

How Important Is True Worship? (Daniel 3:1-30)

I. Nebuchadnezzar Requires False Worship

A. A Great Image Is Constructed (Construction of the Image)

¹ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

B. All Political Leaders Are Notified (Notification of the Leaders)

² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

C. The Political Leaders Arrive (Arrival of the Leaders)

³ So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

D. The Command to Worship Is Announced (Announcement of the Command)

⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and **worship** the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

E. The Consequence for Disobedience Is Stated

⁶ and whoever does not fall down and **worship** shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

- Why not "Hit it!" – Drop down NOW, just so that there is no mistake about my compliance!
- Natural Birth, Natural Food, Natural Hair, Death – Natural Causes!

F. The Call To Worship the Image Is Given

⁷ So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music,

G. The Crowd Falls Down and Worships

all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* **worshiped** the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

II. Three Refuse to Worship Falsely (Three Exceptions in the Crowd)

A. Some Chaldeans Remind the King of His Command and Consequences of Not Obeying It

⁸ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and **worship** the gold image; ¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and **worship** shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

B. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abenego Are Accused

¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not **serve** your gods or **worship** the gold image which you have set up."

They were VISIBLY Faithful – True Worship Sticks Out (Is Not Secret)

They could have rationalized:

- Embarrassment – We don't want to be the only ones standing.
- Pain – That burning fiery furnace – ouch!
- Loss of life – That burning fiery furnace...
- Daniel not here – our leader is missing
- Parents not here – our parents aren't here to help us stand
- Loss of influence – Think of what I won't be able to do if I'm dead!
- Everybody was doing it (and they were!)
- No one looking (all bowing) – not true...
- Just doing what we're told
- We're only thinking of others! We don't want to be a hindrance to the Jews – we don't want to bring bad attention to others Worshipping on the outside, but not worshipping on the inside
- It doesn't matter – what I do is my own business. Just respecting authority (he IS the king, you know)

They could have covered it up (secret defiance):

- Lost coin method
- Tie shoe method
- Relaxing method

III. The Three Refuse a Second Chance to Worship Falsely

A. The King Calls Them in Anger (13)

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

B. The King Threatens Them in Arrogance (14-15; cf. Dan 1:2, 2:37)

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not **serve** my gods or **worship** the gold image which I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and **worship** the image which I have made, good! But if you do not **worship**, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

1. Is this your intention, to disobey the king's command? (14)
2. Do you want another chance? (15a)
3. Remember what will happen if you do not do this! (15b)
4. What god can deliver you from ME? (15c) – it is understood that Neb was asking all to worship his image in place of their own gods. All he was asking was for outward compliance, not verbal agreement.

C. The Three Answer the King with Clarity (16-18)

They were VERBALLY Faithful – True Worship Involves Testifying

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we **serve** is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not **serve** your gods, nor will we **worship** the gold image which you have set up."

1. Yes! This is what we intended.
2. We need no additional opportunities or chances. (No need of a long, drawn-out process)
3. We remember, and will comply with the consequences...
4. ...if our God (Who can deliver us) chooses to let us die. (No fence: follow one, forsake the other)

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. ..."

IV. The Three Suffer the Consequences of Refusing To Worship the Image

A. The King Reacts Furiously (19)

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

B. The King Commands the Three to Suffer as Promised (21)

²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

C. The Mighty Men Die From the Heat (22)

²² Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

D. The Three End Up in the Fiery Furnace (23)

²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

They were VALIANTLY Faithful – True Worship Requires Courage

- The **Severity** of the Threat Did Not Cause Them to Falter (19)
 - The **Certainty** of the Threat Did Not Cause Them to Falter (20-21)
- Acts 20:22-23** ²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

Herodotus – Greek Historian – 1 Millennium B.C. – on the Battle of Thermopylae

- Xerxes was continuing to conquer, approaching Greece quickly with massive army.
 - Greeks and others rally to "head off at the pass" at Thermopylae. Among them were the Spartans.
 - Spartans did ritual hair combing, preparing to die, knowing their fate
 - Xerxes attacked. **It was then he understood that he had many men, but few soldiers.**
 - An informant told Xerxes of a way around, and Xerxes' army came from both sides.
 - The Spartans stood back to back, fighting, even biting, until completely destroyed.
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2 Timothy 3:5 "having a form of godliness but denying its power. ..."

V. God Reveals Himself

A. *The King Experiences a Counting Problem (24-25)*

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

B. *The King Speaks to the Three Again, but with a Changed Perspective (26)*

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.

C. *The Political Leaders of the Land Receive a First-Hand Lesson About the Most High God (27)*

²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

D. *Nebuchadnezzar Becomes a Proclaimer of God (28-29)*

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."

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E. *Nebuchadnezzar Promotes the Three (30)*

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

They were VICTORIOUSLY Faithful – True Worship Allows God to Reveal Himself

- Their Complete Faithfulness Brought a Special **Presence** of God (23-25)
Matthew 28:20 "... and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."
- Their Complete Faithfulness Brought a Special **Proving** of God (26)
 - No touchdown until the goal
 - Race now won until the ribbon is broken
 - Battle not won until enemy is defeated**2 Timothy 4:7** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
- Their Complete Faithfulness Brought a Special **Protection** of God (27)
- Their Complete Faithfulness Brought a Special **Proclamation** of God (28-29)
- Their Complete Faithfulness Brought a Special **Promotion** from God (30) – they can **really** be used now!