

OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Green Mountain 1st Ward, Lakewood, Colorado

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Lesson 45: "If I Perish, I Perish," (Daniel 1; 3; 6; Esther 3–5; 7–8)

Introduction



Detail from "Esther", Francois Leon Benouville, 1844

As an exceptional son or daughter of God, you are sorely needed. There is an urgent need for men and women who will stand for principles against the growing pressures to compromise those very principles. Men and women are required who will act nobly and courageously for what the Lord has defined as right, not for what is politically correct or socially acceptable. We need individuals who have the spiritual, righteous influence that will motivate others to enduring good.

Richard G. Scott, "Living Right," Ensign, Jan. 2007, 14

Think about a time when you or someone you know had to show courage to obey the Lord. Today's lesson is about six people in the Old Testament who showed great courage in obeying the Lord under very stressful circumstances. If we follow their inspiring example, we too will have the courage to live according to gospel standards no matter what challenges we may be confronted with.

Daniel and his friends refuse to eat King Nebuchadnezzar's food; they are blessed with good health and wisdom. (Daniel 1)

As a young boy, Daniel was carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. He and other promising Hebrew youths—including his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were trained in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:8-14 - Daniel and his friends proposed to eat grains rather than the king's meat and wine.

Daniel 1:15, 17, 20 - Blessings they received from the Lord's law of health included physical health, wisdom, and understanding.

D&C 89:18-20 - The blessings they received are similar to the Lord's promises to us if we obey the Word of Wisdom.

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: "*I have come to know ... that a fundamental purpose of the Word of*

Lesson Highlights

- Daniel and his friends refuse to eat King Nebuchadnezzar's food; they are blessed with good health and wisdom.
- The Lord saves Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from death in the fiery furnace.
- Daniel prays in spite of the king's decree and is thrown into a den of lions. The Lord sends an angel to protect Daniel.
- Esther risks her life to save her people.

A study of this lesson will help us have the courage to live according to gospel standards.

Next Week

#46 "A Kingdom, Which Shall Never Be Destroyed" (Daniel 2)

Wisdom has to do with revelation. From the time you are very little we teach you to avoid tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and anything else that disturbs your health. ... If someone 'under the influence' can hardly listen to plain

talk, how can they respond to spiritual promptings that touch their most delicate feelings? As valuable as the Word of Wisdom is as a law of health, it may be much more valuable to you spiritually than it is physically" (Ensign, Nov. 1979, 20).

Daniel 1:5, 8 - This story teaches us not to defile ourselves regardless of the pressures to do so.

The Lord saves Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from death in the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3)

Daniel 3:1-6 - King Nebuchadnezzar decreed that anyone who would not worship his idol would be cast into a fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:12 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded by refusing to bow down to the idol.

Daniel 3:13-15, 19-20 - Nebuchadnezzar commanded that they be thrown into an over-heated furnace.

Daniel 3:16-18 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego expressed faith that the Lord could protect them if he so chose, but if he did not, they would still choose to remain free from idol worship.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: *"We will [not] always be rescued from proximate problems, but we will be rescued from everlasting death! Meanwhile, ultimate hope makes it possible to say the same three words used centuries ago by three valiant men. They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace if He chose. 'But if not,' they said, nevertheless, they would still serve Him!"* (Ensign, Nov. 1994, 35).

The response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can teach us something important about obeying the Lord's commandments—that we should do it because it is right, not because we expect immediate blessings. Shad-

rach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to obey the Lord whether he protected them or not. Our obedience should not be conditioned on whether or not the Lord gives us an expected blessing at an expected time in return.

Daniel 3:21-27 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the furnace but were not harmed, not even singed, nor did they even smell like the fire. And a fourth person appeared in the furnace with them.

Daniel 3:28-30 - The courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego persuaded Nebuchadnezzar that no other god was as powerful as their god.

Daniel prays in spite of the king's decree and is thrown into a den of lions. The Lord sends an angel to protect Daniel. (Daniel 6)

King Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Belshazzar. When Belshazzar was slain, "Darius the Median took the kingdom" (Daniel 5:31), and Daniel rose to a position of great prominence. Note that Darius the Mede is not the same King Darius who ruled the Persian Empire after Cyrus and to whom the Jews appealed while rebuilding the temple.

Daniel 6:1-5 - The king's presidents and princes wanted to find fault with Daniel because they were jealous that the king preferred Daniel, and they were worried that the king might give him more power.

Daniel 6:6-9 - These men convinced the king to sign a

decree that put Daniel in danger. Knowing that Daniel prayed regularly, they persuaded King Darius to sign a decree that for 30 days all petitions must be directed to him rather than to any other man or to God. Those who disobeyed the decree would be thrown into a den of lions.

