

#6 - Standing Up in a Smackdown World

9/28/2008 - Jim Johnson/Daniel 3:1-30

Thus far we have watched as Daniel and his friends have stayed true to God and yet succeed in their world. But now as we come to chapter 3, we encounter an episode where the guys fail to change the course of things.

I. The _____ - 3:1-11

In cp. 2, the King had a dream of an enormous statue. Each different metallic portion represented a world empire. The Babylonian empire as signified by the head of gold. In chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar built a statue much like the one in his dream. It was most likely an image of the King himself measuring 90' tall by 9' wide. (1) He then gathered together all leaders and administrators in his Kingdom. (2-3). They were required to worship the image as if it were a God.

Why? In cp. 2, Daniel told the king that though he was the head of gold, his Kingdom would eventually be destroyed by another kingdom. The king evidently decided that Babylon should rule forever instead. He made an image that was gold from head to toe, signifying the continuance of his Kingdom and then he made worship of that image a test of loyalty to him and Babylon. (4-6) Not everyone, however, was willing to worship the image (8) The young men from Israel (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) did not. They were quickly outed by the Chaldeans who were motivated by jealousy. (8-12)

The problem: The King wished to be _____ as God.

The King made an image of himself. He elevated himself to the place of God. And then he demanded that every one of his subjects demonstrate their loyalty – by falling down and worshipping his image.

Some of us have authorities in our lives that tend to elevate themselves to the status of God. They are full of themselves. The only opinions that matter are theirs. They delight in yanking on our chain—just because they can. Some of us learn to cope and work around a person like that. But what if they should get up in our face and demand something of us that we should not and cannot give?

II. How do you deal with a guy who thinks he is God?

A. _____ to give him what belongs to God. 13-17

The King confronted his disobedient subjects. He offered them a second chance to worship (13-14) but he also repeated his threat to burn them alive if they failed to do so. He even poked at their faith in Yahweh suggesting that even He could not save them. (15) He knew they were devout Jews and refused to worship the image for religious reasons. (Ex 20:4-5) The young men finally spoke (16). They refused to debate the matter. They refused to bow down and worship the statue.

The first thing you do with a guy who thinks he is God is to refuse to give him what belongs to God. Don't give them the worship that belongs to God. Don't obey them if it would cause you to disobey God. Don't give them the time that belongs to God, or the portion of your money that belongs to God; or the priority in your life that belongs to God.

B. _____ to face the consequences. 18-21

These guys stood their ground and gave an eloquent and moving defense. They told him that God was fully able to deliver them from the furnace – but that He may not. He may allow them to perish in that fire. Whatever the case they refused to worship the golden image.” (18)

Biblical faith recognizes that God is able – surely able to do anything above and beyond what we might think or ask. But it is also a faith that recognizes that He may not choose to give us what we want. Faith is being able to trust God to do the right thing no matter what. Faith is choosing to do the right thing no matter what.

The King was enraged. The furnace was superheated. And the King's most valiant soldiers dumped them into it. The flames were so vicious that it took the lives of those who assisted (a proof by the way that this furnace was an exceedingly deadly place) They were forced to endure the consequences of their brave refusal. (19-23)

C. _____ the Lord to walk with you through the fire. -24-27

The king looked through the portal of the furnace and watched the fire at work. Instead of men writhing in agony he saw them comfortably walking about. The ropes that bound them had been burned off, but they seemed unharmed. - Most odd was that there was a 4th person in the furnace. The King described him as *“like a son of the gods!”* This was a visit from the pre-incarnate Christ. Jesus is God eternal and we know that there were many times in OT history when He made a special guest appearance in order to encourage or to save his people. This was one of those precious times. (24-25) - The King was shocked by the whole episode. He summoned them out. They were inspected. Their hair was not singed. Their clothes were not damaged in fact they did not even have the smell of fire on them. - The three young men must have marveled themselves. Surviving the fire was tremendous but the greater encouragement must have been walking with the Lord through the fire. It was His presence with them that gave them such peace. They knew that whether they survived the flames or not, it would be OK, because the Lord God was there with them. (Isa 43:2-3)

CONCLUSION

That's how we deal with a guy who thinks he is God. We refuse to give Him what belongs to God; we prepare to face the consequences and we expect the Lord to walk with us through the fire. It doesn't always work out as wonderfully as it did for those 3. Sometimes we refuse and then are forced to suffer the consequences and there is no rescue. However, even then it's OK, because the Lord will be walking with us through that fire.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. What kinds of things does our world tend to demand from us that ought to be given to God instead?
2. Where do you feel this pressure the most?
3. What is it about the Lord's presence that seems to tame the fiery trials of life?