

LESSON 3



CHRIST APPEARS TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Scripture Text: Daniel 3

Again Jesus visited the earth before His birth here, this time to protect and deliver His faithful children. This occurred about 600 B.C. in Babylon where the Jews were captives. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful of the Babylonian kings. Babylon was the capital of Chaldea. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were captive Jews from Canaan whom the king had placed in important positions in the province of Babylon.

MEMORY VERSE: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

1 John 5:21

The King's Idol

Daniel 3:1, 4-6 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image. He knew something about God from contact with Daniel (Chapter 2:47), but he had not left his idol worship. **It is commanded . . . A king's command has great authority. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall . . . be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.** A fearful threat, who could withstand it?

The Plot

Daniel 3:8-12 Accused . . . Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . . have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image. Three men against the greatest king in the world—how dared they take such a stand? As has been said of another, they "feared man so little because they feared God so much." They had heard the king's command, but they knew God's law, **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them** (Exodus 20:4-5). They obeyed with no excuse or compromise—nothing to take off any of the pressure.

The Challenge

Daniel 8:13-18 Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury . . . spake . . . who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? He was not challenging the men, but God. God always accepts a challenge like that. The rage and fury would have caused most men to compromise, but not these. They had their backs against the wall, but they stood firm with their God. **We are not careful**—this took courage of a higher order than man can muster on his own. They had received their positions from this king, but their sights were set on higher goals. They had received higher positions than those that the king had given them. **Our God whom we serve is able to deliver . . . But if not . . . we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image.** Their obedience did not depend on God's deliverance. They would be true, furnace or no furnace, burned or not burned.

In the Furnace of Fire

Daniel 8:19-25 Heat the furnace one seven times more—a type of the Gospel Day. We are living in a day heated by the heat of all seven ages. **These men were bound . . . cast into . . . the burning fiery furnace.** No

mercy. Is this the point of all hope gone, the time to give up? Many have done so and thus lost the victory that was already theirs if taken. Then Nebuchadnezzar took a look. **The king was astonished, and rose up in haste**—Something had suddenly changed his attitude. **Did not we cast three men bound . . . Lo, I see four men loose, walking . . . no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.** It was a miracle. Jesus Christ Himself came down to walk with His children in the fire. They had not known this would happen; they had been faithful anyway.

The King Glorifies God

Daniel 8:26-29 Come forth . . . upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Here we see God's abundance (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus not only **delivered**, He walked with them in the trial. He not only kept their **bodies** from being burned, but their clothes from **the smell of fire**. Friend, He can save you and me from being tainted by people's sinful lives all around us. He can deliver us from every bit of sin. He can walk with us through every circumstance that man throws us into, and we will be able to live soberly and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). **There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.** There is nothing so convincing as seeing the power of God in action. Having seen, the king was convinced.

Effective Faith

Sometimes we think we could trust more easily if we could just see with our eyes proof of God's power. No, faith is not dependent upon natural sight and sound. It is **the evidence of things not seen** (Hebrews 11:1). Nebuchadnezzar had much outward proof of God, yet was very slow to trust Him. Read Daniel, Chapter 4, to see what it took to cause him to give up himself and to give the praise to God. It is not enough to acknowledge God's existence and power. We must take Him as these Jewish men did, as ours personally, and separate ourselves to Him. The memory verse gives this warning: **Keep yourselves from idols.** Keep clear and separate from all of the many things set in the place of God or between us and God.

Our danger may not be that of bowing before a golden image, but how about loving something else more than God? **Covetousness . . . is idolatry** (Colossians 3:5). How about the temptation to put trust in a picture, a cross, or some other object? God wants our close personal contact directly with Him. Any object or form looked to as an aid to worship may become an idol that we are placing between ourselves and God. This will shut off the flow of His life into ours. (Read Exodus 20:4-6.) There is great need for this kind of faith and courage. There is too much weak-kneed compromise, too much destroying of the dividing lines between right and wrong, too much bowing to the world's standards. Let us all be humble Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos who will see the lines clearly, follow God fearlessly, gain for Him the glory and raise a standard for the church of tomorrow. Each of us must respond; what will your response be?



JUST A THOUGHT

The faith which throws itself entirely upon God with no possible turning back will not be disappointed.