

# **Daniel 03 - Daniel's Friends Refuse to Worship a Statue; Nebuchadnezzar's Ultimatum; The Fiery Furnace; Deliverance; Nebuchadnezzar's Decree**

## **I. Historical section (Dan 1:1—7:28)**

### **(2) Aramaic chiasm (Dan 2:1—7:28)**

#### **(B) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace (3:1-30)**

##### **(a) The setting (3:1-7)**

###### **(i) The image (3:1)**

###### **(ii) The nationwide summons (3:2-3)**

###### **(iii) The command to worship the image (3:4-6)**

###### **(iv) The nation's obedience to the command (3:7)**

##### **(b) The charge (3:8-12)**

###### **(i) Reiteration of the king's command (3:8-11)**

###### **(ii) The accusation regarding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's violation of the command (3:12)**

##### **(c) The test (3:13-18)**

###### **(i) Nebuchadnezzar's command (3:13-15)**

###### **(ii) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's Godly response (3:16-18)**

##### **(d) God delivers the three Hebrews (3:19-27)**

###### **(i) Cast into the furnace (3:19-23)**

###### **(ii) Protected in the midst of the furnace (3:24-25)**

###### **(iii) Taken out of the furnace (3:26-27)**

##### **(e) Conclusion (3:28-30)**

###### **(i) Nebuchadnezzar praises God (3:28-30)**

###### **(ii) Nebuchadnezzar promotes the three Hebrews (3:30)**

## **Daniel 3**

### **(B) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace (3:1-30)**

#### **(a) The setting (3:1-7)**

##### **(i) The image (3:1)**

**1** Nebuchadnezzar the king made a **statue of gold**, the height of which was sixty **cubits**, and its width six **cubits**; he set it up on the **plain of Dura** in the province of Babylon.

**1** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

**1** Some time later, king Nebuchadnezzar built a golden statue, making it 60 cubits high and six cubits wide. He set it up in the Dura Valley within the province of Babylon.

**1** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

- No chronological marker is given for the events of this chapter, but most scholars believe it was ~2 years after the events of Dan 2

- We know that chronologically, Dan 3 happened after Dan 2 because Daniel's three friends had assumed their positions of administrative leadership (v12; Cf. 2:49)

- Some believe these events occurred shortly after the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (about 585 BC). An empire-wide demonstration of the superiority of Babylon's gods and king would have been understandable.

- God is once again going to put Daniel and his friends into a position where they have to choose between God and the world system. The consequences of their decisions are so severe that the wrong decision could see them forfeit their lives.

- "...statue of gold" - this entire image was gold, whereas in his dream, only the head was gold

- It's likely that the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream became a model for the statue he built

- Daniel had told him that he was the head of gold (2:38) but that he would be followed by "another kingdom inferior to you" (2:39) made of silver (2:32).

- He may have determined to show the permanence of his golden kingdom by having the entire image covered with gold, rejecting the idea that another kingdom would follow his own

- "...sixty cubits, and its width six cubits" - 90' tall and 9' wide, equivalent to an 8-story building

- "...plain of Dura" - a town six miles southeast of Babylon

### **What was Nebuchadnezzar's motive?**

According to John Walvoord, the likely background for the events of Dan 3 is a coup attempt against Nebuchadnezzar that occurred Dec 595 BC to Jan 594 BC, during the 10th year of his reign. The event was significant enough to be recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle as the significant event of that year. After the coup attempt failed, it's likely that

Nebuchadnezzar recalled all the rulers and vassal kings back to Babylon to participate in this loyalty oath.

Why a statue of gold? Probably from Daniel's interpretation of his dream (Dan 2) in which Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, but one day his empire would cease to another (chest/arms of silver). This statue, made completely of gold, was likely Nebuchadnezzar's rejection of Daniel's prophecy and statement that his kingdom would live forever. It is an image of rebellion of God's prophecy given by Daniel.

