____ years that no one believed.
- He was ridiculed and persecuted.
- His written prophecy was _____.
- He was falsely accused and imprisoned.
- He died in a _____ land he did not want to go to.

And consider _____.

- _____ himself kept trying to kill Him.
- Most of his family did not believe Him.
- Most of the people he grew up with _____ Him.
- All His life, He was _____ and rejected.
- He was falsely accused, imprisoned, and crucified.

Who else comes to mind? The answer to this question will help prepare you to consider these three purposes for God _____ adversity to come into the lives of His children.