

CORE Seminar  
Spring 2024  
Book of Daniel: Part 1 [Chapters 1-6]  
Session 4: Daniel 3

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ICE BREAKER

*So I have a quick question – name a location in this nation/ world that you believe is truly evil. So, what would you do if you had to pack up – leave Portland... leave FBC Portland – and move to those locations?*

- *How would you continue to worship God?*
- *What would be the things you would look for to find community?*

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to Session 4 of our study in Daniel. This week we'll be in chapter 3. Before we get started let's review **chapters 1 & 2**.

**Daniel 1** teaches us that faithfulness to God often comes with trials, but it is met with divine favor and wisdom. Despite being in a foreign land under oppressive circumstances, Daniel and his friends remain firm in their convictions – they continue to sing the Lord's song even though they are in a foreign land. Their obedience not only protects them but also sets them apart, showing God's power and faithfulness.

**Daniel 2** provided us with a glimpse into the sovereignty of God over the affairs of mankind. God places and removes kings. God places and removes empires. It assures us that while human empires rise and fall, God's kingdom remains steadfast. God's power to reveal dreams – as seen in Daniel's divine interpretation of the king's dream – is a testament to His supreme wisdom. When confronted with impossible challenges, like Daniel, we should lean on God's wisdom, not on our own.

So now we move to **Daniel 3**. In this chapter, we will not see Daniel. But we will see Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah – and we will continue to see how they sing the Lord's Song in the face of temptation and adversity. These men were young professionals. When they came to Babylon they were trained, wined & dined, given new names and assimilated into Babylonian culture. Their story serves as an example of steadfast faith and trust in God. It also reminds us that no god saves like our God!

So, let's start off with a prayer and then we'll move to **Daniel 3**.

## PRAYER

Have someone in your group read Daniel 3:1-7

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> that 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. <sup>6</sup> And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." <sup>7</sup> Therefore, 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.

So what do we have here? King Neb has made an image of gold – about 90' tall – and he's put it out on a plain in Babylon.

- And he's brought everyone together - he wants EVERYONE [with exception of Daniel – maybe he sent him away because he knew he wouldn't bow – who knows] to come together to worship and bow down
- He's brought politicians, and magistrates and top officials in for the dedication of this "image."

But, that's not all. He's also brought in the musicians:

- Horn players
- Pipe, lyre, trigon [any trigon players in here?], harp and bagpipe players.
- In fact, to cover it all, Daniel said Neb brought in "every kind of music" for this dedication of this image.

King Neb had built a giant image of gold and he surrounded this image with orchestras and he placed in a very public place.

- And the decree was that if anyone was in that public place, was able to see the image and the orchestra began to play then they were, **“to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.”**

So, there are two things going on here:

1. First, King Neb **misinterpreted** Daniel’s interpretation from chapter 2. Remember, Daniel told him that the head of the statue made of gold was – King Neb. So King Neb made sure there was a FULLY golden image that would be worshipped.
2. Second, this is a picture of **conformity**. If they didn’t fall down and worship the image then they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. One of those, conform or become “well done.”
  - a. So most did it – because look at the alternative.

**QUESTION: Remember back to the end of chapter 2, King Neb was acknowledging the “God of Daniel,” for interpreting his dream. In chapter 3 we see that this was shallow and short-lived. How can we discern when praise and repentance are genuine?**

- **What was the difference between the image that King Neb built and the one he saw in his dreams?** [the one he built was entirely made of gold – in his dream, only the head was gold.]
  - **What does this suggest about King Neb’s view of himself and his empire?**
- **Everyone in the kingdom [including the Hebrew men] faced enormous pressure to conform. How does our culture pressure believers to reject God and conform to the culture?**
- **What are some of the idols of our day that compete for our worship?**

Any questions?

Ok, we’re about to get to the meat... let’s keep reading.

**Have someone in your group read Daniel 3:8-14**

<sup>8</sup> Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You, 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. <sup>11</sup> And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. <sup>12</sup> 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.”

So, we have some tattle-tales... the Chaldeans. But, it's not like it's difficult to see 3 standing up... right? They are on the plain of Dura and everyone is bowing down.

- BTW this is the same group that Daniel and his boys embarrassed in the first 2 chapters.
- Maybe they were looking for a way to get even.

Let's move along.

**<sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. <sup>14</sup> 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?"**

King Neb is a rage because the boys are not worshipping the image that he has created. He thinks it must be some mistake so he has them brought to him to correct this error.