<b><u>CHAPTER AND VERSE IN DANIEL</u></b>	<b><u>CHRONOLOGICAL DATE</u></b>	<b><u>BIBLICAL DATE</u></b>
<b>1:1</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> year of <u>Jehoiakim</u></b>
<b>2:1</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Sat night 10/12/539 (<u>Hoehner</u>)</b>	
<b>7:1</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> year of Belshazzar</b>
<b>8:1</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> year of Belshazzar</b>
<b>9:1</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> year of Darius</b>
<b>10:1</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> year of Cyrus</b>

Daniel's Age		
CHAPTER	EVENTS	AGE
1	Taken to Babylonian captivity	15
2	Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's 1 <sup>st</sup> dream (huge image)	17
3	Daniel's 3 friends cast into the fiery furnace	19 or 20
4	Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream (huge tree)	45-50
5	Interpreting handwriting of the wall at Belshazzar's feast	Early 80's
6	Delivered from the den of lions	c.83
7-8	Daniel's visions and dreams	Mid-60's
9	Daniel's seventy "sevens" prophecy	Early-80's
10-12	Final dreams and visions	Mid-80's

### Succession of Gentile Rulers

- Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan 1-4)
- Belshazzar of Babylon (Dan 5)
- Darius of Media-Persia (Dan 6)
- Belshazzar of Babylon (Dan 7-8)
- Darius of Media-Persia (Dan 9)
- Cyrus of Media-Persia (Dan 10-12)

(ii) The nationwide summons (3:2-3)

2 Nebuchadnezzar the king also sent *word* to assemble the **satraps**, the **prefects and the governors**, the **counselors**, the chief treasurers, the **judges**, the **magistrates**, and all the administrators of the provinces to come to the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of

the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar summoned the regional authorities, governors, deputy governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all of the other administrators of the provinces, ordering them to come to the dedication of the statue that he had erected.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

- "...satraps" - military chiefs
- "...prefects and the governors" - captains; heads of sections of the provinces
- "...counselors" - high ranking judges
- "...judges" - secondary judges
- "...magistrates" - sheriffs; low level legal officials

3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the chief treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the administrators of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 So the regional authorities, governors, deputy governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all of the other administrators of the provinces assembled to dedicate the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They took their places in front of the statue that he had erected.

3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- Eight classes of administrators are gathered to dedicate the image

(iii) The command to worship the image (3:4-6)

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, you peoples, nations, and *populations of all* languages,

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every* language,

4 Then a herald proclaimed aloud:

"People of all nations, and languages are commanded:

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

5 Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, the flute, the lyre, the four-stringed lyre, and the harp, playing together along with various instruments, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that was set up by King Nebuchadnezzar.

5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

- To the three Hebrew youths, this command was in direct contradiction to the first two commandments in the Decalogue (Ex 20:1-6), which leads to a classic instance of justified civil disobedience.

— Government is a divine institution, created by God in the Noahic Covenant (Cf. Gen 6:11; 9:6; Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:23-25) to curb evil in mankind and society in general. Thus we are commanded to honor and respect those in authority, pay taxes, etc. (Cf. 1 Tim 2:1-4; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into the middle of a furnace of blazing fire."

6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

6 Anyone who does not fall down and worship is immediately to be thrown into the blazing fire furnace."

6 And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

- When the music plays, everyone was to bow down; if you don't, into the fiery furnace you went

— This put Daniel and friends in a bad spot...there was no way they were going to bow to an idol

— Notice the cruelty that often accompanies not falling in line with idolatry

## Noahic vs. Abrahamic & Mosaic Covenants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Noahic Covenant</u>	<u>Abrahamic Covenant</u>	<u>Mosaic Covenant</u>
<u>Human agent</u>	Noah	Abraham	Moses
<u>Scripture</u>	Gen 8-9	Gen 12-17	Ex 19-40
<u>Covenant (<i>Berith</i>)</u>	Gen 9:9	Gen 15:18	Ex 19:5
<u>Party</u>	World, humanity	Israel, Hebrews	Israel, Hebrews
<u>Israel</u>	Pre-Israel	Post-Israel	Post-Israel

## Noahic vs. Abrahamic & Mosaic Covenants

	<u>Noahic Covenant</u>	<u>Abrahamic Covenant</u>	<u>Mosaic Covenant</u>
<u>Conditional or unconditional</u>	Unconditional	Unconditional	Conditional
<u>Promises</u>	No more flood judgment, enduring earth, capital punishment	Ownership of land, seed, and blessing	Enjoyment or possession of land, seed, and blessing
<u>Sign</u>	Rainbow	Circumcision	Sabbath
<u>Purpose</u>	Restrain & Preserve	Redemptive	Redemptive
<u>Directly binding today?</u>	Yes	No	No

So what are Christians to do when a government get tyrannical, and begins to coerce you out of your convictions? The entire reason this subject is raised here and now is that, after 800 years, Israel is no longer in the Land. They are now living under Gentile control, outside the Land of Israel.

