

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Stand Or Bow

Dear Friend,

Have you ever thought; “I know all there is to know about a particular verse, or chapter, or event from the Bible”? That seems to be a common misconception that the enemy regularly tries to get over on unsuspecting Christians. We should never approach God’s word supposing in advance that we already have all the revelation contained in a single verse or event. I have found myself struggling at times to read a verse because it has become so familiar to me that my mind jumps ahead to the next word without taking time to **appreciate** what is being said.

It’s this familiarity with God’s word that can easily lull a person into complacency thinking: “I know all there is to know about this verse.” We need to settle it once and for all in our own minds that we will **never** totally exhaust the revelation knowledge contained in any part of God’s word.

God and His word are one. Just as it is impossible to come to the end of God, it is equally impossible to exhaust the depths of revelation in any part of His word. No matter how many times a person may hear or say the words of John 3:16 there will always be something new and fresh for them to receive: **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** Look at those words and allow the truth to wash over you as though you are reading it for the first time.

Man’s soul is so clever. When it sees a verse like this it immediately begins to reassure us that we have already read it and we know all there is to know about it. It’s our spirit that must rise up and tell our soul to shut up and read it again because there is more here than meets the eye. There is an entire message here about the spirit taking ascendancy over the soul, but since that’s not the goal of this message suffice it to say that in order to excel in the things of God we must never allow ourselves to assume we have gleaned all there is to glean from any part of God’s word.

With that in mind, I would like to turn your attention to an event from the Old Testament that most everyone is very familiar with, the three Hebrew children and their experience in the fiery furnace. This can be found in Daniel 3. Allow me to set the scene for you. At this time Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had fought against Jerusalem and God had given Jerusalem over to Nebuchadnezzar because of their disobedience. Nebuchadnezzar, who was an ungodly king, decided that he would commission the building of a golden image. (Daniel 3:1)

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height is three score cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.”

The height of this image was 90 feet and the breadth of it was 9 feet. Let's put that in perspective; the Lincoln Memorial is 99 feet tall. Imagine having an image 9 feet wide and almost as tall as the Lincoln Memorial, made of gold. When the sun was shining bright in the sky that image had to look like it was electrified. You certainly could not say that you didn't know it existed or where it was located. I would assume that this image stood higher than anything else in the area.

Isn't it interesting that this image was erected in the same general vicinity as the tower of Babel, described in Genesis 11? I believe it is noteworthy that the ungodliness demonstrated thousands of years earlier by the inhabitants who built a high place for the purpose of idol worship was once again building an image of gold to be worshipped. Without God, man will always gravitate towards ungodliness.

Once the golden image was erected, the time came for the dedication celebration. It was at this point that the decree was made that when the music was played that all would bow before the image or immediately be cast into the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:5-6)

“That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. (6) And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. “

The golden image is complete and everyone has gathered for the dedication ceremony. The decree is made that when the music is played everyone will bow and worship the golden image. What do you think was going through the minds

of the people, particularly the Hebrews who had been enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar? They knew the commandment in the law not to have any other gods before the one true and living God. But, to follow God's commandment would mean they would be thrown into the fiery furnace.

Picture the scene, you are surrounded by multitudes of people who are about to bow themselves to the ground and worship a golden image, which you know is an abomination to God. All you have to do is get down on your knees and you will live and not suffer the consequences. Suddenly, the music begins and the moment is upon you. As far as your eyes can see, the people are bowing themselves to the ground. Some of your fellow Hebrews must have followed suit and bowed down with their captors. Now it's your turn, what are you going to do?

Thank God for three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to follow the crowd and bow down to the golden idol. They stood their ground while the rest bowed themselves to the image. Picture a sea of people all face down to the ground on bended knee and three Hebrews standing. You know they had to have one thought after another running through their minds. "What's going to happen to us next?" "I wonder what that fiery furnace is going to feel like." "Maybe Nebuchadnezzar will change his mind." Thought after thought raced through their minds.

I think we forget that these three were people just like us. They rolled out of bed that morning with no thought of being faced with a life or death decision. Now, they are right in the middle of conflict because of their decision to follow Jesus. If I were there I would hope that I would be one of the three and not one of the masses facing the ground. Don't you know that these three were looking around at the backsides of the people who were bowed to the ground? Some of them they most likely knew. **"How come they bowed down? Am I doing the right thing?"**

As much as they tried to remain calm, I wouldn't be surprised if they didn't have to fight the urge to drop down with everyone else and save themselves. Possibly, they remained calm, cool and collected knowing that God was their protector. Whatever the case, the anxiety of the prospects of being cast into a fiery furnace had to have been weighing heavy on their emotions. But even at that, when they were given one last opportunity to bow they respond with these words. (Daniel 3:16-18)

"...Oh Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. (17) If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the

burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, oh king. (18) But if not, be it known unto thee, oh king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

I love to hear their conviction and confidence in the delivering power of God, whom they trusted to deliver them out of the fiery furnace. They know that God is not subordinate to the decisions of this mad man and that no matter how highly Nebuchadnezzar thinks of himself there is one much greater.

This is the point where those who truly believe are separated from those who are uncertain. Anyone uncertain of the delivering power of God is face down and worshipping a false god. Only those whose heart is set on God are able to withstand the pressure to conform. But look at the reward that awaits you. (Daniel 3:24-25)

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, ‘Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said unto the king, ‘True, oh king.’ (25) He answered and said, ‘Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’ ”

I have always wondered how Nebuchadnezzar knew what the Son of God looked like. No matter how he knew, the point here is that Nebuchadnezzar is now faced with either accepting or rejecting the existence of the one true God. Because of the commitment of these three, who willingly walked into what appeared to be certain death, Nebuchadnezzar saw the delivering power of the one true God.

One point that must be made here is that they did have to go into the furnace. Sometimes we think, as Christians, that there shouldn't ever be any furnaces that we must walk into. The fact is that at times we do have to go into difficult situations, but know this. God is right there with us in the midst of whatever we are faced with.

The bottom line is, Nebuchadnezzar was given the opportunity to see the delivering power of God because of one reason, the three Hebrews were willing to stand for what they knew was right. My final point is this, we are going to be faced with many opportunities to stand for God or to bow in fear and unbelief. The choice will always be ours. I believe that in order to stand in the face of dire circumstances or life's choices, we must know Him and not just know about Him. When we know God and know His nature and how much He loves us, we will

see these times as opportunities for God to introduce Himself to others through our actions.

I hope this encourages you to pursue a personal fellowship with God because the day will come when you too will have to choose whether or not you are going to stand in faith or bow in unbelief.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins