

“Everyone is Doing It!”

Daniel 3

Background:

1. Exile - God’s Judgment on Disobedient Israel

Persistent Warnings by His Prophets were Ignored

CHOSEN People > COVENANT Promises > Blessings bring Responsibility

SIMPLE Formula of OLD Covenant > Blessing? OBEY! or Cursing? DISOBEY

Israel FAILED be FAITHFUL, Obedient, RIGHTEOUS > Covenant CURSES

Moses WARNED them when made Covenant > LAND on LOAN from God

Unfaithfulness EVICTION from LAND > God keeps PROMISES & THREATS

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary...He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him
2 Chronicles 36.15-20

Prophet JEREMIAH had WARNED them, Now he WEEPS Over them...

For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. Lamentations 3.31,32

2. Far from Home but Not Far from God

God of Israel – True and Living God > Sovereign, Omnipresent, Omnipotent

KINDNESS even for WAYWARD Sons > UNDESERVED Love & MERCY

Foundations of their Faith (Temple, Priesthood, Sacrifices, Festivals) Destroyed

Strange PLACE did not FEEL like HOME > Had Always MET GOD at HOME
Can GOD be PRESENT in this PLACE? FAITHFUL among all UNFAMILIAR?

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion...our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? Psalm 137.1-4

3. Tested and Found Faithful

God's Vegetables were Superior to Nebuchadnezzar's Delicacies

Young men believed in BIG GOD – Not LOCAL, LIMITED Deity

Boys Believed their GOD was IN BABYLON even BEFORE they GOT THERE

HIS Arm was not SO SHORT that it could Not SAVE even THERE!

Put their LIVES on LINE > TRUSTED His PROMISES & POWER

...they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food...And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. Daniel 1.15,20

All WISE Men of Babylon AGREED, No MAN knows Another Man's Dreams

Their GOD of WISDOM & POWER can Reveal ALL SECRETS

The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." Daniel 2.47

1. Pressures to Conform

a. Wrong Reading

You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance... You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. Daniel 2.31,37,38

Neb HEARD what he WANTED to Hear from Daniel's Interp of Chapter 2

HE was the HEAD of GOLD on Great Statue of GLOBAL EMPIRES

SO... made Gold Statue of HIMSELF almost 30 meters Tall > Higher Bldg IN!

vs. 1,4,5 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...And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 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.

ALL he NEEDS to HEAR > his GRAND Name on that GRAND MONUMENT

IGNORES Fine Print > Statue will be SMASHED! – Distorts God’s Word

QUICKLY FORGETS > Feet of CLAY > Make MONSTROSITY FALL

HEAD Filled with BOLD, NEW Possibilities > ALL CENTERED on Him

MAIN Reason – Preach thru Bible Books /Launched JOSHUA TRAINING

Help people to RIGHTLY READ their Bibles > Wrong Reading leads to...

b. Wicked Results

It was common practice of the ancient kings to erect images of themselves with laudatory inscriptions in conquered cities, or provinces, as symbols of their dominion.

R.H. Charles

COMMON in Many of our NATIONS > Pictures LEADERS in Post Offices

RARELY do we have to BOW DOWN before we Can BUY POSTAGE Stamp

RELIGION lit. def. “to bind together” > TO GOD, His Believing PEOPLE
STATE’S Use Religion to BIND NATIONS & Citizens > NATIONAL UNITY
NOT any Clear THEOLOGY > ALLEGIANCE TO STATE and its LEADERS

Expected President USA ends Speeches with “God bless America”

Many Religions in US – NEVER told which God we are Looking to for Blessing

Neb. is SIMILARLY AMBIGUOUS > Statue of him? a god? both?

What WAS Very CLEAR > What would HAPPEN to You if REFUSED to Bow

vs. 3,4,6 So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language... Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

This is the problem that confronts every follower of the true God when the requirements of serving Him come into conflict with the demands of the secular state...any pressure to disobey the teachings of the Bible, whether by peers in your school, by fellow employees, by employers... Whenever you are pressured to do something (or not to do something) that you know by the teachings of the Bible to be wrong, your situation is that of the three men and your responsibility before God is the same.

James Boice

c. Way of the Rabble

ALL the Masses Loyally Follow Popular MUSIC & MEDIA of Babylon
STRANGE SYMPHONY gathered around TALL, SKINNY STATUE
KAZOO Band was Calling them to COMPROMISE > Worship an IDOL

vs. 5,7 as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

MONDAY Night at Church Retreat played DANCE and DROP

When MUSIC Stops – DANCERS Drop to GROUND!

