



9 | DANIEL 3

WITH ME IN THE FIRE

When all is lost, you are not alone

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Call to Worship

Psalm 96:1-9

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth. ² Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. ³ Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. ⁴ For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. ⁶ Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. ⁷ Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Give to the Lord glory and strength. ⁸ Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts. ⁹ Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth. ¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns..."

Songs

Come Christians Join to Sing

Jesus Strong and Kind

What a Wonderful Name It Is

King of Kings

Turn Your Eyes/Give Me Jesus

Announcements:

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees. Also, we have a new secured mailbox at the church, so you may also give by sending a check to Living Hope, 6N171 Gary Avenue, Roselle, IL 60172.

WITH ME THE FIRE

Daniel 3

Introduction

Open your Bible to the book of Daniel. We are in a series called “Safe and Secure in Jesus”. The title of our message is “With Me in the Fire”.

In Philippians 1:21 Paul writes, “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” This is the ultimate win-win scenario. If I live, I get Christ. If I die, I get more of Christ! Either way I win!

Around 2600 years ago, three young men stood alone for God in a burning fiery furnace. These were Hebrew young men taken from Israel as prisoners of war. They were the best and brightest of Israel, and they became high officials in King Nebuchadnezzar’s court.

King Nebuchadnezzar was the King of Babylon, ancient Iraq at the time. He had overpowered the world powers of the time: Egypt, and now he was essentially, “King of the world”.

The three men named in this account, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are actually named in the ancient Babylonian records.¹ I mention that because the Bible is a historical book. All of the Bible is true, not made up, but verifiable and historical. The Bible is real history, or His Story. It’s the story, ultimately of Jesus coming to save us from our sins.

Today’s events took place around 2600 years ago. The Temple of Solomon had been torn down. Now you have this great world dictator, Nebuchadnezzar ransacking Israel over and over again, taking the best and the brightest from Israel and bringing them into Babylon, modern day Iraq.

One of the things we need to understand is that even in the midst of great evil and power in government that is out of control, God always has his people where he wants them. In this great Babylonian government, God had a great statesman named Daniel who would go on to serve with several kings who ruled the ancient world.

¹ W. H. Shea, “Daniel 3: Extra-Biblical Texts and the Convocation of the Plain of Dura,” AUSS 20 (1982): 37–50. A. L. Oppenheim’s English translation of the Babylonian text may be found in ANET, 307–8.

But today's events revolve around three young Hebrew men who had been ripped away from their home in Israel and brought to serve in King Nebuchadnezzar's court.

Now as I said, this all happened. You can check the records of Babylon at that time, and all are listed. You can go to Chicago's Oriental Institute and see the very walls and gate of Babylon that Daniel would have walked through. The walls of the Ishtar Gate are erected here in this museum right here in the city of Chicago.

Now it's interesting that in Daniel 2, the king has a dream of a statue where Daniel interprets the Golden head of the statue to represent King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon. Time had passed, and **Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance had skyrocketed**. His great success seems to have gone to his head. World power has been placed in his hands. We can picture the king, in war and peace, gathering the nations from Babylon to Egypt into his net.

This great King would likely have known several of the great prophets of the Bible. Obviously, he knew Daniel. He very likely met with the prophet Ezekiel and learned all of the latest news about poor, suffering Jeremiah.²

Here we have the story of when the King Nebuchadnezzar built a giant golden statue in honor of his kingdom. He wants everyone to bow to it.

1. WE MUST NOT BOW TO THE WORLD (3:1-12)

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE IMAGE (3:1)

Daniel 3:1 | King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits (*90 ft high*) and its breadth six cubits (*9 ft wide*). He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Imagine! An idol 90 feet high and 9 feet wide! In his campaigning days Nebuchadnezzar had been in Egypt and had seen the pyramids, the sphinxes, and the colossal temples. The sheer size of these things left their mark on his memory.

The location of the statue was significant, for the Babylonian plain was on the location for the building of the **Tower of Babel** in Genesis 11:2. The Tower of Babel had one main goal: it exalted the power of man above God (Gen. 11:4).³ Now, so many thousands of years later, Nebuchadnezzar's glittering golden image was erected on very likely the same plain where everyone could see it.

One King, Application: Let me just say that no matter who proclaims themselves to be king or president or governor, there is one king over the whole world and universe, and his Name is Jesus. He is the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords and the Governor of the whole earth. No one competes with him or compares to him. The only magistrate we should worship has a Name above all names: Jesus.

² Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 107.