So what do you do when the government coerces you to do something that God forbids you to do (i.e. worship a statue, Dan 3)? Or what do you do when the government forbids

you to do something that God commands you to do (i.e. prayer, Dan 6)? These circumstances open the door for civil disobedience (Acts 5:29).

### **Principles of Civil Disobedience**

1. Clear conflict between the laws of man and the laws of God
  - Key word is "clear" as in this case with Daniel's three friends
2. Exhaustion of all creative legal remedies
  - Paul says, as much as possible, live in peace with all men
  - Civil disobedience is not a first resort but a last resort
3. A willingness to pay the consequences
  - The blood of Christ saves us from hell, but that doesn't save us from temporal consequences
4. Maintaining respect for civil authorities
  - As civil disobedience is taking place, there is still respect for the God-given institution of government

Other passages that deal with Civil Disobedience:

- Hebrew midwives: Ex 1:15-17
- Rahab hid the spies: Joshua 2:3-4
- Sadducees legally persecuting the church: Acts 5:29
- Believers rebelling against edicts of Antichrist: Rev 13:10

(iv) The nation's obedience to the command (3:7)

**7** Therefore as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the **horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe**, and all kinds of musical instruments, all the peoples, nations, and *populations of all* languages fell down *and* worshiped the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

**7** Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

**7** Therefore, when all of the people "heard the sound of the trumpet, the flute, the lyre, the four-stringed lyre, and the harp, playing together along with various other instruments," all the "people, nations, and languages" began to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

**7** Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

- "...horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe" - the names of these instruments come from the Greek language, not Hebrew or Aramaic
- This fact is used by liberals to discount the fact that Daniel wrote of these events while in exile in Babylon in ~601 BC
- The fact is that the Greeks were enslaved by the Babylonians and Persians in the 7th century BC. The Greek culture did not begin with Alexander the Great, there were Greek mercenaries who came into both Babylon and Persia. So there were remnants of the Greek language still around Babylon at the time of Daniel
- If Daniel was written in the Greek era around the time of Alexander the Great, why are there just a handful of Greek terms on some musical instruments? Wouldn't we expect large passages of Greek throughout the book of Daniel?
- These were very early Greek terms; by the time of the LXX in ~270 BC, the terms for musical instruments used here were obsolete.

(b) The charge (3:8-12)

(i) Reiteration of the king's command (3:8-11)

**8** For this reason at that time certain **Chaldeans** came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

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**8** Just then, certain influential Chaldeans took this opportunity to come forward and denounce the Jews.

**8** Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

- So here come the former advisors to throw Daniel and friends under the bus

- "...Chaldeans" - *gubrin kasda'in*, these were nobles, not just normal astrologers

— They were in a position to profit personally from the execution of Daniel's three friends, perhaps even to step into the government positions they held

**9** They began to speak and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

**9** They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

**9** They told King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your majesty, live forever.

**9** They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

**10** You, O king, have made a decree that every person who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, is to fall down and worship the golden statue.

**10** You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the

golden image.

10 You, your majesty, issued this decree: 'Every man who hears the sound of the trumpet, the flute, the lyre, the four-stringed lyre, and the harp, playing together along with various other instruments is to fall down and worship the golden statue.

10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:

11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into the middle of a furnace of blazing fire.

11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

11 Whoever does not fall down and worship is to be thrown into a blazing fire furnace.'

11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

- They repeat the entire order thoroughly, basically reminding Nebuchadnezzar of his decree

(ii) The accusation regarding Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's violation of the command (3:12)

12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods, nor do they worship the golden statue which you have set up."

12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

12 "Certain influential Jewish men whom you appointed to manage the city of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—have neither paid attention to you, your majesty, nor served your gods. And they won't worship the golden statue that you set up."

12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

- The three friends could not worship the statue because as Jews, they were monotheists. Doing so would've broken the first two commandments (Ex 20:1-6).

- The reason the three friends were turned in to Nebuchadnezzar was due to jealousy. The Chaldeans could not replay the dream or provide an interpretation, but Daniel (with God's

help) did.