Music SOUNDED on Plain of DURA – 3 Hebrews STOOD DEFIANTLY

Boys knew THEIR GOD Clearly Spoken > No Other gods, Worship NO IDOLS
Not enough PLASTER, PAINT, of PIXELS to Capture OMNIPRESENT God
Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him

proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together.

Isaiah 44.6-11

2. Challenges to Compromise

a. Popular Attitudes

v. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

FUNKY Sounds of Babylon BAND Everyone BOWED Down to Skinny Statue

Everyone EXCEPT these Jewish Young Men > Great PRESSURE

People wondered WHAT IS THEIR PROBLEM? Disloyal, Ungrateful, Fools?

Pay NO ATTENTION to the King who is GOD over Babylon

As PETER wrote to JEWS of DIASPORA Centuries Later...

They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

1 Peter 4.4

After DANIEL'S God Revealed his DREAMS > Neb PROMOTED Exiled Jews

How would YOU FEEL if KIDS from OUTTA Town became NEW BOSSES?

When KZ was Republic of USSR > Nearly ALL Dept Heads, Bosses RUSSIANS

When we lived there in 1990's LOTS of UPHEAVAL! Peristroika > KZ RULE
RUSSIANS Leaders were REPLACED by Ethnic KAZAKHS – Many Left KZ

PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY might have been in the Air in BABYLON

Not sure WHERE Daniel is Just Now > 3 HOMIES in Crosshairs of ATTACK

NOT Told All GOING On in Minds > Perhaps that REASONS to BOW Down

We are just FOREIGN Students – Trying to get WORK Visa – Cultural Matter

If they KILL US our MINISTRY will be OVER!

Maybe we can KNEEL on the OUTSIDE and still be Standing on the INSIDE

It might be WRONG but GOD will FORGIVE US ANYWAY!!

NOT Told ALL that they THOUGHT > ARE told what they DID > STOOD!

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Ephesians 6.13

b. Powerful Authorities

EVERYONE was COMMANDED to Bow Down – NO Choice

Society held Together by FEAR and TERROR – COMPLIANCE!

vs. 13-15 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar... "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of... all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Given their OWN Command Performance of Babylonian KAZOO BAND

King himself gave them ONE MORE CHANCE – Do It! Everyone's Doing It!

Neb DIRECT Challenge to them & their GOD – Who is Greater than Me??

Thousands of Jews ALREADY BOWED – Who cares? What will it Hurt?

Centuries Later see another Lonely Stance against Powerful Authority

Jesus the EXILE from HEAVEN Stood before Leader of CITY OF MAN

"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"
John 19.10

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Revelation 12.11

3. God our Confidence

a. Our Judge

v. 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

HEBREW Name DANIEL means > GOD is MY JUDGE

QUIET Obedience to God – NOT Open Defiance of King – No Scandal, Shame
Stood FIRMLY for God but Kept DOOR OPEN for Communication to King

God more than EMPTY PROMISES – He is God of POWER who is PRESENT

Human Opinion is Fallible – God's JUDGMENT is INFALLIBLE

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself...wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.
1 Corinthians 4.2-5

PAUL did not Fear Judgment of Men – Ignored Critics – WAITED on God

Not Guided by Popular Opinion – Changing Morals – Unchanging God/Word

Jesus: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Matthew 10.28

b. Our Protector

God of ISRAEL was God over BABYLON – Met Him There, Served Him There
 Seen His Power – Healthy thru Vegetables – Wisdom to Interpret Dreams
 Now Stood by His Power before powerful man – Just a man!

v. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is **able to save us** from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king....

Many Christians are afraid to believe that God will deliver them, because of the disappointment they will experience if he does not. Others then point to that lack of faith as the reason they were not healed or delivered. But it seems that very few Christians can have the firm belief that he can and will deliver us while maintaining a submissive attitude to his sovereign will if it differs from our request. We need to understand the faith is not a rabbit's foot, and God is not a genie who is bound to do for us whatever we want. Rodney Stortz

God gave Great MERCY and GRACE to these Young Men...

vs. 27 So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Power & PROTECTION – No SMELL of FIRE – More than Able to Save
 TRUST Him who Worked THEN & NOW to Carry us Through ALL things
 Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. Jeremiah 32.17

Jesus: "Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9.23

Whate'er my God ordains is right:
 Here shall my stand be taken;
 Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
 Yet I am not forsaken.
 My Father's care is round me there;
 He holds me that I shall not fall:
 And so to him I leave it all.

