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Unprecedented Challenges and an Extraordinary God: Lessons from the Prophet Daniel



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One of the most profound instances of God's presence in the lives of an oppressed people was recorded by God's servant named Daniel; an upright and sincere person who is recognized as a Minor Prophet by many biblical scholars. Daniel suffered an economic or militaristic oppression inasmuch as Jerusalem was taken captive though the military strength of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel 1:1-2). Daniel suffered a political oppression inasmuch as the king attempted to use his political influence to force Daniel to eat his food (1:8-13). Daniel suffered a cultural oppression inasmuch as Nebuchadnezzar's culture dictated that all of the magicians, astrologers and Chaldeans describe and interpret his dream, and those who could not interpret it were sentenced to death (2:10-13). Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego suffered a spiritual oppression inasmuch as the king ordered them to worship other gods as well as a golden statue of himself (3:18). To say the

least, Daniel and his companion's were facing unprecedented circumstances. In fact, Daniels companions were thrown into a "fiery furnace (3:36);" however, the fire in the furnace did not consume them. Nebuchadnezzar ordered the three of them to be placed into the fire; however, he eventually saw four men in the fire, and the "form of the fourth (was) like the Son of God (3:25)." An extraordinary God delivered Daniel and his companions from the unprecedented political, economic and spiritual challenges of their day.

America in general and the African-American community in particular, is facing a series of unprecedented challenges. Some of the challenges that confront our nation are economic in nature. The percentage of unemployed American's remains relatively high and a disproportionate percentage of these citizens are African-American. Some of the challenges which confront our country are political in nature. The stalemate between our congressional leaders has implica-

tion for our entire nation as well as the global community. The cultural and spiritual challenges concern, but are not limited to, our participation in war, an increase in the national percentage of divorces, a decrease in the funding of programs for the most disadvantaged in our society, an increase in funding for prisons and an national obsession with people, places or things that distract us from loving God as well as our local, national and international neighbors. These unprecedented challenges threaten the growth, vitality and stability of American in general and the African-American community in particular. The book of Daniel reminds us that we serve an extraordinary God who is still able to address unprecedented local, national and international challenges. God is the same God of yesterday, today and tomorrow, and if we but seek His face, God is still able to heal our land (2 Chronicles 7:14).