— Thus, Daniel was promoted over the Chaldeans to rule over the entire province of Babylon, and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon (Cf. 2:48)

— Once Daniel filled that position, he requested that his three friends be appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon (Cf. 2:49). The Chaldeans were obviously jealous that these foreign exiles were promoted to higher positions.

(c) The test (3:13-18)

(i) Nebuchadnezzar's command (3:13-15)

**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

**13** Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and furiously ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him.

**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

- He took their disobedience as a personal affront and an act of insubordination

— His decree was that if you don't worship, you'll be thrown into furnace in same hour. In this case, he wants to see these guys personally rather than just throw them into the furnace. This wasn't Nebuchadnezzar's usual approach.

— It appears as if Nebuchadnezzar is trying to give these guys a second chance

**14** Nebuchadnezzar began speaking and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden statue that I have set up?

**14** Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?

**14** Nebuchadnezzar asked them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't worship my gods and that you don't worship the golden statue that has been set up?

**14** Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

- The king distinguished between serving his gods and worshipping his golden image. This confirms that the worship of the image was primarily political rather than religious.

— However, failure to worship reflected disbelief in the king's gods, which was evidence of these Jews' lack of conformity to Babylonian culture and life

15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, *very well*. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can rescue you from my hands?"

15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, *very well*. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

15 Now, if you are ready at this very moment to obey 'the sound of the trumpet, the flute, the lyre, the four-stringed lyre, and the harp,' and worship the image that I have made... If you do not so worship, you will immediately have cast yourselves into the middle of the blazing fire, and what god is there who can deliver you from my power?"

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

- Nebuchadnezzar is challenging God's authority. He did the same thing in Dan 1 when he changed the names of Daniel and his three friends from God-honoring names to Babylonian names.

— Even though the king had witnessed and testified to the sovereignty and power of Yahweh previously (2:47), he clearly did not believe that God could save the three friends from the fiery furnace

— He may have assumed that providing information (the interpretation of the dream) was one thing, but saving people from a fiery death required greater supernatural power (Cf. 2 Kings 18:33; Is 36:13-20)

(ii) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's Godly response (3:16-18)

**16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego replied to the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, **we** are not in need of an answer to give you concerning this matter.

**16** Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

**16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "It's not necessary for us to respond in this matter.

**16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

- "...we" - emphatic in Aramaic; implies a contrast with *Yahweh*, meaning that God would give the king an answer  
— They didn't feel a need to answer the king's question: "who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (v15)

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

17 Your majesty, if it be his will, our God whom we serve can deliver us from the blazing fire furnace, and he will deliver us from you.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

- The three Jewish men believed the Lord could deliver them from any punishment the king would deliver to them

— However, they also acknowledged the possibility that it may be God's will to not deliver them

18 But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the golden statue that you have set up."

18 But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

18 But if not, rest assured, your majesty, that we won't serve your gods, and we won't worship the golden statue that you have set up."

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

- The Bible never teaches unlimited compliance with human government

— The Bible is clear that we are to submit to governmental authority, just as a wife is to submit to the authority of her husband. But there is a point at which the government (or the husband) can go too far.

The quiet, modest, yet positive attitude of faith that these three men display is one of the noblest examples in the Scriptures of faith fully resigned to the will of God. These men ask for no miracle; they expect none. Theirs is the faith that says: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

They believed not only in God's omnipotence but also in God's wise sovereignty...and that is a great lesson to learn in the midst of suffering.

(d) God delivers the three Hebrews (3:19-27)

(i) Cast into the furnace (3:19-23)

**19** Then Nebuchadnezzar was **filled with wrath**, and **his facial expression was changed** toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace **seven times more** than it was usually heated.

**19** Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

**19** Out of control with rage, Nebuchadnezzar's facial expression changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual.

**19** Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

- "...filled with wrath" - there is no fool on earth like a man who has lost his temper

- "...his facial expression was changed" - he appeared conciliatory earlier, but not any more

— The determination of the three friends to deny the form of allegiance that

Nebuchadnezzar required made the king as angry as he could be

- "...seven times more" - a proverbial expression and hyperbole for "much more" (Cf. Prov 24:16; 26:16); basically means "as hot as possible"

— Nebuchadnezzar's pride was severely punctured so he gave the foolish order to overheat the furnace, as if this would increase the torment. Actually, a slower fire would've been far more torture. Even Nebuchadnezzar in his irrational anger wanted the furnace to be as hot as his rage.