Now remember, Babylon had conquered many nations. It was made up of many nationalities and many cultures. These people – that come from different lands – have their different religions and they have their different gods.

I want you to notice something about this passage – no one is required to give up their gods. It is really interesting. Most of the time we have this “here I stand moments” is because someone is asked to denounce God, but no one is asked to stop worshipping their gods.

- Neb is not asking them to worship the Babylonian gods instead of their gods.
- He is just asking that they worship the Babylonian gods in addition to their gods.
- They are being asked to demote God and their gods. Just scoot Him over in your heart and make a little bit of room – just make Him secondary.

Neb doesn't care that they worship other gods, BUT **in public – when the orchestra plays – everyone should bow down to the image that Neb has created.** “You can worship your gods privately, but in public you will acknowledge the Babylonian gods.”

**The ISSUE here is WORSHIP**

- For Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah the king's command was a problem. They had not forgot God's first Commandment – **“you shall have no other gods before Me.”**
  - Everything about our relationship with God, flows from this command.
  - In their eyes, nothing can be negotiated after that fact has been established.

**The verb for worship and serve is used 16 times in this chapter**

- Daniel 3:5, 3:6, 3:7, 3:10, 3:11, 3:12, 3:14, 3:15; 3:15; 3:18; 3:28 | *segid* = worship

- Daniel 3:12, 3:14, 3:17, 3:18, 3:28 | *pelach* = serve

These three men - Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah – understood this command from God.

- Because they understand the issue – no other gods – and because of who they are – God’s chosen men – **then we have the impasse...** and we have a fiery furnace...

Guys, this is **pressure**.

And this pressure extends to our time today. Do we not agree that we are increasingly living in a culture that says, “*you can privately worship any way you want, but in public, you must be like everyone else.*” [attached sociology study]

- The pressure continues as our culture leans on our faith in attempt to assimilate us into thinking we should privatize our faith, and to question the exclusive claims of Christianity.

If we don’t know that we are under the same pressure – then it’s a pretty good indication that we’ve given in to culture.

As we are about to see, the boys were under pressure, but they were not about to lose their resolve/ commitment to God.

**QUESTIONS: We’ve seen through the first 3 chapters of Daniel that Daniel and the boys have their convictions/ resolve about God. Why do you think it is often too late to develop our convictions in the moment of truth?**

Any questions?

Ok, let’s keep reading

**Have someone in your group read Daniel 3:15-18**

***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?”***

***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.”***

There is very little conversation and there are no negotiations because there is nothing that can be negotiated. They are not showy and not an arrogant defiance – this is a bold defiance.

- They are told to worship a foreign god publicly – and they did not run away from the pressure.

Neb said, you will fall down and worship me – the 3 said “we WILL NOT worship your gods.”

Their position cannot be made any clearer.

In their words we begin to see what true **faith** looks like. They say, “we believe that our God is able and will deliver us from your hand, but ***‘if not we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’***”

- Basically, they are stating that they will serve God **only** for who He is – and not for what they hope to **get** from Him. They loved and worshipped God for who He is and not for who they hoped for Him to be.

Faith plays a crucial role in both our personal life and life in general. It serves as the defining aspect that shapes our decisions and perspectives. The decisions of our lives are often determinative of where our faith lies.

How do we worship God?

- Is there an agenda attached? Is it, “God you take care of this and this and this. If you do so, then I’ll continue to worship you.”
- But, if you don’t take care of my agenda – what’s important to me – then You’re out of my life.
- Do we trust God to do OUR WILL – our desires – our agenda?

This is basically what Martha says when she runs out to meet Jesus, “Lord we know that You could have healed Him, if only You had come when WE said.”

- ***If only You had done what we think you should have done.***

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah didn’t do this. They showed their faith in God – that even when presented with death – they stated God will rescue us. BUT, even if He didn’t – they let it be known to Neb that they would not forsake God to worship his image.

They were devoted to God, no matter what would happen to them. This shows a faith that loves and serves God because of who He is, not because of what a person can get out of Him.

Possessing this kind of faith prepares us to face anything – making us spiritually immune to life’s fiery trials.

### Have someone in your group read Daniel 3:19-23

***<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.***

Now think about ALL that Neb loses here:

- He loses his temper – he was filled with fury.
- He loses some of the mighty men of his army – sacrificed them to cast 3 kids into a furnace.
- And, he potentially loses three of his best & brightest – remember how they tested in chapter 1? They were men who had government jobs and were in high standing.