³ Iain M. Duguid, *Daniel*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 47.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE IMAGE (3:2-7)

In verse 2 we see a list of those officials who were expressly summoned to be present at the inauguration of this grotesque idol and the dedication of the new, universal Babylonian religion. Make no mistake, King Nebuchadnezzar wanted everybody to worship the state, represented by his image. If unchallenged devotion was not given to the state, there would be the imminent threat of death if necessary (3:6).⁴ This was made well known.

Anyone who was anybody was to be present. All kinds of government officials were required to be present. Daniel's three friends, who had been promoted to responsible positions in the Babylonian government, also received formal invitations. And they came.

Daniel 3:2-3 | Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³ Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego received their invitations too. They saw no way of escape. This fact raises the **question of where Daniel was**. Why was he not on the list? He might have been far away on private or public business. He might have been ill. We are not told why he wasn't listed among those who were invited. But of one thing we can be sure: if Daniel had been summoned, he would have been there.

People poured into the place. The king's glittering throne would have been ablaze with color. Public figures from all over the empire were there. Troops stood by in their uniforms, watchful to protect the king. Daniel's three friends could pick out this one and that, here an imperial governor, another, a ruler of one of the provinces.

The plain near Babylon began to fill. High above all, glittering in the sun, stood the towering 90 foot obscenity that was soon to be worshiped by all.

The orchestra was there. Daniel names half a dozen instruments, some of foreign import and others common place enough, that were being tuned and prepared for their role in the proceedings.

A sharp, piercing fanfare sounded, and the king himself arrived and was conducted to his high seat. He gazed out across the vast, colorful multitudes settling down in their places, a countless throng there to celebrate this gala occasion. Many of them commented on the upward-pointing pillar. They had seen such vile things before. They were common enough among the Canaanites, who used them as objects of worship in their shrines and had done so for centuries. Even the later Judean kings had used them. But never had there been such a startling sight as this thing. It stood 90 feet high.

Then came the herald. His voice rang out across that crowded plain:

Daniel 3:4-7 | And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the

⁴ Ibid.

horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” ⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The voice of the herald died away. Eyes darted here and there, now looking at the towering image, now sweeping the vast crowd, now fixed firmly on the king, and now focusing on the orchestra to catch the first move of the conductor.

Suddenly, the massed musicians attended to their instruments. A great sound of music blared out across the plain, and the people, one and all, fell face down on the ground. **All except three young men.**

Allegiance to Christ, Application: No matter how impressive or imposing the rule of any king on earth seems, we must never be scared or impressed into submission to ultimate allegiance. Our ultimate allegiance is to King Jesus. We are grateful for our freedoms, and wherever Christians are, they will always stand up for freedom to worship God freely. But when there is persecution of Christian worship, we will never bow declare ultimate allegiance to anyone but Jesus Christ.

Now we want to pray for our authorities and obey them as long as they do not infringe upon our right and duty to worship God. But we are given rights that the founders of our country called “inalienable rights” that are “endowed by our Creator”. We not only the God given right to gather and worship Jesus, we have the duty to worship him, and no human governor, king, or president can take that away from any child of God on planet earth.

THE CONTEMPT FOR THE IMAGE (3:8-12)

So here was that monstrosity of a statue, representing the near divinity of the king of Babylon. Everyone is told: “*Bow to it, worship it, or you will be put to death!*”

The **three young Hebrew men would not bow.**

There were some of the Chaldean leaders who were stirred up by Satan against these Jewish men, and they stirred up trouble for the three Hebrew men. The Bible says these enemies were filled with hate and malice for the godly young men. The Holy Spirit records their malicious behavior.

Daniel 3:8-12 | Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

Interestingly, the idea of the king setting up or establishing his idol appears seven times in this passage. It's clear the king is establishing his own worship, setting himself up. This stands in striking contrast to **Daniel 2:21**, where Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, “[God] changes the times and seasons; he removes kings and establishes kings.”

Taking a Stand, Application: It's easy to serve God in the undercurrent. But once you take a stand, you stick out like a sore thumb. Now I don't believe these Hebrew boys had any bloodlust for a date with death. I believe they were as “wise as serpents, but as harmless as doves.” I believe they did try “to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness” as we are commanded (1 Tim 2:2). But there comes a time to take a stand. And the king took notice.

2. WE MUST NOT BUDGE TOWARD THE WORLD (3:13-18)

THE RAGE OF THE KING (3:13-15)

The Chaldeans manipulated the king, and King Nebuchadnezzar exploded in uncontrollable rage toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He was beside himself. He commanded his soldiers to arrest the Hebrew boys immediately.