— What Nebuchadnezzar does here is consistent with his actions that we read of in Jer 29:22-23. Written a bit earlier than the time period of Daniel, Jeremiah documents two prophets who the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) roasted in the fire.

**20** And he ordered certain valiant warriors who *were* in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in order to throw *them* into the furnace of blazing fire.

**20** He commanded certain valiant warriors who *were* in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast *them* into the furnace of blazing fire.

**20** Then he issued orders to his elite guard to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with ropes and throw them into the blazing fire furnace.

**20** And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

- The fact that Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be tied up by the strongest men in his army also reveals the irrationality of his behavior, as if the friends would've broken the

ropes and they escape if ordinary men would've tied them up.

In anger, people act in strange and irrational ways. Anger itself is a form of temporary insanity. When you're in a state of anger, you say and do things that you never would've said or done when in a normal state. Sadly today, you can say something in anger on social media and it's enshrined forever. This is why Scripture talks over and over again about controlling our anger (Prov 16:32; Eph 4:26). It was a simple moment of anger that resulted in Moses being forbidden from entering the Promised Land.

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their *other* clothes, and were thrown into the middle of the furnace of blazing fire.

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their *other* clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

21 So the elite guard tied them up fully clothed, still wearing their robes, tunics, and turbans, and threw them into the blazing fire furnace,

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

- The king did not even waste the time to have them strip out of their clothes before being tied up, which would have been normal procedure in the ancient world

22 For this reason, because the king's command was harsh and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

22 because the king's command was so drastic. Since the furnace was blazing hot, its flames killed those who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the blazing fire.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

- His best soldiers were burned to death because of the extreme heat from the furnace

— The fact that the men who threw them into the fire perished is testimony to the faithfulness of God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3; Cf. Haman in Esther 7:10)

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell into the middle of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up.

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up.

23 Bound firmly with ropes, these three men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell into the blazing fire furnace.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

- It is possible that the three friends had the prophecy of Isaiah (a pre-exilic prophet) in their minds as they were being thrown into the fire...

Is 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. **When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.**

(ii) Protected in the midst of the furnace (3:24-25)

**24** Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up quickly; he said to his counselors, "Was it not three men *that* we threw bound into the middle of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Absolutely, O king."

**24** Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

**24** Astonished, King Nebuchadnezzar stood up in terror, and asked his advisors, "Didn't we throw three men into the fire, bound firmly with ropes?" In reply they told the king, "Yes, your majesty."

**24** Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

- As Nebuchadnezzar watched what was happening inside the furnace, he marveled to see that the three men did not perish immediately

— Rising from his seat, he saw them loosed from their bonds and walking around inside the furnace

[Dan 3:28; 6:22]

**25** He responded, "Look! I see four men untied *and* walking about in the middle of the fire unharmed, and the appearance of the fourth is **like a son of the gods!**"

**25** He said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!"

**25** "Look!" he told them, "I see four men walking untied and unharmed in the middle of the fire, and the appearance of the fourth resembles a divine being."

**25** He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

- "...like a son of *the* gods" - probably not a theophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ)
- Nebuchadnezzar doesn't call the fourth man the "Son of God" but "like" "a son of *the* gods." In fact, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the fourth man as an angel of God (v28).
- In Dan 12:1 we learn about an archangel named Michael whose job it is to guard and protect Israel
- Looking again at the chiastic structure of Dan 2-7, Dan 3 corresponds with Dan 6. In Dan 6:24, an angel (not Jesus) rescues Daniel from the lion's den.
- A good book on theophanies is: *Jesus Before the Manger*, Dr. Ron Rhodes. He documents each time Jesus shows up in the OT.

Based on what we've read so far about Daniel and his three friends, it's likely that just before they were thrown into that fire, cognitively they knew that God was faithful (Cf. v16-18). If they were given a test by their Sunday School teacher, they would get the answer correct on whether God was faithful. But when they came back out of the fire unscathed, they no longer had an intellectual knowledge that God was faithful, they now had experiential knowledge that He was faithful.

