

# NO OTHER GOD CAN SAVE LIKE THIS

## Daniel 3:1-30

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Tonight we have the joy of continuing our study of the Book of Daniel.

Please turn your Bibles and your attention to Daniel chapter 3.

An incredible story that most of us will have known since childhood.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and the Fiery Furnace.

We're going to walk through this incredible narrative ***but** before we dive in, can someone remind us of the central theme of Daniel?*

→ **The Absolute Sovereignty and Trustworthiness of the True and Living God.**

We will see that this chapter puts that theme on display in an incredible way!

I also want to show you how this chapter fits into the structure of the book.

You'll remember that we are in the Aramaic section of Daniel that runs from chapter 2 through ch. 7.

And I want you take a look again at the "chiastic" structure that Daniel organized this section with.

### **Chiastic Structure of the Aramaic Structure (Daniel 2-7):**

**Dan. 2** – Vision of the four world empires

**Dan. 3** – Deliverance of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace

**Dan. 4** – Judgment of Nebuchadnezzar resulting in repentance

**Dan. 5** – Judgment of Belshazzar resulting in death

**Dan. 6** – Deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den

**Dan. 7** – Vision of the four world empires

Another important thread to understand here is how God's faithfulness to persevere His people Israel through exile.

Both chapter 3 and 6 will show God's faithfulness to deliver His faithful people from the face of certain death.

So this is yet another passage that declares "GOD IS SOVEREIGN!"

But there's something else this passage teaches us.

That is the **courage** and **cost** of **true devotion** to God.

This is an example of true convictions that will not bend in the face of pressure, and even in the face of death.

A refusal to compromise and violate one's conscience, even if it means suffering the worst fate in this life.

The kind of real, personal devotion to God that believes the what the puritan Thomas Brooks said:

*"It is better to have all the afflictions in the world upon us, than to have our souls [afflicted] with the least sin." (Remedies)*

To have "...a soul [that would] rather suffer the worst that men can do, than do the least thing that God forbids." (Remedies)

And this kind of thinking is *desperately* needed for us in our day.

We are in a sweeping current of pressures and pleasures that all tempt us to **compromise**.

We live in a culture of compromise.

We are happy to espouse "strong convictions" as long as those serve our vision.

But the moment those so-called convictions begin to get in the way of something we really want, we begin to compromise.

Very often this begins with small, private, subtle shades of compromise...

*Entertaining the thoughts of bitterness or lust, lingering too long with the eyes, shading the truth just enough to my advantage,*

*Massaging the details of the story to protect or promote myself,*

*Rationalizing sin by confessing a “sanitized version” of it...*

It is easy in our church culture to give lip-service to “having strong convictions” so long as they are **advantageous** to me and my vision.

But the test of authenticity for convictions always comes with the **cost**.

Are you willing, first of all, to **deny yourself**? That’s always the fundamental cost of convictions – **self-denial**.

You must deny your autonomy and your vision for significance and say, as we were singing:

*I am not my own – I belong to the Lord – my conscience is bound to Him!*

And so, as I have said before, we need to have convictions that have an **overriding** power in our lives

*What do I mean by that?*

That when there’s an arm wrestle between your fleshly desires and God’s standard, what’s going to win out?

A true conviction will win out! Defective convictions will give way.

**A true biblical conviction will override the influence of our flesh, our feelings, our friends, and our fears.**

And that is what we find on display in the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Convictions that had an overriding power over their fears.

Because their fear of God and personal devotion to Him was **genuine**.

They displayed the kind of conviction that responds to the warning of Christ in **Matthew 10:28** (*which we need to hear tonight*):

*“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Beloved, that warning needs to grip our souls in self-examination tonight.

This is not a game.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego knew that and lived accordingly.

I want to make the case tonight that their courageous stand flowed downstream from their **personal devotion** to God.

Their personal devotion that bound their consciences to His Word and so compelled them to **refuse** the temptation of **idolatry**.

We’re going to see tonight that it all boils down to that: **worship!**

The timeless question that will rise from this narrative and confront us tonight is this: ***who will you worship?***

So, let’s dive in.

