

February 11, 2024

“Faith in the Fiery Furnace”
Lesson 2

Daniel 3:19-28

Intro

The book of Daniel shows the life of Daniel and other Jews in Babylon, under captivity to the king, Nebuchadnezzar. Some of these captives were talented young men who were specifically selected to serve the king. In chapter 3, just prior to today’s study passage, Nebuchadnezzar has had a large golden image erected, and instructed all the people to worship it. But three of these Jewish servants to the king (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) refuse to do as the king has commanded. The punishment for disobeying was death in a “blazing furnace”. Their faith in God was strong, confident that God would be with them.

Read Daniel 3:19-28

1. vs. 19: The king’s response to the trio’s refusal was anger

He was “furious”

These three had experience his favor in the past, but no longer

The text says the furnace was heated to “seven times hotter than usual”

The number 7 in the Bible indicates fullness, totality, or completion

This phrase indicates the furnace was heated to its maximum temperature

2. vs. 20: Two things of note here

First, the king ordered his *strongest* soldiers to tie up the three

It seems likely that he anticipated they would put up a fight

Second, the three of them were put into the furnace

A furnace with space enough for three grown men is pretty large

3. vs. 21: The full picture is given here

Their clothing is emphasized

They were wearing robes, trousers, and “other clothes”

These items would certainly catch fire quickly in such a hot furnace

They were then, dressed as described, thrown in to the fire.

4. vs. 22: Nebuchadnezzar makes an “urgent” command to his soldiers

He has been a man of haste and harshness earlier in Daniel

He ordered the execution of his wisemen when they couldn’t interpret his dream
(Dan.2:10-13)

When Daniel heard about this order, he called it a “harsh” decree (2:14-15)

Now he is angry at these three Jewish men who will not bow down to his idol

He acts again in haste and harshness

His command has caused the death of his “strongest” soldiers

5. vs. 23: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are noted as being “firmly tied”

They can do nothing to alter their situation here

At this point, they “fell” into the hot, blazing furnace, whose heat just killed the soldiers

This happened to them because they refused to “fall” at the feet of the idol

6. vs. 24: Nebuchadnezzar “leaped to his feet in amazement” after the three went into the fire
He asks his advisors to verify what he is seeing
“Weren’t there three men...?”
Something unique and miraculous has occurred, and the king is seeing it firsthand
7. vs. 25: Here is the king’s report of what he is seeing—an amazing thing has happened!
“I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed”
“The fourth looks like a son of the gods”
Some speculate, like the KJV, that this is the Son of God, Jesus
However, it’s not likely that a pagan king would recognize Jesus
Most other translations use a phrase “like a son of the gods”
Nebuchadnezzar might recognize this being as divine
This translation seems in keeping with his views and understanding
The four men are walking around, unharmed
How can the fire not have killed them, when the heat alone killed his soldiers?
8. vs. 26: The king goes to the opening and calls to the three men to come out
He calls them by their names, and calls them “servants of the Most High God”
He has calmed down, and realizes that their refusal to bow down was justified
They serve a God greater than the king or any of his idols
The term “Most High God” was used by the Israelites to show God’s superiority
There was no other God like Him, none as powerful or as caring
Nebuchadnezzar’s use of this term shows he sees God as above any other God
It doesn’t mean he accepts that God is the only god, and there are no others
9. vs. 27: What a contrast is shown here
The fire’s heat killed the soldiers when they were *outside* the furnace
The three men were thrown *into* the furnace, with flames and not just heat
Yet they are completely unharmed
Not a hair was singed
Their robes are completely unaffected by the fire or the heat
Nothing about them or their clothes even smells like smoke
All those officials who serve the king had bowed down to the idol in 3:2-3
Here they see these three men, who didn’t bow down, come out unfazed
10. vs. 28: Nebuchadnezzar displays a change of heart here
He gives praise to God
He acknowledges that God sent an angel to protect them in the fire
He acknowledges the depth of faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
“They trusted in him, and defied the king’s command, and were willing to give up
their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”
Again, the king doesn’t say that God is the only god, but this is a step in that direction
The witness of the three Israelites bore fruit because of their actions

Application: When our faith gets tested, we take one of two options. We give in to the testing, or we remain faithful to God. The three men in today's text were willing to die rather than give in to the testing. We may never face such a severe test as this one, but our faith does get tested by people and situations regularly. Will we give in to the temptation (the test), or will we remain faithful? It is important to remember that God is faithful to His people. Isaiah 43:2-3 says, "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." We are "more than conquerors through Christ".

Prayer: Father God, You are the one true God. We acknowledge that You are faithful to Your people, and that Your lovingkindness is forever. Strength our faith and trust in You so that we can resist the temptation to worship other "gods". Help us support each other in our trials of faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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