

Daniel

"Faith and the Fiery Trial"

(Daniel 3:1-30)

The Date/Setting: There is no explanation of why Daniel does not appear in the story. He may have been away for the King, or ill. The events in Chapter 3 took place after the events of Chapter 2 for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have been promoted. Also, it is likely that these events took place before Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Chapter 4 since events involved in its interpretation point toward the end of the King's rule. Dura is a real place, either isolated or walled, and could be at one of several locales near Babylon.

The Outline:

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's Image (3:1-7)
- B. Daniel's Friends Accused (3:8-12)
- C. Daniel's Friends Tried (3:13-18)
- D. Daniel's Friends Sentenced (3:19-20)
- E. Daniel's Friends Punished (3:21-23)
- F. Daniel's Friends Delivered (3:24-27)
- G. Nebuchadnezzar's Reaction (3:28-30)

The Key Players:

- God
- Nebuchadnezzar
- The Herald
- The Babylonian Officials
- The Chaldeans
- Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego
- The Soldiers
- "A son of the gods"

Nebuchadnezzar's Image

1	Nebuchadnezzar made a large image of gold (1).
2	The King called his officials to its dedication (2).
3	The officials gathered before the image (3).
4	The Herald announced the instructions (4-5).
5	The Herald announced the potential rewards/penalties (6).
6	The dedication service commenced (7).

Daniel's Friends Accused

7	The Chaldeans told the King that some Jews did not comply (8-12).
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Daniel's Friends Tried

8	The angry King brought the insubordinate Jews before him (13).
9	The King asked them if what he had heard was true (14).
10	The King offered the Jews a "Do-Over" (15).
11	The King reiterated the penalty for noncompliance (15).
12	The King foolishly challenged God (15).
13	Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered the King (16).
14	The Jews told the King that God was able to save them (17).
15	The Jews told the King that they would not comply with him (18).

Daniel's Friends Sentenced

16	The King became enraged (19).
17	The King directed that the furnace be heated higher than normal (20).
18	The King had soldiers bind the Jews and cast them into the fire (20).

Daniel's Friends Punished

19	The Soldiers bound the Jews and threw them into the fire (21).
20	Due to the high temperatures the Soldiers died (22).
21	The Jews fell bound into the furnace (23).

Daniel's Friends Delivered

22	The King expressed surprise to his counselors & they responded (24).
23	The King sees four men unbound and walking within the furnace (25).
24	The King reveals that one looks like "a son of the gods (25)."
25	The King acknowledges the Most-High (But not the only) God (26).
26	The King directed the men to come out of the furnace (26).
27	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire unharmed (26).
28	The people observed that the fire had no effect on the men (27).

Nebuchadnezzar's Reaction

29	Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the sovereignty of God (28).
30	The King made a decree against speaking down to God (29).
31	The King acknowledged the unique power of God (29).
32	The King promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (30).

What is true faith?

True faith confesses the Lord and obeys him regardless of the consequences. The three Jewish men did not presume that God would save them. Rather, they stated that he was able to do so and left it at that. These men were delivered on this occasion because it was God's will. On the other hand, Stephen was stoned for his faith (Acts 7).....and this was also God's will.

Why did the Lord include this story in the Book of Daniel?

We are called to faith in the person and works of Jesus Christ, and stories about true faith are encouraging. The example of these three Jewish men and how God protected them would have been encouraging for the exiled people in Daniel's day. Peter encourages us in our day not to be surprised when the fiery trial comes upon us as it did to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Revelation 13-14 remind us that an arrogant leader like Nebuchadnezzar will someday construct an image of himself and force people to worship it. Perhaps people in those days will take comfort in the fact that God will protect his people then, as he did during the days of Daniel.

Lessons Learned:

- Although human governments are sanctioned by God they can and do abuse their power.
- When human governments command something different than God, believers must obey God.
- When the believer disobeys human government to obey God, they must take the consequences.
- If the believer survives government punishment, he is not to overthrow the government.

Next Week: "Learning the Hard Way (Daniel 4:1-37)"