This is why God sends us into problems or circumstances where you have no one else to count on except God. Then God shows up. Then you no longer have a Sunday School understanding of God, you have actual real-life experience of who God is. God doesn't want us to just have head knowledge of who He is, He wants us to have experiential knowledge of His faithfulness, He wants it to be part of our walk and our life.

So when we have the opportunity to communicate the faithfulness of God in our lives, we're not just rolling off data from our minds, but we're communicating actual experiential knowledge of who God is. There is much more power in our testimony when we've experienced the faithfulness of God in real life than there is rattling off a bunch of verses. Experience is something that gets people's attention.

We don't have control, by and large, of the trials that come into our lives. But we do, however, have control over our reaction to them, our openness to the leading of the Spirit in the midst of those trials. Rather than getting angry while in the valley, we should look for teaching moments. James tells us to do something completely counter-intuitive...to be joyful during trials. [Woods]

### (iii) Taken out of the furnace (3:26-27)

**26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the **Most High God**, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the middle of the fire.

**26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

**26** Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the opening of the blazing fire furnace. He shouted out, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire.

**26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

- Nebuchadnezzar went as close to the door of the furnace as he could, and called the three men to come out of the furnace. They responded by coming out of the furnace, but the fourth person disappeared as mysteriously as he had appeared.

- "...Most High God" - used 13x in Daniel, 7x by either Nebuchadnezzar (3:36; 4:2,17,34), or by Daniel when speaking about God to the king (4:24,25,32)

— The phrase suggests a God of universal authority, but of otherwise undefined personal qualities. For a pagan, it would denote only the highest among many gods.

— By this title, the king ascribed greater power to God than to any other god

Just as the reign of Nebuchadnezzar is symbolic of the entire period of the Times of the Gentiles, so the deliverance of Daniel's three companions is typical of the deliverance of Israel during the period of Gentile domination. Particularly at the end of the Gentile period Israel will be in fiery affliction, but as Isaiah prophesied (Is 43:1-2):

1 But now, this is what the LORD says, *He who is your Creator, Jacob, And He who formed you, Israel:* "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!

2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you."

[Walvoord]

**27** The satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together *and* saw that **the fire had no effect** on the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their heads singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had *even* the smell of fire touched them.

**27** The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around *and* saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor

was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire *even* come upon them.

27 The regional authorities, viceroys, governors, and royal advisors gazed at those men and saw that the fire had no effect on their bodies—not a hair on their head was singed, their clothes were not burned, and they did not smell of fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

- "...the fire had no effect" - the Chaldeans worshipped fire as an image of the sun, so by restraining the fire from consuming the three friends, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too

- Nebuchadnezzar violated ANE protocol by throwing them into the fire while clothed; this wasn't common in the ANE. But his doing so out of anger and irrational rage became a testimony for God. The clothes were untouched so much that they didn't even smell like smoke.

— This demonstrates just how in control God is...he can take the irrational rage of a pagan king and turn everything around for His glory. This is complete and total deliverance.

— Here is the answer to the question Nebuchadnezzar posed in v15...what god is there who can rescue you from my hands?

Have you ever considered that a trial you have isn't just for you, but rather for someone else (an on-looker)? This episode had a powerful effect on Nebuchadnezzar, which ultimately led to his conversion. This wasn't just a Sunday School lesson on the faithfulness of God...this was the faithfulness of God in action, in real life. You are the only Bible some people will ever read. God may be doing something evangelistic through your trials when you rely on the power and faithfulness of God as you go through it with calmness and grace.

#### (e) Conclusion (3:28-30)

##### (i) Nebuchadnezzar praises God (3:28-30)

**28** Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has **sent His angel** and rescued His servants who **put their trust in Him**, violating the king's command, and **surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God**.

**28** Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

**28** Nebuchadnezzar spoke up and announced: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! He sent his angel to deliver his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and were willing to risk their lives in order not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

**28** Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

- Nebuchadnezzar saw the miracle that the three men were uninjured by the fire, and he worshiped the Lord

- This is what worship is: a response or reaction to truth. You're so overwhelmed about what you just heard or saw that your only reaction is to worship God.

- Worship has little to do with the style of music or our emotional reaction to a certain melody. It has to do with truth and being absorbed by it and exploding into praise with God.

- Worship is not about me or my musical preferences, it's about Jesus. It's about me wanting to get into the presence of fellow believers and glorify Jesus Christ for the fact that He is both my Creator and my Redeemer.