We’re going to walk through this narrative by moving through 4 major scenes:

- 1. Nebuchadnezzar’s Idolatrous Requirement (3:1-7)**
- 2. The Hebrews’ Unbending Resolve (3:8-18)**
- 3. God’s Miraculous Rescue (3:19-27)**
- 4. Nebuchadnezzar’s Humbled Response (3:28-30)**

Let’s start with this first scene: **#1 Nebuchadnezzar’s Idolatrous Requirement (vv. 1-7)**.

We’re going to Read through verse 1-7 and make observations as we go.

## v. 1

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

We don't know exactly how much time had passed between Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue,

But it seems likely that enough time had passed that the **sobriety** of that confrontation with God had clearly worn off.

And I think it is also very likely that this is a direct statement of pride from Nebuchadnezzar in defiance of that dream.

Follow the flow of thought in Daniel's writing these two narratives.

Neb had been told by God that he was **the head** of gold that would give way to another kingdom...

And here we find him making the **whole** statue of gold...almost as if to say, I am the whole statue, my kingdom will never pass away...<sup>1</sup>  
This image would've been an image of a human form.

The word used here is the same as the image (the statue) in chapter 2, which clearly was a **human** image.

And even though we don't know if this image was made in Nebuchadnezzar's likeness, his intent for this image to represent him is undeniable.

As we continue reading, I want you to notice how many times Daniel emphasizes that "Nebuchadnezzar had set up this image".

Now, the proportions of this "image" are interesting.

A height of 60 cubits (a cubit = about the length of your forearm).

But a width of only 6 cubits.

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<sup>1</sup> Whitcomb 1985: 53.

So, this is about 90ft tall, but only 9 ft wide.

Very disproportional. A 10 to 1 ratio of height to width.

I just want you to have in your mind that this golden image would've been very imposing – in many ways, breathtaking.

And what was Neb's purpose in doing this?

It was to bring glory to himself by testing the loyalty of his subjects.

Let's vv. 2-5

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|---|---|
| 2 | Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent <i>word</i> to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.                            |
| 3 | Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they were standing before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. |
| 4 | Then the herald loudly called out: "To you it is said, O peoples, nations, and <i>men of every tongue</i> ,   |
| 5 | that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to <b>fall down and worship</b> the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.  |

Neb gathers all his chief officials here in the plain of Dura.

Now, we need to just point out that Daniel is absent in this entire story?

Why wasn't Daniel required to be at this event?

I think the best answer is at the end of chapter 2 – that Daniel's role was different and really *above* the roles served by his three friends.

### **Dan. 2:48-49**

- 48 *Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him rule with power over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.*
- 49 *And Daniel sought of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.*

I think that clearly explains why Daniel was not alongside his three friends here.

He was service in the King's court and likely managing things in Babylon in the King's absence...

Or perhaps he was off traveling on royal assignment, either way his absence is likely simply due to his difference in rank.

But let's picture the scene here – a sea of people assembled by King Nebuchadnezzar.

And I believe one of the things Neb wanted to accomplish here was a test of loyalty.

He is concerned with his power and he wants to put his own glory on display.

So he assembles his top leaders to test their loyalty and likely to attempt to **unify** them under him.

Remember, as Nebuchadnezzar conquered lands, his empire was a multi-national government.

The ranks of his top officials were men from “every tongue” (v. 4). The assembly here truly represented “nations” (v. 4.).

So this mandate would be a powerplay to force their compliance to Neb's authority.

But his mandate here was a direct assault on the authority of the Most High God.

Because his mandate goes far beyond mere national allegiance...the **requirement** from Nebuchadnezzar was one of **worship**.

That's exactly what was being demanded here.

Notice again v. 5: when you hear the music...*“you are to **fall down and worship** the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.”*

I want you to highlight and take note of that word: **worship**.

It is going to be repeated over and over again throughout this chapter because it is so crucial to understand that this was about **worship!**

Let's read on in v. 6 now because this command to worship was followed up by a horrifying threat:

v. 6

“But whoever does not **fall down and worship** shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”

This was no idle threat.

