

Cool in the Furnace

Daniel 3:1-30



- » Story set in Babylon during the exile (modern day Iran)
- » The text raises the question of identity
- » What gives our lives clarity, meaning, vision?

- » Two famous narrative units in Daniel
 - chapter 3 “Furnace”
 - chapter 6 “Lions den”
- » Both deal with the issue of identity

1. The Initial Crisis (v1-7)

King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

... you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.

Daniel 3:1, 5b-6

- » The youngest and most talented youth of Israel chosen by the Babylonians to be trained by them – a process of integration (1:3-4)
- » Daniel interprets a troubling dream for the king which causes he and his friends to be promoted to positions of power (Ch. 2)

- » Nebuchadnezzar has a massive obelisk made and raised up in the suburbs of Babylon
- » He orders that all of his leaders bow down and give loyalty to the statue
- » Probably more a political act insisting on unification of diverse peoples than worship

II. Resistance (v8-18)

“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

Daniel 3:12

- » The 3 young Jewish men refuse to fall down and worship an idol
- » They are reported to the king by their accusers
- » The king gives them another chance and challenges them; “who is the God that will deliver you?” (v15)

- » The men respond with a declaration of trust in God (v16-18)
- » They do not presume on God’s intervention but they refuse to bow down to an idol

“If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

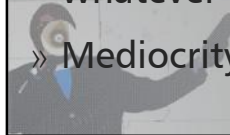
Daniel 3:17-18

- » The 3 young men know the Torah
 - » Exodus 20:1-4 – no worship of idols
 - » Also Shema – Deuteronomy 6:4-5

- » The men refuse to compromise with the king displaying a greater purpose & vision for life
- » They display great conviction in their faith

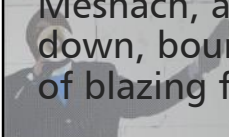


- » It speaks to our tendency to drift into apathy
- » We lose our direction
- » Perhaps we settle for whatever is the going trend
- » Mediocrity becomes the norm



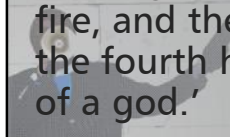
III. Punishment (v19-25)

... the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

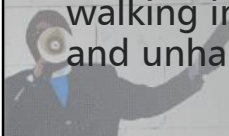


King Nebuchadnezzar said to his counsellors, 'Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?' They answered the king, 'True, O king.' He replied, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.'

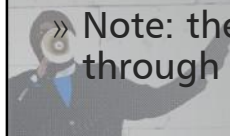
Daniel 3:22b-23, 24b-25



- » The 3 men are bound and thrown into the oven
- » The fire is so great that it kills the attending guards
- » The king sees the 3 men walking in the oven unbound and unharmed



- » They are joined by a 4th person – "image of a God"
- » This speaks of God's presence with us amidst the storm
- » Note: the 3 men still pass through the storm



But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O
Jacob, he who formed you,
O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have
redeemed you; I have called
you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the
waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they
shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire
you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not
consume you.

Isaiah 43:1-2

King's Response & Repentance (v26-30)

» The king orders the men to
come out of the oven – they
are completely unharmed
(v27b)

» The king acknowledges their
faith and trust in their God
(v28b)

» The king ends his statement
with an acknowledgement of
their God's great power
"For there is no other god who
is able to deliver in this way"
(v29b)

» The king has sufficient
awareness to change his
condemnation to praise and
ultimately promotes them (v30)

» God is not finished with king
Nebuchadnezzar – his
journey of faith goes deeper

» The losing of his mind (Ch 4)
and his eventual coming to
clarity and understanding of
God (v36-37)

» We are reminded to
consider our true calling

- » What is our centre or core?
- » Pursue our deepest
connections with God
- » Claim our true identity as
his sons & daughters

» What are the key elements that help you in establishing your identity?

» In what ways do you experience God's presence in the storms of life?

