CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 17 2024

Scripture Story: Daniel 3.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 41.

choose your kingdom



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keytext

"Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."

(Daniel 3:28, NIV)

flashlight

"In the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily. . . . He who walked with the Hebrew [youth] in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. . . . Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself . . . able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 513).

what do you think?

Circle A if you agree, and D if you disagree, with the statements below. Then write a number between one (very little) and five (very much) for how strongly you agree or disagree.

A D ___ When with a small group of close friends, it would be relatively easy for me to do what I thought was right, even if they didn't.

A D ___ If I were in a large group with none of my friends, it would be difficult for me to do what I thought was right if everyone else didn't think the same way.

A D ___ I am fine doing whatever my group of friends thinks is best as long as they are Christians.

INTO THE STORY

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. . . .

"Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do. . . . Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.' . . .

"At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. . . . 'Your majesty has issued a decree. . . . But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty.'. . .

"Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?'. . .

"Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'

"Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. . . . He . . . commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. . . . The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

"Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?'

". . .'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.' "

(Daniel 3:1-25, NIV)

did you know?

The term *theophany* means "appearances of God." There are several foreshadowings of God or the preincarnate Christ in a visible form in the Old Testamant. This story of His appearance in the fiery furnace is one of them. Nebuchadnezzar probably did not "recognize" the Son of God (verse 25) in the sense that he was given knowledge about what Jesus would look like when He took human form many years later. But Ellen White shares in our chapter for this week that the Hebrew young men had shared about the expected coming of the Son of God. And they represented by their lives "the principles of righteousness" so much that Nebuchadnezzar recognized their companion in the flames.

OUT OF THE STORY

Whose original idea was the image in this story (see Daniel 2:28, 31)?

_____

Compare the image from the dream in chapter 2 and the image in this passage. What are the similarities? The differences?

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_____

In whose kingdom does this story take place? Who were the subjects of this kingdom?

_____

_____

To what kingdom did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego belong?

_____

What information in the story supports your answer?

_____

Why do you think the three said, "We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter" to the king? Were they being insubordinate?

_____

When is it necessary to resist the prevailing influences in society? What influences should you resist? Explain.

_____

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What did the test of the furnace prove in the end? Who was in control of what went on there? Has your faith ever been tested in the "furnace" of troubles and difficulties? Have you relied on God to carry you through that time of testing?

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punch lines

"They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers" **(Revelation 17:14, NIV).**

"He deposes kings and raises up others" **(Daniel 2:21, NIV).**

"Without inquiry he shatters the mighty and sets up others in their place" **(Job 34:24, NIV).**

"Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever" **(Psalm 136:3, NIV).**

"God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords" **(1 Timothy 6:15, NIV).**

further insight

"As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be filled with His love, satisfied with His presence. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331

Sabbath

Read Daniel 3:16.

Look over the statements in *What Do You Think?* and give some careful and honest thought about how you would respond in similar situations. Think of times in the past, or imagine situations in the future, that might test your response to these statements. The young men in today's Bible verse were not being arrogant. They knew they were guilty of the charge, but didn't feel that they were guilty of insubordination to the kingdom in which they were functioning, or any unrighteous action. Why do you think they felt that way?

Sunday

Read Revelation 17:14.

Read *Into the Story* and then thoughtfully answer the questions in *Out of the Story.* Who was in charge in this story? To what kingdom were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego giving due respect? Consider where the original idea of a statue representing kingdoms came from. Who was really in charge of the fiery furnace and of the people in it? If you were faced with the choice of submitting to earthly kingdoms versus submitting to God's kingdom, to what authority or power would you submit? Explain.

Monday

Read Daniel 3:28.

Consider the *Key Text.* Why do you think it was so easy for Nebuchadnezzar to make such a demand about who deserved respect and worship after the furnace incident? What previously gained knowledge do you think Nebuchadnezzar had about God? What previous experience do you think the young men had that would cause them to trust God's plan even though they weren't sure He would rescue them?

Tuesday

Read Nahum 1:7.

The *Flashlight* quotation tells us that we will face similar tests of our trust in God. What might give you the courage to act as the young men did in this story? What might you be able to do to strengthen that faith to enter in the kingdom with the more powerful ruler when the time came?

Wednesday

Read Haggai 2:7.

In the *Further Insight* section of the lesson the quote by Ellen G. White is from *The Desire of Ages*, which tells us about Jesus' life. Today's Bible verse tells us why she named her book as she did. Jesus is who we desire, need, and the one who gives us peace. When we are in our own fiery furnace and call out our need to Him, He will provide just as He did for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Do you trust that Jesus will provide for you? Is Jesus your Desire of Ages? Read this week's *Punch Lines.* Do they encourage you to rely on God and His Son to provide for you in your time of need? Who would you rather give your ultimate allegiance to—someone whose guards were killed getting close to a fire, or Someone who kept His subjects from even smelling like smoke after they had been hanging out in the middle of the fire?

Thursday

Read Romans 12:1, 2.

Even though you may not have to choose between allegiance to God's kingdom and allegiance to an earthly government, situations come up all the time when you have to choose between faithfulness to God and the secular influences of contemporary society. For instance, when you are with a group of friends that has a "leader" other than yourself, how easy is it for you to choose not to go along with something the group decides to do? What other situations can you think of that might test your allegiance to God's kingdom? How might it help you if you thought about the "ruler" or "leader" that was actually the more powerful? (Write your answer in the Notes section in the back of this study guide.)

Friday

Read Matthew 6:33.

Draw a big circle, and around the outside write "Kingdom of God." Now draw a medium-sized circle in the middle of the larger circle. Label it with the name of the country in which you live. Then draw a smaller circle in the middle of the medium-sized circle. Write your name inside that circle. That is how things would ideally line up in this world if earthly governments or kingdoms acknowledged who was really in charge of them (refer to the *Punch Lines*). Draw these circles again, but make the medium-sized circle partly inside of and partly outside of the "Kingdom of God" circle. In this new graphic, where will you put yourself? If you are part of the kingdom that is not completely lined up with God's kingdom anymore, are you still part of God's kingdom? It, of course, depends exactly how you drew the circles, but you can see where problems might arise. Draw another one of these representations and label it according to the Bible story today. Can you see now why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said what they said in Daniel 3:16?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 41.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.