Neb. was infamous for his torture and cold-blooded methods of killing.

There's a powerful letter from the prophet Jeremiah written to the exiles in Babylon in Jeremiah 29.

Jeremiah reminds them how God used Nebuchadnezzar (mentioned by name). to kill two false prophets, Zedekiah and Ahab.

And Jeremiah says that Neb's means of killing them was by **roasting them** in the fire (cf. Jer. 29:21-23).

So, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego would've have had no doubts about what was at stake if they failed to comply with Neb's requirement.

In fact, when we put the whole story together, it seems likely that the fiery furnace was in sight of this assembly.

So, just imagine that as we continue the story.

The command to bow down at the sound of the music has been announced.

The threat of the fiery furnace has been declared.

Nebuchadnezzar's massive orchestra stands ready to signal the beginning worship service.

**v. 7**

“Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and *men of every tongue* fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”

The music sounds and the response of compliance is immediate – the assembly fell down and **worshipped** the image.

What was on display on the plain of Dura as this sea of people bowed down was naked **idolatry**.

“They fell down and **worshipped** the golden image...” it says.

But I want to submit to you that while the external act here was bowing to the golden image, there were ALL sorts of **unseen idols** being worshipped here.

I'm talking about what Ezekial describes as the idols of the heart (Ezek. 14:3).

I find it hard to imagine that everyone in this multinational, multi-religious assembly suddenly had total devotion to King Neb. and this forced idolatry.

Yet, we are told they all bowed down.

*Why?*

I have no doubt that countless were bowing externally to this Golden Image only because they were first bowing in their hearts to idols of self.

Idols of self-preservation – *I don't want to roast in the fire...*

Idols of position – *I want to keep my job and get that next promotion...*

Idols of peace – *I just want to maintain the “peace” here...*

Idols of people-pleasing – *I don't want to stand out like a fool...*

Idols of self-promotion and reputation – *maybe they will notice my loyalty...*

And the list could go on. Because, as John Calvin said, the human heart is a perpetual *idol factory*.

Here's what I want you see (and self-examine) – this was no mere external act – it was first a bowing of the heart to a delusional view of self and glory.

Our English word Idolatry comes from a Greek compound word that literally means "*image-service*".<sup>2</sup>

And you see, that's what worship is. It is always **service**.

We could put it this way – you are in *servitude* to whatever you worship.

In fact, that's a helpful way to understand worship. It is always expressed in acts of service that cost you something.

And the question for humanity is not whether or not you worshipping, but **who** you are worshipping.

To whom are you rendering acts of service? To whom are you in servitude – enslaved?

What is an idol? It is any image of glory that is not God.

It is any alternative outside of serving God through Christ.

And so, before you wag your head at the masses bowing down, understand this – make no mistake:

If you were there, and if anything other than God was on the throne of your heart, you would've bowed down as soon as the music queued.

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<sup>2</sup> Whitney Oxford (*Everyday Idolatry*, p. 173):

As David Powlison wrote, *“The worship of tangible idols is...an expression of a prior heart defection from YHWH your God.”*<sup>3</sup>

So, understand this – those who fell down here to worship did not fall very far.

Meaning a lifetime of heart idolatry made this one act of external idolatry *natural*.

The only way for someone in this crowd to resist would be for countless other heart idols to have already died the death of true repentance.

Which is why what we find next is such a profound example of spiritual devotion to God – an example that we cannot afford to ignore tonight.

Let’s walk through this second scene -- **#2 The Hebrews’ Unbending Resolve (3:8-18)**.

Let’s walk through these verses and make some key observations.

### **vv. 8-12**

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| 8  | For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came near and brought charges against the Jews.  |
| 9  | They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: “O king, live forever!   |
| 10 | “You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.   |
| 11 | “But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.  |
| 12 | “There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, <i>namely</i> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, do not pay attention to you; they do not serve your gods and do not worship the golden image which you have set up.” |

What we find here is a report from certain Chaldeans who seem all too eager to turn in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

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<sup>3</sup> Powlison, *Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair*, p. 36

I think you can sense the spite and resentment with which these Chaldeans played the tattletale.