### **QUESTIONS: What did these three men care about more than their lives?**

- **What does it mean to view your life as expendable for your faith, resolve and worship of God?**
- **What do you make of what the men say in verse 18, “But if not...”. Does this represent doubt on their part?**
  - **How do we typically respond when God doesn’t answer all of our prayers exactly the way we want Him to?**
- **When God doesn’t deliver us from dangers, sickness, trials or even death – does this mean that He has abandoned us? Why or Why not?**

Any questions?

Ok, let’s keep reading

## Have someone in your group read Daniel 3:24-30

<sup>24</sup> 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.” <sup>25</sup> 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.”

<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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.” <sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

What's funny – is that this is the section we often remember from our Children's story book Bibles or from talking & singing fruits and vegetables. Through these – we often talk about what they were saved from – the trial and the fire.

What we should be talking about is what they **found** in the furnace.

The first thing they found was **freedom**.

Not a hair on their head was singed – their clothes were in good shape – and they didn't even smell like smoke!

- That's CRAZY!
- We go camping and EVERYTHING smells like smoke.
- For these guys - nothing was burned!

Isaiah 43:1-3a

**43 But now thus says the Lord,  
he who created you, O Jacob,**



**he who formed you, O Israel:  
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.  
<sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.**

OR was there something that was burned?

- The only thing that was burned were the ropes that bound them. [**verse 24** - **three men bound into the fire** | **verse 25** - **four men unbound, walking**]

The biblical principle is this – the Lord in the furnace uses the furnace to set us free in so many ways

- He burns the things that bind us
  - Self-reliance
  - Self-absorption
  - Worldliness
  - Sinful habits
  - Sinful relational patterns
- When you have been through the furnace what matters to you changes drastically!

THIS PASSAGE IS TEACHING A CHRISTLIKENESS **ESPECIALLY THROUGH** OUR SUFFERING.

- This suffering is especially tasted while in the furnace

The 3 did not find freedom **FROM** the flames – they found freedom **IN** the flames.

**The second thing they found was fellowship.** They found a 4<sup>th</sup> Man.

There are so many ways to apply this narrative to our lives. The most important thing to remember is that Jesus is with you. Always. Whatever you’re going through—Jesus is with you!

When we go to the furnace, He is not joining us there – we are joining Him there.

- Because He is already in the furnace.
- He was/is there so that we will never have to experience the furnace.

The lesson of the 4<sup>th</sup> Man is Jesus ALWAYS knows where His people are and is ALWAYS there with them.

**QUESTIONS:** How do you interpret the phrase " that the fire had not had any power " in verse 27?

- What was the only thing that burned up in the furnace?
- Why is that important?
- What is the lesson of the 4th man?
- When have you sensed Him in times of trouble?
- Why do you think the King promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego after their defiance?

### CONCLUSION

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's miraculous survival in the furnace shows that faith in God – no matter the threat – is what truly defines us as His children. This is a truth that Christians often forget while hoping to conform God to our agenda – and to not experience suffering. According to the Bible, suffering can shape our character, deepen our trust in God. Jesus showed us that trusting in God's provision can lead to freedom and fellowship, reminding us to always be thankful for God's presence.

## Sociology Study

Sociologists at Oxford University completed a study a few years ago. The name of this study was called, “Premarital Sex in America.” And obviously, they were measuring the pre-marital activities of young American men. So, they took 2 groups of men:

- One group were unmarried, college educated American men ages 18-23 who **did not** grow up in the Christian faith – and **did not think** that pre-marital sex outside of marriage was wrong.
- The second group were unmarried, college educated American men ages 18-23 who **did** grow up in the Christian faith – and **did teach** that pre-marital sex outside of marriage was wrong.

Now here is what the sociologists found:

- In the first group, **23%** of them were virgins.
- What do you think the number was from the second group?
  - The second group – the one that grew up in the Christian faith – **28%** of them were virgins.

Based on the percentages, the sociologists stated we have two groups of people – with similar characteristics but different beliefs. BUT, the way they are actually practicing is negligible – there’s no difference.

- So why?
- The sociologists said this – your church tells you something about sex and your culture tells you something about sex – and based on the percentages, you believe what the culture tells you.
- Applied to our lesson - I believe what Christianity tells me in private, but in public I listen to and model my life around what culture says is ok.