- "...sent His angel" - their "guardian angel"—likely Michael (3:25; 12:1; Cf. Ps 34:7)

- Angels were created by God for a specific purpose: ministering spirits who provide service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14)

- They are an extra measure of God's grace for believers. It is likely that once we're in heaven, we'll be shocked at the number of times an angel was dispatched by God to provide service to believers.

- "...put their trust in Him" - it was evident to Nebuchadnezzar how these three young men trusted in God...it was evident from both their words (v16-18) and their actions (2:49). Their belief wasn't a private matter...they lived it out in their words and actions; it was so conspicuous that it resonated with the Gentile, unbelieving, godless mind of Nebuchadnezzar.

- When unbelieving people see your life, can they see the trust that you have in God during your trials of life?

- "...surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God" - this is a tremendous definition of what it means to be a disciple, coming from an unsaved pagan mind: the sacrifice of one's own body for the zeal and glory of God.

- These young men went from the realm of being believers to the realm of being disciples. They didn't just trust Christ for initial salvation, but they kept trusting Him through the trials of life, to the point that they were willing to sacrifice their own bodies and lives so they wouldn't have to worship the statue of a pagan deity.

— To move from believer to disciple, God starts putting His hand on things in our lives that need to go and you start to say to the Lord, I can't do it myself, I need Your help. When that is your heart, you're moving in the direction of discipleship.

— Sometimes the things that God requires us to give up are of such severity that it could even cost us our own lives, our livelihoods, or our relationships (Cf. Matt 16:24-25; Rev 7:9; 12:11)

— However, God has a habit of replacing what we give up with something much better. We lament giving up things that maybe we love, but God is saying, Just give it to Me and I'm going to replace it with something much better.

— In fact, you don't discover your purpose in life or why you're even here (or why He saved you in the first place) until you move into discipleship. Meaning is discovered as you become a disciple.

- This episode was a training exercise in these three young men's life to bring them from belief to discipleship. If God does not exercise our "faith muscle" periodically by putting us into circumstances whereby we have no answers but Him, our faith will begin to atrophy and become weak. To strengthen it, He puts you into a situation that you can't figure your own way out of. If you're not in that circumstance currently, you will be shortly. God will not allow believers to remain children forever.

— Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were in an impossible situation...in fact, they didn't even know if God was going to get them out of it (v18). God took the "faith muscle" that was already present and fortified it through this ordeal.

The first four chapters of Daniel deal with Nebuchadnezzar. As the story progresses, we see the softening of the heart of this pagan king. God is gradually at work in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar. In Dan 2, he learned that God is the revealer of mysteries (2:47) after Daniel told him the dream and interpretation. In Dan 3 he learns that God can do things that no other god can do, no other god can save in the same way God can. In Dan 4, he'll learn about God's judgment, that God is sovereign in judgment.

How did Nebuchadnezzar learn these things...was he reading Hebrew Bible? No, he was watching God work through His people. God is in the business of teaching theology to those who are not interested in theology.

29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or *population of any* language that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses made a **rubbish heap**, because **there is no other god who is able to save in this way.**"

29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from

limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

29 So I decree that people from any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego will be destroyed and their house reduced to rubble, because there is no other god who can save like this."

29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

- The king was so impressed that he issued a decree ordering everyone to respect *Yahweh* and say nothing against Him

- Reminiscent of Gen 12:3, I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you (Cf. Ex 1:22; 4:22; Esther 7:10). God's promise to Abraham is so rock solid that here He turns the heart of a pagan king that he issues decrees that favor Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- Notice in Scripture that whenever Israel is attacked, and is the underdog by overwhelming odds, Israel comes out victorious and then gets a national holiday out of it? (Esther 7:10 - Purim; Antiochus Epiphanes - Hanukkah)

- Nebuchadnezzar's ability to cancel a law and replace it with another is evidence of the power and authority of the Babylonian king

- Rulers of the Persian Empire, which eventually replaced the Babylonian Empire (Cf. 2:38-39), could not do this; it was impossible for them to override a previously written law (Cf. 6:8,12,15; Esther 1:19).

- Nebuchadnezzar made Judaism a recognized religion with rights to toleration and respect. His edict may have been responsible in part for the fairly comfortable conditions under which the Israelites lived in Babylonian exile.

