

#7 - Standing Up in a Smackdown World

10/03/2008 - Jim Johnson/Daniel 4:1-37

Chapters 1-3 of Daniel are more about King Nebuchadnezzar than Daniel –a chronicle of his spiritual journey. There was distance between Nebuchadnezzar and God and God was trying to eliminate it. He put 4 godly people in the King's service, spoke to him through a dream and demonstrated his wonderful deliverance power through the fiery furnace. The King saw and was impacted but he never really made a commitment. The things he valued most was personal comfort and success (Dan. 4:4) He had both. How long would God chase him? How far will God go to get to a person?

A. God _____ his peace. 5-18

Scholars tell us that some 30 years after the fiery furnace the king experienced another terrifying dream (5) It involved a mighty tree that provided shelter for the earth. The tree was felled and the person it represented began to act like a beast grazing on the grass and sleeping in the wild. - God was still after Nebuchadnezzar, so he gave him a dream that greatly disturbed him. It deeply troubled him. He suspected that the dream was about him. What he really wanted from Daniel was to know if it was or not. - That is how far God will go to get a person. He will disturb our peace. He will strip away the things that give us a false sense of peace and happiness and security.

B. God _____ him of the price. 19-27

As the dream was revealed, Daniel became genuinely concerned about the welfare of his king. (19) He told the king that the big tree represented the King and his Kingdom. But at some point – the tree would be felled. God would cause the King to experience some type of psychotic break causing him to think that he was an animal in the fields, eating the grass, living under the stars and covered each night with the dew for a period of 7 years. (20-25) The reason for this was to cause him to humble himself before God – and acknowledge God as the ruler over mankind. (25b) The stump is the promise that Nebuchadnezzar would eventually regain his sanity and be restored to his throne once he came to submit himself to God. - After rendering the dream Daniel pleaded with the King – that he would repent and turn to God before the dream took place so that he might be spared the ordeal. That's how far God will go to get to a person? He will warn about the price of sin that we will be required to pay.

C. God _____ him of his pride - 28-33

God allowed another 12 months for the King to respond to His warning, however, the King was founding boasting on his rooftop instead. He was enthralled with what he had accomplished in the great city of Babylon. (28-30) In the middle of his boast, God spoke to him and declared that judgment had come. (31-

33) Perhaps it was hearing the voice of God that caused him to snap for immediately he experienced a psychotic break and began to think and act like a beast. The folks in the palace secluded him in some royal garden. Daniel 5:21 tells us that he hung out with donkeys. He became more grotesque in appearance day after day thus nauseating others. The condition persisted for 7 years, long enough for his hair to get long and matted and his nails to grow out and curl up like claws. God caused the mightiest most powerful man in the world to become a sickening embarrassing shell of a human being. That's how far God will go to get a person.

He will take us as _____ as we need to go. God did this to him – because he refused to give God the honor He alone deserved. Friend, if you are resisting God – please understand that the consequences can be stiff. God is willing to do whatever he needs to do to bring you to a point of brokenness.

D. God _____ the repentant– 34-37

During a moment of lucidity, the King turned his eyes and his heart to heaven and repented and his sanity was restored. (34) God is so good. He is always there waiting and ready to receive us when we finally come to see how desperate we are. He truly came to faith in the Lord. For the first time in his life he became a first hand worshipper of God (34b). Another evidence is that he was the one that composed the words of chapter 4. Cp. 4 is essentially a royal decree which was circulated throughout his Kingdom. (1-3) a decree where the king told of his own obstinance and his arrogance, and the humiliating judgment that God brought upon him and how God saved him when he turned to Him. Humility like that only comes to a man who is truly right with God

APPLICATION

For those who near to God – We can change this Smackdown world one person at a time. Daniel served the king for over 30 years and stood firmly on his godly ethics even when he had to resist the king in order to do so. At times Daniel and friends spoke very frankly to the King about their God. (cp. 3) Daniel obviously cared about the king. He was grieved to reveal the dream of chapter 4 to him. He wished it upon the Kings' enemies. Daniel no doubt prayed that his King might come to faith. Scholars suspect that it was Daniel's influence that helped the King through his 7 years of insanity. Most Kings would have been deposed but Daniel saw to his protection and arranged for the continued management of the Kingdom. Daniel was always there. His witness was consistent. He care for the lost king was authentic. God certainly used all of that to bring the King to his sense. This is what we need to do in our Smackdown world - To influence and love the people around us to Christ. As people change, culture changes.

For the one who is distant from God – there is only one application here. God is after you. He continues to relentlessly pursue you. He will do whatever he needs to do. He will disturb your peace. He has warned you of what will come if you do not change. He will eventually strip you of all that is important to you if you defy Him. He will take you as low as you need to go. Maybe it is time for you to turn your eyes to heaven.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

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

1. Can God still be a loving and compassionate god, and yet to a man what He did to the King?
2. What was the King's essential sin? To what degree do I share that sin?
3. In what specific ways do you think the witness of Daniel and his friends affected the King?