Remember that these young Jewish exiles had been elevated to some of the highest offices and this would have no doubt sparked bitter jealousy.

But in their accusation, we find a remarkable example of courageous convictions.

The accusation is this, v. 12:

“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, do not pay attention to you; **they do not serve your gods and do not worship the golden image which you have set up.**”

As the sea of men fell on their faces at the sound of the music, it immediately exposed three men standing.

And I want us to consider the dilemma that these three Hebrew friends were in.

While their attitude was to submit to this king as an earthly authority, their ultimate devotion is to God as the ultimate Authority.

This situation has now pitted these two authorities against each other in an incompatible way – and one must win out.

A choice has to be made – *which will win out in the hearts of these men?*

Consider the temptations to rationalize and compromise:

- We want to live!
- We want to retain our positions
- We want to prove our respect to Nebuchadnezzar (is this really the battle worth dying for?)
- Everyone else is doing (likely many other Jews)
- “bowing down is only an external act and we all know that true worship is in heart”
- Why not self-preserve in the name of ‘wisdom’

But the convictions of these men had an **overriding** power to crush all those temptations.

All those idols were powerless because God was on the throne of their hearts.

And this is key – these men understood that to bow down would constitute an act of spiritual infidelity.

They understood that to bow down would have yielded an endorsement of pagan worship.

No matter what they ‘meant’ in their hearts, anyone watching would understand it as an affirmation of the worldview in play.

[IMP] Think of how that applies to things in our day like using LGBTQ pronouns, or attending so-called gay weddings...

Those are extreme examples, but what about laughing at certain jokes, or turning a blind-eye to sin...

We need to ask, by doing this, regardless of what may be in my heart, am I communicating an endorsement of something godless?

These three friends knew that bowing down would constitute an act of treason against the true and living God.

Their consciences were bound to God’s Word -- His clear commands like in the First of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:3):

***“You shall have no other gods before me.”***

And the second commandment (Exod. 20:4-5),

- 4** ***“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.***
- 5** ***“You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God...”***

They were conscience bound to God's Word.

And they were personally devoted to God.

That's why they stood firm.

But this report of three men standing sent Nebuchadnezzar into a rage.

Read vv. 13-15

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|---|
| <p><b>13</b> Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and wrath said to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; then these men were brought before the king.</p> <p>14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you are not serving my gods and do not worship the golden image that I have set up?</p> <p>15 "Now if you are ready, at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, then you shall fall down and worship the image that I have made. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and <b>what god is there who can save you out of my hands?"</b></p> |
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In his fury, Nebuchadnezzar utters that final question as a mocking threat, again notice he is presuming to be on equal footing as a god...

*"What god is there who can save you out of **my** hands..."*

But his question ends up being the perfect set-up for the true and living God to break through with an answer.

In Neb's mind, the obvious answer was that there was no god who could thwart his decrees.

But we will see in a moment how God silences that high-handed pride.

But before we get there, we have to slow down and learn some powerful lessons from these three godly friends.

Because their response to Nebuchadnezzar's confrontation is simply beautiful.

Let's read vv. 16-18 and then consider some key points.

## vv. 16-18

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|----|---|
| 16 | Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to respond to you <i>with</i> an answer concerning this matter. |
| 17 | “If it be <i>so</i> , our God whom we serve is able to save us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will save us out of your hand, O king.                    |
| 18 | “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods, and we will not worship the golden image that you have set up.”            |

*I love this! Their response is incredible!*

We’re going pull the car over here for a moment and consider *Three Displays of Unbending Devotion to God from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego*

Three displays that are lessons for us – things we can pray and strive to imitate as we face the pressures and pleasures of this world.

### *#1 Unrelenting Courage in Their Stand (16a)*

Nebuchadnezzar is testing them and offering them a second chance to comply with his command.

But what he finds is that their courage is unrelenting.

Although they clearly respect him, they conscientiously defy him here.

This is the mindset that Peter and the Apostles had in Acts 5:29 when they were commanded to stop teaching in Jesus name:

*“We must obey God rather than men.”*

This is such an important principle about our default posture of submission to human spheres of authority that God has ordained.

