

Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 122.2)

LESSON 45 (STUDY NOTES)

“If I Perish, I Perish”

Hook	A question that gets at the heart of this life thing we are doing: What is worth dying for? Perhaps more importantly, what is worth living for?
Goal	
Overview	
Conclusion	

Manual Goal: To help class members have the courage to live according to gospel standards.

EGD Goal: To provide class members opportunity to reflect on what is worth giving their lives for (in both senses) and understand the significance of the context of scripture

The martyrdom hypothetical: What is worth living and dying for? What loyalty do we owe our religion, church, etc? (I personally think God would prefer us to be alive unless we needed to do something horrific to stay that way...)

I. Sunday School

- a. How are Daniel and Esther discussed in Church settings?
- b. Lessons from the story of Daniel
 - i. Being true to heritage, covenants, personal integrity
 - ii. Remaining true in the face of adversity
- c. The question of martyrdom: What is worth dying for? When do we compromise, and when should we not?
- d. Lessons from the story of Esther
- e. The nature of scripture
 - i. Daniel as underground motivational fiction; Esther as farcical comedy
 - ii. What do we learn from understanding genre? (Daniel especially is an example where the historical context is MORE inspiring; understanding Esther just makes it less crazy)
- f. Conclusion I

II. Scholarship

- a. Dating Daniel

Antiochus Epiphanes places a golden statue in the temple, 167 BC (See Daniel 11:31: “They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate”; also described in Daniel 8.11-14 and 1 Maccabees 1.36-59)

Installation of Gentile Cults

41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, ⁴²and that all should give up their particular customs. ⁴³All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. ⁴⁴And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, ⁴⁵to forbid burnt-offerings and sacrifices and drink-offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, ⁴⁶to defile the sanctuary and the priests, ⁴⁷to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, ⁴⁸and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, ⁴⁹so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. ⁵⁰He added, ‘And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.’

51 In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice, town by town. ⁵²Many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; ⁵³they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt-offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, ⁵⁵and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. ⁵⁶The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. ⁵⁷Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. ⁵⁸They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. ⁵⁹On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt-offering.

- i.
 - ii. Antiochus Epiphanes IV dies in 164 BC (of sickness, in a way *different* than the climactic battle described in Daniel 11:40-45)
 - iii. The positive portrayal of the king and more lighthearted tone of some of the narratives suggests
- b. The puzzle of Esther
 - c. Esther in Hebrew, Greek, and the biblical canon

III. Study Notes

- a. What do we do when our faith/affiliation (or our relationships) just might kill us, or at least harm us? (Stuart Matis' bishop: Choose your life; leave the Church and live)
- b. Integrity to our heritage and religion vs. integrity to ourselves
- c. Theology: What does God expect/want us to do?
- d. Scripture: Letting scripture be what it is; learning from/being inspired by fiction and truth

e. Conclusion II

Elder Dennis Simmons, But if Not

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2004/04/but-if-not?lang=eng>

Knowing all this, it was not difficult for those three young Hebrews to make their decision. They would follow God; they would exercise faith in Him. He would deliver them, *but if not*—and we know the rest of the story.

The Lord has given us agency, the right and the responsibility to decide.⁹ He tests us by allowing us to be challenged. He assures us that He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our ability to withstand.¹⁰ But we must understand that great challenges make great men. We don't seek tribulation, but if we respond in faith, the Lord strengthens us. The *but if not*s can become remarkable blessings.

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Men [and women] accomplish marvelous things by trusting in the Lord and keeping His commandments—by exercising faith even when they don't know how the Lord is shaping them.

Elder Neal Maxwell, Willing to submit

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1985/04/willing-to-submit?lang=eng>

<http://bycommonconsent.com/2014/10/09/such-a-time-as-this-remarks-at-stanford-convocation/>