

### Lesson 3: Chapter 3 – Faith Under Fire

Despite Nebuchadnezzar's previous recognition of Daniel's God as the God of gods, some time later the foolhardy ruler erects a monumental statue to himself outside the city of Babylon and demands that all bow down in worship. This sets up another showdown between the faithful devotion of the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and the rash decree of an arrogant king consumed with his own power and strength.

Day 1: Read Daniel 3:1-12. We learned earlier in chapter 2 that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, along with Daniel had been singled out for great honor, privilege and influence within the court. Surely it must have displeased the Babylonians to see such foreigners honored above them. The jealousy of the wise men who bring the noncompliant Jews to the attention of King Nebuchadnezzar is apparent.

1. Can you think of other biblical stories where envy destroyed men, women and families (hint – see Genesis 4:1-16, Genesis 29:15-35; 30:1-24, Luke 15:11-32)?
2. Read James 3:14-16 and 1 Corinthians 3:3. What do these verses tell us about envy? Memorize Proverbs 14:30, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

Day 2: Read Daniel 3:8-15.

1. Why do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue (see Leviticus 19:4)?
2. Are idols still a struggle in the modern world? What idols have you personally struggled with? What does the New Testament teach us about idols (see 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 John 5:21)?
3. What is Nebuchadnezzar's question to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in v. 15?

Day 3: The response of the three young Jewish men whose very lives are at stake is one of courage, conviction and confidence.

1. Read Daniel 3:16-18. Explain how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's responses show:
  - a. Courage
  - b. Conviction
  - c. Confidence
2. While it is understandable that we thrill to the men's confidence in the ability of God to save them, tucked into v. 18, is, perhaps, an even more impressive confidence that the three Hebrews have – confidence in the sovereignty of God.
  - a. What does Isaiah, the Israelite prophet who prophesied nearly one hundred years before Daniel's time, say about God's sovereignty in Isaiah 46:9-10?

- b. Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you needed to rely on the sovereignty of God?

Day 4: Nebuchadnezzar, incensed by the boldness of the Jews, orders them thrown into a large, blazing furnace, a not uncommon method of execution during the time of the Babylonian empire. God responds in a most miraculous manner. We see two of the main themes of the book of Daniel displayed – God’s sovereignty and unsurpassed power.

1. Read Daniel 3:19-27. Two things of a most unexpected nature occur. What does Nebuchadnezzar see in the furnace?
2. Some commentators believe that the fourth who “looks like a son of the gods” is an angel of the Lord, or the pre-Incarnate Jesus Christ himself. Either way, it is clear that their companion in the flames is of non-human origin. Nebuchadnezzar orders Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego removed from the fire. What condition do he and his officials find them in?

Day 5: Read Daniel 3:28-30.

1. What is Nebuchadnezzar’s response to the rescue of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the executioner’s flames?
2. Does this remind you of anything else you’ve read so far in the book of Daniel?
3. What can the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego teach us?



*“The Fiery Furnace; From the Book of Daniel, 3” Painting by Franz Joseph Hermann, Wiggensbach, Germany*