Toward government, employers, parents, and pastors we should have a default mode of submission unless we’re asked to sin and breach our devotion to God.

In fact, in that same letter that Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon, he touched on this principle when he wrote this – listen – Jer. 29:7

*'Seek the peace of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Yahweh on its behalf; for in its peace you will have peace.'* (Jer. 29:7)

Believers are not called to be revolutionaries or rebels.

Instead, we follow the command of Peter in **1 Peter 2:13-14**

- 13** *Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,*  
**14** *or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do good.*

But submission to human authority stops when mandates to sin begin.

And that's where these 3 friends stood with unrelenting courage.

But notice this -- not only do they not back down from their resolve, they're not even panicked!

You can sense that in the way they speak to King Neb.

Which brings us to a 2<sup>nd</sup> characteristic of their unbending devotion to God: **#2 Uncompromising Clarity in Their Speech (16b-17a)**

Now I want you to see something here in their response.

Because Nebuchadnezzar had asked them two questions – but one was directed at them and the other one was just an insult.

So, the question they're supposed to answer is Nebuchadnezzar's original one in v. 14, *'is it true that you won't bow to my gods?'*

He wants them to answer that question.

He doesn't expect them to answer his insult in v. 15, *"what god is there who can save you out of my hand?"*

Yet these three men disregard his first question and instead respond to his insult. *It's just perfect!*

To the 1<sup>st</sup> question, they respond: *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to respond to you with answer concerning this matter”* (v. 16)

*I love this!*

With a respectful steadiness, they appeal to Nebuchadnezzar’s relationship to them and knowledge of their devotion to their God.

The idea is, you know us – you should have known we would never bow down to your gods.

But they go on to respond to Neb’s foolish claim that no god could save them and notice what they say.

*“Our God whom we serve is able to save us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will save us out of your hand, O king.”*

With faces set like flint, they seize this to proclaim God with *uncompromising clarity*.

Just like their friend Daniel, these 3 men take this opportunity to proclaim the sovereignty and power of the true and living God!

They know God’s character and power that they are confident to proclaim His ability to deliver them from the fiery furnace.

But what comes next is perhaps the most important lesson in this chapter.

Listen again to their words moving from **vv. 17 to 18**:

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 17 | <i>...Our God whom we serve is able to save us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will save us out of your hand, O king.</i>  |
| 18 | <i>“<b>But if not, [“even if He doesn’t”]</b> let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods, and we will not worship the golden image that you have set up.”</i> |

That brings us to consider a 3<sup>rd</sup> display of their devotion to God: **#3**  
*Unconditional Confidence in God’s Sovereignty (17b-18)*

Even though Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had no doubt that God was able to save them, they did not presume to know His plan.

This is the heart of someone who is totally surrendered to the principle that *“whatever my God ordains is right!”*

This is total trust that God knows what is best for His glory and our good.

This is a heart that knows that His glory *is* our good.

So we find a display of *unconditional confidence in God’s sovereignty*. It is not conditioned on God giving me the relief I so long for.

It simply says, *“I belong to the Lord, I am not my own.”*

Their faith is like that of Job (in Job 13:15): *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him!”*

Unconditional trust.

Beloved, this is what we so often lack.

This is why trials destabilize us and sometimes even the smallest disappointments and inconveniences send us into panic-mode.

However lofty our theological view of God’s sovereignty may be, the test of authenticity is this: *do you trust Him unconditionally.*

Regardless of circumstances or cost – do you say, O God, whatever you ordain is right!

These three stood firm and said, even if God’s plan is NOT to deliver us physically, we trust that He knows best and His glory is our good!

Therefore, WE WILL NOT BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP YOUR GODS!

Do you see how their trust in God’s sovereignty fueled their stand here?

I want you to consider an important lesson here from these three brothers of ours.

In the midst of trials, our first reaction is often to ask, “will God be faithful to me?”

Mature believers do not ask that question – instead, they are chiefly concerned with this question as the trial presses in:

*“will I be faithful to God!”*

That’s the question that Shadr., Mesh., and Abed., were concerned with here!