Daniel 6:10 - Daniel ignored the king's decree and continued his pattern of prayer. We learn from Daniel's response that prayer was so important to him that he continued to pray even when his life was threatened for doing so. This should cause us to pause and ponder the value we place on the privilege of praying to our Heavenly Father.

Daniel 6:12-15 - King Darius was displeased with himself when his men reported that they had seen Daniel praying.

Daniel 6:16, 18 - The king demonstrated his belief in God by expressing confidence in God to Daniel, fasting and refusing to sleep.

Daniel 6:19-23 - Daniel was completely unharmed in the lions' den.

Daniel 6:24-28 - Daniel's faith and courage caused King Darius to issue a decree that the people of the kingdom would fear and tremble before the living God – the powerful god of Daniel.

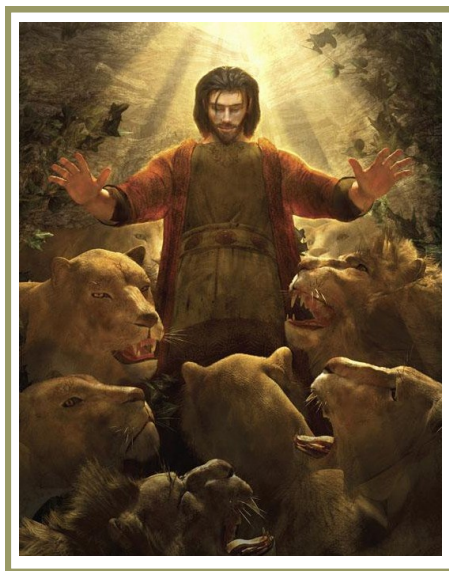
Elder L. Tom Perry said: *"Not only did Daniel's service benefit the king, but*



Daniel 1:14-16 The Stewards Vegetables



Daniel 3:25 Four in the Furnace



Daniel 6:1-5 Daniel in the Lions' Den

because of the faith that Daniel had in the Lord, it affected an entire land. The king sent forth a proclamation that all the people of the kingdom should worship the true and

living God, the God that Daniel worshiped. How mighty was the power of the service of one righteous man, affecting so many, as he served 'in the world' in which he lived!

How effective will be the results of our service if we will continue to serve in our own personal way 'in the world' in which we live!"
(Ensign, 5/1988, 15).

Esther risks her life to save her people. (Esther 3–5; 7–8)

Esther was a Jewish woman who lived shortly after the time of Daniel. After her parents died, she was raised by her cousin Mordecai. Esther was very beautiful, and Ahasuerus, the king of Persia and Media, was so pleased with her beauty that he made her his queen.

Esther 3:1-4 - King Ahasuerus promoted Haman to be his highest-ranking prince, but Mordecai, a Jew, showed courage when commanded to bow to Haman. He refused to do so. Haman reacted with anger, persuading the king to order the destruction of all the Jews in the kingdom (Esther 3:5-14).

When Esther learned of the mourning among the Jews, she sent a messenger to ask Mordecai what was wrong (Esther 4:1-6).

Esther 4:7-9 - Mordecai asked Esther to plead for the lives of the Jews before the king.

Esther 4:10-11 - It was dangerous for Esther to go in and

speak with the king because the law allowed the king to kill anyone who approached him uninvited.

Esther 4:13-14 - Mordecai sent Esther a message when he learned of her concerns about approaching the king, telling her to contemplate the possibility that she had "come to the kingdom for such a time as this".

Esther 4:16 - Esther asked her maidens and the local Jews to fast for three days as she prepared to approach the king. Stating her intent to approach the king, Esther said, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

This declaration was very similar to the statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before they were thrown into the furnace. (See Daniel 3:17-18.)

This declaration showed Esther's devotion to her people and to God as she resolved to place her life on the line to do what was best for others.

Esther 5:1-8 - When Esther approached the king, he received her and said he would grant anything she requested, so she requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet.

Esther 7:3-4 - On the second day of the banquet, Esther asked the king to spare her life and the lives of her people.

Esther 7:5-10 - When he learned that the people Haman was plotting to destroy were the Jews, he had Haman hanged on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai, but the decree to kill all Jews had already been circulated throughout the kingdom.

Esther 8:5-6 - Esther asked the king to reverse the extermination order and he complied.

Esther 8:16-17 - Blessings the Jews received because of Esther's courage and faith included light and honor, and gladness and joy.

The Lord will bless us as we have the courage to stand for the truth. We should follow the examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Esther, and Mordecai whom we have studied in this lesson. We should resolve that our strength and courage in spiritually and morally challenging situations will be a blessing to those around us as we live the gospel and make the difficult choices regardless of the cost.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- What situations today require courage for us to obey the Lord's commandments? How can we develop the courage needed to obey in
- What are the dangers of obeying the Lord only because we expect him to give us a certain blessing in return?
- How has the Savior helped you when you turn to him during your trials?



Esther Denouncing Haman, Ernest Normand c. 1915