- "...rubbish heap" - a public toilet (Cf. 2:5; Ezra 6:11)

- "...there is no other god who is able to save in this way" - God is incomparable; Nebuchadnezzar states clearly and truthfully that no other god could've saved the three young men in this way (Cf. Ex 15:11)

- We can't lose sight of who Nebuchadnezzar is at this point...he's still a polytheist who simply added *Yahweh* to a large pantheon of deities. At this time, he had respect for God, but had not yet become a child of God; he has not yet come to saving faith.

Life for the Judean captives was comparatively pleasant in Babylon, in contrast to the bondage that their ancestors had experienced in Egypt. The Judahites were able to maintain some of their national traditions, such as rule by elders, and the teaching ministries of priests and prophets. They enjoyed freedom of movement in the land of

Babylon; elders of the people came to visit Ezekiel, who occupied in his own house (Ezek 8:1). The people could correspond with friends back in Judah (Jer 29:1,25). Favorable employment opportunities were also open to them (2 Kings 24:14-16), and many of them lived on fine, fertile land (Ezek 1:1,3; 3:15,23). Nevertheless being uprooted from the Promised Land and their settled conditions there constituted a judgment from God.

(ii) Nebuchadnezzar promotes the three Hebrews (3:30)

**30** Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego prosperous in the province of Babylon.

**30** Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

**30** Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego within the province of Babylon.

**30** Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

- This teaches us that God blesses the uncompromised life; God blesses those who are not sinless, but sinning less

— Daniel and his three friends would not compromise by eating the king's food; instead they ate vegetables, and God blessed them...they looked larger and better than those who ate the king's food (1:17-21)

— Daniel and his three friends went to God for the dream and interpretation, then communicated them to Nebuchadnezzar exactly as received, giving all credit and glory to God; in turn, they were blessed (2:48-49)

— The three young men would not compromise by worshiping the statue of a pagan king, upon penalty of death...God sovereignly and miraculously saved them, and Nebuchadnezzar "made them prosperous" (3:30)

- Sometimes we think that if we can get away with one little sin over here, and one little compromise over there, then I benefit. We think if we cheat God we can benefit ourselves. What a lie! The hand of blessing remains on these three youths and Daniel because of their consecration to God.

— Haggai's sermon (Haggai 1:3-11) encourages the returning exiles to get about the business of rebuilding the temple rather than building their own kingdoms at God's expense, while the temple sat half completed. They thought they were getting ahead, but what a deception. They were in the predicament they were in because they did not put God first.

— If Daniel and his three friends had compromised in any one of the three tests that they've been put through thus far, it would be a completely different outcome. We need to get our priorities straight, then we'll see God work differently in our lives.

This historical incident seems to have prophetic significance as well. In the coming Tribulation a Gentile ruler (7:8) will demand for himself the worship that belongs to God (2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:8). Any who refuse to acknowledge his right to receive worship will be killed (Rev 13:15). After assuming political and religious power, he will oppress Israel (Rev 13:7). Most of the people in the world, including many in Israel, will submit to and worship him. But a small Remnant in Israel, like the three in Daniel's day, will refuse. Many who will not worship the Antichrist will be severely punished; some will be martyred for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. But a few will be delivered from those persecutions by the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming [Cf. Zech 13:8; Rev 12:10-17].

In the forthcoming Tribulation period God will do for this believing Remnant what He did for Daniel's three companions. They withstood the decree of the king, and though they were not exempted from suffering and oppression they were delivered out of it by the God they trusted. [Pentecost]

### **Fire (as an idiom)**

- God's Presence (Ex 3:1-4)
- God's Pathway (Ex 13:21)
- God's Precepts (Ex 19:16-18; Cf. 20:1-17)
- God's Punishment (Gen 19:23-24; Lev 10:2)
- God's Power (1 Kings 18:24)
- God's Protection (Dan 3:25)
- God's Prophecy (2 Thess 1:6-10; 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 17:29-30)

### **Takeaways from Daniel 3**

- The Mosaic Law taught Israel how to live inside the land; the examples of Daniel and the three Hebrew youths taught them how to live outside the land
- Consecrate yourself to God; no compromise
- Live by faith from crisis to crisis, entrusting the results to God
- Be willing to pay the consequences if necessary
- Allow God to promote us in His due time (1 Peter 5:6)