Samuel Rodigast, 1675

TUCKED into Paul's Description and Duties of Elders & Deacons...

Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3.13

BEST Way to HELP Yourself is to SERVE OTHERS, No Time for DOUBTING

We are CALLED to Follow in Faith > BOTH Confidence AND Submission

c. Our Wisdom

We know END of Story – They DID NOT – Probably Expected Toasting

FAITH before the FIRE “Though he slay me, I will hope in him” Job 13.15

No MATTER How God takes us to HIMSELF – We are WITH Him

v. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Like Jesus prayed before the CROSS in Garden of Gethsemane...

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22.42

Whate'er my God ordains is right:

His holy will abideth;

I will be still whate'er he doth,

And follow where he guideth.

He is my God; though dark my road.

He holds me that I shall not fall;

Wherefore to him I leave it all.

Samuel Rodigast, 1675

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. 2 Timothy 4.18

4. The Reward of our Convictions

a. Intimacy with God

v. 25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Perhaps JESUS HIMSELF came to Bear their Afflictions with Them

God PROMISED thru Isaiah – 100 Years Earlier – Ever with His People

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine...When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior"
Isaiah 43.1-3

Days of Sailing Ships – Terrible Storm – Crewman washed alone onto Island
With pieces of Wood – Built Small Shelter – Waited – Gathered Food & Water
1 Day – Far around island looking for Food – Wooden Shelter BURNED Down
Laid on Beach that Night – Hardly Slept – Considered Suicide

Next Morning Man comes in Rowboat "I saw your SIGNAL FIRE yesterday"

God brings BLESSING out of what seems to be CURSE

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."
Revelation 17.14

b. Influence in High Places

Notice CHANGE in Neb's Attitude as Situation Unfolds >>

Anger: v. 13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king,

Amazement: v. 24 King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there 3 men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

Acknowledgement: v. 28 "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

Thru Obedient Servants great Name of God is PROCLAIMED Pagan King!

Fulfills promise of ch 2 – God of Heaven set up UNSHAKABLE Kingdom

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2.44

v. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

c. Impact on the World

v. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

Responsibility of Israel be MISSIONARY NATION – Light to the GENTILES

Show the World – True and Living God who Covenanted with Them

Important THEME seen thru DANIEL – Pagan Kings DO what Israel did NOT

PROCLAIM Great Name of God to ALL the WORLD!

The living embodiment of the grace of God and the truth of God lifts a whole society. Consistent applications of grace and truth, expressed in straightforward business dealings, honest research, transparency in government leadership, fulfillment of contracts, concern for the last and least, respect and kindness toward all the different segments of society (ethnicity and national origin, age, ability and disability, gender) all contribute to shalom, that beautiful Hebrew word describing a state of peace and righteousness and wholeness toward which God's mission is aimed.

David Bennett, "Integrity, the Lausanne Movement, and a Malaysian Daniel"

True Story of Young Man INJURED in MINING Accident

LIVED On for MANY Years as INVALID – Watching World from Window
 WATCHED as Friends got MARRIED, had KIDS, then GRANDKIDS
 Watched as BODY Withered, HOME Crumbled, LIFE Wasted Away

One day YOUNG Miner visited the BEDSIDE of this Long-Suffering MAN
 “I hear you believe in God and claim that he loves you. How can you believe
 after all that you have gone through? Don’t you doubt sometimes?”

“Yes, sometimes Satan comes calling on me in this fallen-down house of mine.
 He sits right there where you are sitting and points to the strong men I used to
 work with walking by, with their wives, carrying their grandchildren. And as he
 waits for the tear in my eye says, ‘does Jesus really love you?’

“Then I take Satan by the hand. I lead him in my mind to a hill far away called
 Calvary. There I point to the thorn-tortured brow, to the nail-pierced hands and
 feet and to the spear-wounded side. Then I say, ‘Satan, you tell me...doesn’t
 Jesus love me!’”

3 young EXILES in Far-Away Land made DIFFERENCE > HUGE Impact
 STORY being TOLD thru MILLENIA – End of TIME, Ends of the EARTH
 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing
 wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.
 1 Peter 2.12

Daniel 3.¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. ⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: ⁵As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” ⁷Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁸At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! ¹⁰Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹²But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” ¹³Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” ¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and

throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²²The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. ²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty." ²⁵He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." ²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. ²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.