Not, ‘will God be faithful to me?’ but, “will I be faithful to God?” And that changes the prayer the believer prays in the midst of trials.

The prayers are not consumed with panicked requests for God to be true, but are filled with desperate cries to conformed into His likeness!

That’s what they were concerned with.

Davis wrote,

“It’s as if they said: ‘We don’t know what our God will do, O king; you may turn us into puddles of carbon; but in one sense it doesn’t matter; the bottom line is that we will not serve your gods or worship your image.’

What matters for them is not deliverance but obedience.”<sup>4</sup>

Todd Dykstra wrote simply: *“Obeying God was more important than life to these men.”* (course notes, p. 84).

To use Thomas Brooks’ words again, *I would rather suffer the worst that men can do, than do the least thing that God forbids.*

*Beloved, does that mark us?*

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<sup>4</sup> Davis 2013: 56.

*Are we marked by this kind of unconditional trust in God's sovereignty?*

Before we move on I want our hearts to beat with the same passion as these three men.

Because if God did not deliver them and they were roasted with Neb's fire, all of this would still be absolutely true!

But in this story, we find God's gracious providence intervening in a miraculous way as the story reaches its climax.

Let's walk through this 3<sup>rd</sup> scene: **God's Miraculous Rescue (3:19-27).**

And really, we're just going to strap in and let Daniel tell us the story with words that God inspired:

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|----|--|
| 19 | Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and the image of his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He answered and said to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.  |
| 20 | And he said to certain mighty men of valor who <i>were</i> in his military host to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in order to cast <i>them</i> into the furnace of blazing fire.  |
| 21 | Then these men were tied up in their <sup>a</sup> trousers, their coats, their caps, and their <i>other</i> clothes and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.   |
| 22 | For this reason, because the king's word <i>was</i> <sup>a</sup> urgent and the furnace had been heated to an extraordinary degree, the flame of the fire killed those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.  |
| 23 | But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire <i>still</i> tied up.  |
| 24 | Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and hurriedly stood up; he answered and said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast tied up into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king."   |
| 25 | He answered and said, "Look! I see four men loosed <i>and</i> walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of <i>the</i> gods!"   |
| 26 | Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he answered and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.   |
| 27 | Then the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's high officials gathered around <i>and</i> saw in regard to these men that the fire had no power over the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their <sup>c</sup> trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire <i>even</i> come upon them. |

This was an **undeniable miracle** in EVERY way!

That they did not die instantly alongside the guards who were killed by the heat alone.

That they were walking around. That their clothes and hair did not even smell like fire.

But the greatest miracle here is **this fourth man** in the fire with them!

Nebuchadnezzar described him as having the appearance like a son of the gods (v. 25).

Clearly this was not a man like the other three.

It could have been an angel, but I believe there is OT precedent to believe that this is actually an appearance of the **preincarnate Christ!**

Theologians often call this an OT “Christophany”. A preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other places in the OT we find this often with the title “the Angel of the Lord/YHWH” is equated with God.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that here God is miraculously delivering these three faithful servants by sending **Jesus Christ Himself** to be with them in the fire!

*Incredible!*

That gives new weight to the phrase we were singing,

*“you’re with us in **the fire** and the flood, you’re faithful forever, perfect in love, **You are sovereign over us.**”*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego knew that to be true!

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<sup>5</sup> Gen 16:7, 9, 11; Gen 22:11-12 [the angel is equated with God];  
- Ex 3:2-6 [Moses worshipped him]; Num 22:22-27;  
- Judges 6:11-12, 22-23 [Gideon equated him with God];  
- Judges 13:18, 21-22 [Manoah equated him with God]; Zech 3:1). [DYKSTRA course notes, p. 87].

And they walked by faith, not by sight.

In fact, they're alluded in the "Hall of Faith" in Heb. 11:32-34 which says that *through faith* they quenched the power of fire!