By the time the three Hebrews appeared, he had himself back under control. He would at least explain things to them himself. Maybe they didn't understand. He put to them a question: “Is it true?”

Daniel 3:13-15 | Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And **who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?**”

The king's message was basically: “Worship the way I tell you to or die.” “And,” he added, “**who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**” He rightly recognized that this was not ordinary disobedience. This was a clash of worldviews.

Nebuchadnezzar is playing a role that only God plays! And in the process, he is setting up a showdown with the Almighty.⁵

Freedom to Worship, Application: Freedom to worship according to conscience does not come from any human government. It comes from our Creator. It comes from God. If you are a child of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, you are commanded to worship

⁵ Daniel L. Akin et al., *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017).

God. In this strange time, some may worship from home and some at church, but we are commanded to worship.

Let me be clear, those who worship at church or worship at home have the freedom to make that decision outside of government coercion. We have the first amendment, in large part, due to the efforts of American Baptists such as Isaac Backus and John Leland. Leland, who had petitioned James Madison, that our religious freedom be ensured in this country.

Separation of church and state means that the government has no rightful jurisdiction over our free worship of Christ. They cannot tell us how to govern the Lord's church. I'm grateful for that foundation that our country is founded upon.

But regardless, my right to worship does not come from the government. It comes from Christ. And it's more than a right. It is everyone's duty to worship their Creator and their Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE RESOLVE OF THE HEBREWS (3:16–18)

So remember the king's question: who is this God that can deliver you out of my hands? Isn't the king so forgetful? Remember in Daniel 2, the king received the vision of the statue that was crushed by the rock. The statue represents all the governments of the earth, beginning with King Nebuchadnezzar (the golden head). But the Rock crushes them all. And who is that Rock? It is the Government of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Look at the deep resolve of the Hebrew boys. They honored the king all they could, but there came a point where a line was crossed. That king was asking them to deny the Lordship of God. These men refused to budge. Instead, they spoke out:

Daniel 3:16-18 | Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Nobody had spoken thus to this pagan king in all of his memory and experience. Where did this boldness come from? These boys honored all earthly authority as believers ought. But **they feared and honored the God who made all authority infinitely more than this king.**

"Listen," they said, "God is able to deliver us... but even if he doesn't, we will not bow." Praise God.

Persecution, Application: I don't know how long each of you has known the Lord, but the Bible promises us that "All they who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12). If you've known the Lord for any length of time, you know it's not easy following Christ. There is a cross to bear.

As a believer your faith is going to be tried and tested. The world is going to harass you. If you are not feeling any opposition from the world, you have to ask, are you really alive in Christ? Are you just a dead fish floating with the current of the world? The world

wants to shut down the faith of believers. We have to have a resilient, optimistic, persevering attitude. We have to be faithful to Jesus, even if someone takes our life as a result.

Biblical faith has the **confidence** to say, “I believe that my God will deliver me.” But it also has the **submission** to say, “But even if he does not, I will still trust him.” As Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15).⁶ That’s a mature faith.

Listen, we are called to live a life separate from the world. We are to be “in the world, but not of the world”. Jesus said, “you are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:14). We are no longer slaves of this world.

1 John 2:15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Saint, why would we love the world when we have all of Christ?

3. WE WILL NOT BURN BECAUSE OF THE WORLD (3:19-30)

We will not bow to the world’s idols.
We will not budge to the world’s worthless ways.
We will not burn in judgement with the world.

PERSECUTION (3:19–23)

Here we come to the real trial of these boys’ faith. They either have to deny the Lord or be put to death. What would you choose?

Daniel 3:19-23 | Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. **He ordered the furnace heated seven times more** than it was usually heated.²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace.²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

“Heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual!” he roared. “Now then, bind these men. Make sure they cannot move a muscle. Summon the mightiest men we have in the army. Let them make sure that these three men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—do not have the slightest ability to move. Then cast them into the furnace.”

And so it was done. The captives were bundled into their clothes and bound with all of the strength that these mighty men could command. Then they picked up these human

⁶ Rodney Stortz and R. Kent Hughes, *Daniel: The Triumph of God’s Kingdom*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 54.

bundles and dragged them to the seething cauldron of fire and flame. Everything in the vicinity of the furnace must have been scorched by the white-hot heat. The very bolts and bars glowed with the terrible heat. The flames roared. The heat was enormous. The king's men felt the fury of the flames. Even as they flung their captives into the furnace, **its heat overwhelmed the king's soldiers and they engulfed by the flame.** The dreadful deed was done. The three boys were in the furnace never to be seen again. Or will we see them again?

