

DANIEL 3:1-31

To Defy or Obey

KNOWING & GROWING

Read the scripture and highlight the words that stand out to you.

Tips: Read it out loud. Mark the words that are repetitive. Mark the words that stand out to you personally.

Daniel 3:1-30 [NKJV]

3 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. **2** And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **3** So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. **4** Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, **5** *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; **6** and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

7 So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. **9** They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! **10** You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; **11** and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. **12** There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. **14** Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it true,*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and* cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here.*" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

OBSERVATION & UNDERSTANDING

Take a closer look at king Nebuchadnezzar's response at the end of chapter 2 and how he starts in chapter 3. Notice the contrast between Daniel pointing out that the king is only the golden head of the statue in his dream... but ironically, chapter 3 starts with king Nebuchadnezzar erecting a huge image of solid gold to represent himself before the people.

How big was the statue that king Nebuchadnezzar built? Who did he invite and ultimately what did he want from this event?

V1-6. 60 cubits x 6 cubits = 90ft x 9 ft. This is a huge image of gold, set up in the plain of Dura.

He invites all these people: Satraps (governors of the provinces), administrators, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates (civic officer administering the law), all the officials of the province – basically, everyone in position and power, people of significance were gathered there.

His command was 'when you hear the varieties of instruments (horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery) play, fall down and worship the gold image. If you do not fall down to worship, then you will be thrown in the furnace. Interestingly, all these different instruments come from different regions and culture, which implies that he wants all of the people from everywhere to worship him.

What kind of character can we see from Nebuchadnezzar's action?

Definitely he thinks highly of himself. Whether he thought of him as a god or not we do not know. But he definitely thought everybody in power should bow down and worship to his power.

Who are the Chaldeans and what did they want?

V8-12. The Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. Chaldeans can be referred as Babylonians in general, but specifically, they are a semi-nomadic tribe that lived in the southern part of Babylon (which would be the southern part of Iraq today). They were an influential and highly educated group of people (known for their knowledge of astrology and astronomy during the Babylonian empire) (Reference -Quest study bible). In this text it shows that they are resentful, jealous, and antisemitic. They reminded the king of his decree and they pointed out the 3 Jews that disobeyed his command. And these are not any Jews, but the Jews that YOU the king have set in position.

Who are the 3 Jews?

V12. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These are Daniel friends that we saw in the earlier chapters.

Interestingly, in this chapter Daniel is not mentioned.

What was the king's last challenge to these three and describe the environment, situation they were in.

V13-15. The king says, "I'll give you one more chance to decide to fall down and worship the gold image, if you worship, great, if not, I will kill you". Lastly, see the king's challenge "and who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?". King Nebuchadnezzar is not only threatening the three men in front of all these group of people, but he is challenging God! From what he says, we can see the pride of this king in his power and might. Thinking there is no other above him, in contrast to what he heard from Daniel's message to him in the last chapter.. there is a God above you. He forgets all of the past, perhaps thinking, 'Cool thing that your god interpreted my dream, but I am above that. Do what I say, or else !!'

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond?

V16-18. To the king's questions "and who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?", they answered, "oh king, we don't need to answer you. If our God wants, He will deliver us, but even if He doesn't, it's okay we will still not worship your image or serve your gods". Mic drop!

Their answer displays their faith and commitment. They know that God is powerful and above law. He is sovereign! Remember, Nebuchadnezzar has gathered all different type of people, culture, power – but in front of all these people, these three did not back down and refuse to worship his gods and obey his order. Imagine the disgrace of the king as they defy the king's power.

How does the king respond to them and what happens?

V19-23 In rage. 'how dare you disobey me!' He binds them and throws them into a furnace that is 7 times higher than the regular temperature. It was so hot, that the men who were throwing in these three have been killed by the heat. But after he throws them in there, he can't believe his eyes. As he sees 4 people, unbound, freely walking around, and the 4th person looks different from the others.

Who is the 4th person?

V25. "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The original text does specify the identity of the being and it can be translated as "a son of the gods." Some say it is an angelic being sent by God. Some say this is God himself. Whether this being is God himself or an angel, we may not know. What we do know is that preserving them in the fire was a miracle. Would it be less of a miracle if it was an angel instead of God himself? Let's not focus on what we don't know, but let's focus on the obvious. That God delivered the three and protected them from the fire and Nebuchadnezzar was a witness of this miraculous event.

How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to all of this?

*V26-30. The king said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, **servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.**" He's not saying that he believes in this God, he just acknowledging that you are a God of Most High, as I challenged you, and you came through and protected them so you must be a real god, worthy to be 'recognized!'*

Imagine this scene, when the three were pulled out from the fire in front of all of the people watching carefully. The text describes as "the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them"

Then the king makes a decree that any people, nation, or language who speaks anything against the God of these, they will be killed, because there is no other God who can deliver like this. And he promoted these three in the province of Babylon.

What can we takeaway from this situation?

Remember the overall theme of Daniel. The Sovereign God who is in charge of ALL things, also loves us and cares for us. He is with us and He will not forsake us. He wants us to trust His Sovereignty, He wants us to stay faithful in obedience to Him because we love Him and He loves us.

In a closer look at this chapter, we can talk about 'deliverance'.

In a bigger picture, this is an imagery of salvation. God delivering us from death. By our confession of faith, he frees us when we were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace, we ought to burn, but He being with us, this fire has no power over us. Just like death has not power over us, sin has no power over us, we are free and we may experience this freedom and walk with God in this burning furnace environment. And when we come out of it, there is no shame, no hint of smoke.

In our daily lives, we may be in situations that we are expecting 'His deliverance'. But remember they were thrown into the fire, they were in the fire, and they came out without a singe of hair or evidence of smoke. Just as God was able to save the Hebrew boys, he was present with them whether they could see him or not. Same with us today. God is able to save us, whether we see him or not. He may allow us to go through the fire, but remember, He is with us and He will preserve us.

APPLICATION

1. How do you think Daniel's friends came to their decision to defy or obey? What are some factors that may have made it easy or difficult for them?
2. How confident are Daniel's friends of being delivered from the fiery furnace (vs 16-18)? What other fate do they consider a possibility?
3. How does the text describe how the three friends appeared after they came out of the fire? What does this teach us about God's ability to protect and care for His people?
4. Is there an area in your life that you are expecting His deliverance? Based on what we learned from chapter 3, whether you are about to enter the furnace or you are in the furnace, what is your takeaway on how to respond to your situation?