*Oh, that we could imitate their faith!*

Nebuchadnezzar recognized the power of their faith and unbending devotion – did you notice how he called them to come out of the fire in v. 26,

*"come out, **you servants of the Most High God**"*

Nebuchadnezzar has once again been confronted by the true and living God – "the Most High God" and he knows it!

This brings us to our final scene: **#4 Nebuchadnezzar's Humbled Response (3:28-30)**

Let's read vv. 28-30

vv. 28-30

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 28 | Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and saved His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's word, and gave up their bodies so as not to serve and not to worship any god except their own God.   |
| 29 | "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or tongue that says anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." |
| 30 | Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to succeed in the province of Babylon.   |

King Neb. is humbled here and forced to acknowledge the living God.

His mocking pride has been silenced.

Remember the question he asked in cynical unbelief, "*What god can save you?*"

God broke through and answered in the most dramatic way.

This King who, moments ago, was demanding worship from the whole world now turns to bless the Israelite God.

And notice how God uses Nebuchadnezzar as a mouthpiece to fully vindicate the faithfulness of Shadrach Meshach, and Abed-Nego!

He praises them for the following things (v. 28):

- *For putting their trust in God,*
- *For violating the king's word!*
- ***For giving up their bodies so as not to serve and not to worship any god except their own God!***

*Oh, that this could be said of us!!*

Moreover, he issues a new decree that overrides the former mandate:

**Now all people are to revere the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.**

And just as his first decree to false worship came with a death sentence for non-compliance,

So this new decree (protecting true worship) came with a death sentence for anyone who failed to comply!

*An incredible plot-twist!*

And given this dramatic display of humility from King Neb., many have rightly asked the question here, 'Is Neb. saved here?'

God is certainly working on him, **but** I don't believe there's enough evidence in this text to say that he was saved here.

Notice, his regard for God is still like chapter 2 – he calls God “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.”

And remember, it wouldn't be difficult for him to add and include their god in his polytheistic worldview.

But we will ask this question again in ch. 4 next time.

But I want you to consider what Nebuchadnezzar declared at the end v. 29, answering his original, mocking question:

***“there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way”***

Daniel writes this narrative to encourage the faith of Jews in exile – our God will persevere us through this trial – He is sovereign and trustworthy!

But this narrative continues to encourage God’s people in every age.

And I love how commentator Davis summarizes the power of this story:

*“Daniel 3 is a **token** and not a **blueprint**, that is, it is a sample of the way Christ preserves his people but not a guarantee of his dramatic deliverance in every case. Still Christ’s flock are strangely comforted here. Christ did not keep them out of the furnace **but found them in it**. He does not always shield you from all distresses and dangers, but **it is in the loneliness, in the betrayal, in the loss that the Fourth Man comes and walks with you. He has the knack of both exposing you to, yet keeping you through, waters and rivers and fire...**”<sup>6</sup>*

[CONC]

*Beloved, No Other God Can Save Like This!*

And the greatest miracle of salvation is not deliverance from an earthly fiery furnace, but deliverance from the eternal lake of fire.

The greatest miracle of salvation is when God breaks through and gives New Hearts to those who are dead and enslaved to idolatry.

Even in this story, the greatest miracle of deliverance was on display far before the men fell into the fire.

The fact that they refused to bow down in the first place was evidence the greatest miracle had already taken place in their hearts.

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<sup>6</sup> Davis 2013: 58.

That, as 1 Thess. 1:9 says, God had given them a heart that ***turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God.***

No other god can save like this.

So, stop turning to idols to provide what only God can provide!

In the closing pages of his book *Everyday Idolatry*, Whitney Oxford writes this powerful warning and :

“At the moment of death, every unrepentant idolater will wake from his delusion to **sudden terrors.**

God overwhelmingly conquers His enemies. Most of them He will conquer as in a battlefield.

The rest He conquers by giving them a new heart to love Him.”<sup>7</sup>

**No other God can save like this!**

*If you don't know His salvation – turn to Him now!*

*And if you do know His salvation, praise Him for you have received the greatest miracle of deliverance already!*

[PRAY]

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<sup>7</sup> Whitney Oxford, *Everyday Idolatry*, pp. 230-231.