

God's Pursuit of a Pagan King - Daniel Ch 03

CREATION an image (90 ft tall) → kingdom built on pride, defiance, fear → Wants kingdom to endure?

Dan 3:1-2 King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide, ... 2 he gathered all the officials to come to the dedication of the image

- **Chap 2 Review** Dan 2:38-39 **You are the head of gold.** But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, **will rise to take your place.**

COMMAND → worship or burn

- 5...when you hear the sound of the 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. 6 And **whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."**

COMPLIANCE crowd bows → compliance maintains the status quo → does not transform hearts

- all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image

COMMITMENT → a heart resolved to honor God's word (decree)

- 12 There 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."**
 - **Babylon's perspective** → to not bow was an offensive disregard to Nebuchadnezzar's decree
 - **Their perspective** → honoring God's decree → worship the LORD your God serve Him only

COMMITMENT became a CATALYST FOR CHANGE -- Starts with fury, in his estimation he had power greater than God

- **13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king.**

SLIDE

- **Is it true** that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?
- 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?"

GOD IS ABLE → BUT IF NOT - "either way we won't worship"- DESCRIBES A HEART RESOLVED

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "**O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If 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. 18 But 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."**

- **GOD IS ABLE → BUT IF NOT → we will only worship Him**
- Faith that depends on the outcome isn't faith - it's a contract (I prayed he didn't answer, I won't follow)
- They never doubted God's ability → but they surrendered to God's will → **worship Him only**
- **Bigger Story** → **God is after Nebuchadnezzar's heart** - compliance would not have led to any of this

From FURIOUS RAGE to FILLED WITH FURY and carrying out his threat

- 19 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.**
- 21 **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.

From FILLED WITH FURY to ASTONISHMENT → God not only delivered the boys, he revealed himself

- 24 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."**
 - Many commentators see 4th person as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ
 - SLIDE → He not only came to deliver the boys...**he came to astonish Nebuchadnezzar**

ASTONISHMENT to ACKNOWLEDGEMENT they are SERVANTS of the Most High God

- 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!**".....[everyone] **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.**

From ACKNOWLEDGEMENT to WORSHIP "Blessed be the God of..."

- 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "**Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel 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.**"
 - He recognized it was trust in God that brought this deep resolve to these boys

From WORSHIP to PROCLAMATION → Nebuchadnezzar's Decree

- 29 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 Contrasts

In the beginning he called all peoples, nations and languages to worship his image

Now any people nation or language that speaks anything against the God of these boys...shall be torn limb from limb

Nebuchadnezzar

- From "Who is the god who is able to deliver you out of my hand"
- to "There is no other god who is able to rescue in this way"
- From honoring his gods (plural) To honoring the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego

→ They resolved to NOT worship the image (a simple obedience of God's word (major impact on Babylon)

→ God delivered them → but as importantly **revealed himself to a prideful pagan king**

You will never know what your obedience, or suffering or persecution will produce

→ God is beginning to reveal himself...next chapter he deals with heart and the root of his problem → Pride

→ God is after more than just acknowledging him → he is after transformed lives