Governors Bow to Jesus, Application: Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). We as Christians have nothing to fear when it comes to exercising our faith and worshipping God. We honor governing authorities. We pray for them. Most of all, we want to see them tear down the idols of our culture and worship Christ. They are subject to him and they will bow before Jesus one day.

If the mayors and governors of our nation were wise, they would bow and tremble before the great power of Jesus. They would worship him.

And I call out to our mayors on the northwest side of Chicago: bow before Jesus! Worship him. I call on Governor Pritzker: Worship Jesus, Mr. Governor. I call on our congress and President and all leaders in this country: if you are wise, you will devote yourself to the worship of Jesus.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him, including our Governor, our mayors, and local leaders, they will not perish in hell, but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16, paraphrase, application).

PRESERVATION (3:24–28)

God watches over all who trust in him. Do you think he was watching over these Hebrew boys? Indeed he was!

The king of Babylon was now in for the biggest surprise of his life so far. He gazed into the fire, and something had caught the king's eye. It was a miracle! It had to be a miracle! Or could the king no longer count? He leaped to his feet. He addressed his counselors (vs 24)...

Daniel 3:24-27 | Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like **a son of the gods.**" ²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.

“How is it that I see four men? And that fourth One, why He looks like the Son of God! Moreover, those men are free. The fire has consumed the cords that bound them but not the clothes that covered them! Look at them. They are strolling around in the very heart of the furnace! Those flames would melt iron, but the fierce power of the flames is gone! Come on, let’s look for ourselves!

It was true all right. Christ was in the furnace with them. The glorious hall of faith in Hebrews 11 records their story when it says they had “quenched the power of fire” –that burning fiery furnace (Heb 11:33–34).

These three young Hebrews were claiming a truth and promise of God. Years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had spoken such words as these for just such an hour as this:

God says in **Isaiah 43:1–2**, “Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

God kept His word to the letter. “I have called you by your name,” He said. The names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego appear no less than thirteen times in this narrative.

We cannot affirm that anything similar ever happened again. We do know, from the testimonies of many martyrs, down through the church age, that many people who were being burned at the stake received mysterious and miraculous power to sing and testify even as the flames took hold of them.

Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, captains, governors, and counselors were astounded. **The fire had no power on the bodies of the three Hebrews, their hair was not singed, their garments remained unscorched, and, indeed, not even the smell of fire was upon them.**

Nebuchadnezzar was deeply moved. Forgotten was the foul image that had so engrossed him.

Daniel 3:28 | Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel [Messenger] and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Application: Hallelujah! This is what happens when our eyes are fully on Jesus. The world will notice. Even kings and presidents and world leaders will notice!

PROMOTION (3:29–30)

Daniel 3:29-30 | Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.”³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar did not stop at merely praising the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He warned the people of his empire, noting each of the various languages spoken, that no one must say anything against the Hebrew God. “**There is none like Him,**” he said.

In his remarkable repentance, Nebuchadnezzar went a step further. He promoted the three Hebrews in the province of Babylon.⁷

Evangelism, Application: One of the things that strikes me is that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were selfless. They stood alone because they loved God and they loved their fellow man. You may hate the direction of our culture, but you must never hate your fellow man. They humbled themselves before God and man, and the Lord lifted them up.

I believe these three Hebrew boys wanted to see their entire nation of Babylon come to know the Lord. And look at what happened. The King responded. He said, “**Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego... for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way**” (vs 29).

Conclusion

My big takeaway from this precious story is that this is really not a story of civil disobedience. This is a story of deep commitment to the Lord, and a mercy to the King and the culture. In one swift act of faith, the king was moved, and the people were moved to see the LORD. That’s the kind of lives we are called to live. We are fragile jars of clay in the hands of the Almighty God!

We need to have that kind of selfless, courageous, radical faith. We must not be careful about our lives when it comes to sharing our faith. Let’s stand up, in love for God and for the souls of people, like the three Hebrew boys.

Let me ask you: what’s your fire? Christ is with you in the fire! He says to all believers: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He says: “I am with you to the end of the age.” Time will end, and Jesus will still be with you.

I can’t wait to see him face to face, how about you?

⁷ John Phillips, *Exploring the Book of Daniel: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Da 3:1–30.