

Christians slaughtered in Nigeria

June 20, 2014

Nigeria -- Dozens of Christians in the village of Attagara, Nigeria, were killed in two separate attacks carried out by Boko Haram militants in June.

Early Sunday morning on June 1, the church in Attagara, located in the Gwoza local government area, had already begun its regular worship service when more than 100 Islamic militants, some dressed in the combat fatigues worn by Nigeria's army, stormed the church building. Chanting "Allahu Akbar!" (God is great), the Boko Haram militants shot more than 50 people, killing 27.

Several Christians ran from the scene to a military checkpoint almost two miles down the road to ask for help. However, Nigerian army personnel were not able to respond. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram rebels were moving from home to home in the Attagara, burning down houses and killing anyone in their way, including small children.

On June 3, just two days after the first attack, Boko Haram drove through the village at 7:30 a.m. disguised as members of the army and called people to the church for a security briefing. The 45 people who gathered in the church were gunned down. None survived.

Immediately afterward, hundreds of insurgents came over the hills to raid the village. They killed many, including pregnant women and small children. One witness saw a group of about 30 women and children being rounded up. As the women tried to shelter the children, the insurgents demanded that the children come forward. They slaughtered 17 boys.

The insurgents also raided surrounding villages, reducing them to ashes. Churches were bombed and explosive devices set to destroy Christian homes and public buildings. Dozens of Christians were killed as they tried to escape into the hills to try to hide in caves.

(From Voice of the Martyrs website, www.persecution.com.)



Faith at Home

Ask your family, "What would we do if we found ourselves living in a place where Christians were persecuted because of their faith -- arrested, beaten, even killed? How would we respond?"

Teacher's Toolbox

*Getting your class into God's Word
and God's Word into your class*

ExcitingBibleStudy.com

Bible Series

Daniel 3

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HOW TO USE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: Make a four-page folded teacher's leaflet from the first two sheets by printing two-sided (or by putting the blank sides together). The other two sheets are for duplicating, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using as called for in the lesson plan.



Faith at Home – A specific application of today's Bible passage to family life, to be used for individual reflection, family discussion, or class activity.



Getting Started

Sharing a news story

- Begin by having someone read aloud the recent "top news story" from the Voice of the Martyrs website, www.persecution.com (page 4). You may want to duplicate page 4 and distribute it to class members, encouraging them to check out that website and others about persecution of the Christian church.
- **It has been said that more Christians are being persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and martyred for their faith right now than at any other time in history. Here in the United States it is easy for us to become complacent because of the religious freedom we enjoy. But what if things changed? What if we lost our freedoms? What if we found ourselves in another land where Christians were hated and abused? How would we react? What would we do?**

In today's study, we will see three godly men, ripped out of their

own country and transported to a foreign land, remain faithful to their God, despite religious persecution.

Exploring God's Word

Setting the stage

- Write the following names on the chalkboard:
 - Jehoiakim
 - Nebuchadnezzar
 - Ashpenaz
 - Daniel (Beltshazzar)
 - Hanaiah (Shadrach)
 - Mishael (Meshach)
 - Azariah (Abednego)
- Ask members to focus on the names written on the chalkboard as you read aloud Daniel 1:1-7.
- Then ask members to identify each of the persons listed on the chalkboard, based on what you read in the passage. If they need help, refer them to the passage.

Dramatic Bible reading

- Have members find Daniel 3:1-30.
- Enlist someone to be “narrator,” reading everything in the chapter that is not a direct quote. Then enlist persons to read the direct quotes of these characters:
 - Herald
 - Astrologers
 - Nebuchadnezzar
 - Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego
- Ask the narrator to begin the reading.

Reviewing the content

- Ask the following questions to make sure members understand the content of the passage.
 - What had King Nebuchadnezzar built? (a 90-foot tall image of gold)
 - What did he expect all of his people to do? (worship that image)
 - Why was this a problem to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? (it would be idolatry for them to worship a false god)
 - What were the three men willing to risk in order to be faithful to the one true God? (their lives)
 - What was the outcome of their faithfulness? (rescued from the fire, given full religious freedom, promoted in their careers)
 - What if they had burned up in the fire? (in verse 18 they had said that even if God did not choose to rescue them they would be faithful)

Related verses

- Have members find and read Job 13:15 and Isaiah 43:2. Ask them to verbalize how those two verses relate to today’s study.

Understanding perspectives

- Divide the class into three groups. Give someone in each group paper and pencil, designat-

- ing that person to take notes and be prepared to report back to the class key ideas from their group’s discussion. Give each group an assignment (cut apart Item 1) to consider the events described in Daniel 3 from a different perspective:
- Group 1: from the perspective of King Nebuchadnezzar
 - Group 2: from the perspective of the astrologers (or officials, Chaldeans, Babylonians, first mentioned in verse 8)
 - Group 3: from the perspective of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
- Ask them to decide why the person or persons assigned to them acted as they did, what motivated them, what gave them confidence in their position, what they hoped to gain.
 - Allow four or five minutes for groups to discuss. Then call for reports.

Making It Personal

Preparing for persecution

- Give each person a pencil and a copy of the following (duplicate Item 2).

Wrapping It Up

- **The best way we can face religious persecution faithfully is to prepare ourselves in advance. Peter denied Christ because he wasn’t prepared for what happened. Let’s be careful that doesn’t happen to us.**
- Call on someone to lead the class in prayer.

Preparing for Persecution

Living in a land of religious freedom, we seldom give much thought to the persecution that Christians in other parts of the world face every day.

But it is possible that someday we will find our own religious liberties threatened. We may move to another country or be there on a mission trip or on business.

What can we do now to prepare for the possibility of religious persecution in the future? List your ideas here:

- Ask members to list on their paper as many ideas as they can during the next three minutes.
- After three minutes, call time and let volunteers share their ideas with the rest of the class.

○ **Group 1:** Study Daniel 3 from the perspective of King Nebuchadnezzar. Decide why he acted as he did, what motivated him, what gave him confidence in his position, what he hoped to gain.

○ **Group 2:** Study Daniel 3 from the perspective of the astrologers (or officials, Chaldeans, Babylonians, first mentioned in verse 8). Decide why they acted as they did, what motivated them, what gave them confidence in their position, what they hoped to gain.

○ **Group 3:** Study Daniel 3 from the perspective of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Decide why they acted as they did, what motivated them, what gave them confidence in their position, what they hoped to gain.

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