

Daniel 3

December 15, 2024



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

Chapter 3 of Daniel inspires us to live faithfully for the Lord, even if the Lord doesn't rescue us from our circumstance in the way we want.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Let's recap what we've learned in Daniel to this point. What has happened so far?

What does it mean to worship something or someone?

What do you think our culture worships?

What happens to someone who does not worship those things?

Today, we're exploring a familiar Bible story: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Last week, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a massive statue in his dream, and this week, he'll build one of solid gold and require those in his kingdom to worship it. Clearly, he had not yet learned to fear the Lord, despite his proclamation that the God of



the Israelites was “indeed God of gods, Lord of kings” as he said in Daniel 2:47. As always, the Lord was still at work, and this time in miraculous ways.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:1-7.

How is the statue in chapter 3 different than the statue from King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2? Why do you think that is?

•Why do you think the king required everyone to worship?

Scholars are divided on the timing of the events in Daniel chapter 3, some believe this happened shortly after the events of chapter 2 while others believe this happened years later. In either case, the head of gold from King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 may have served as inspiration for the gold statue in chapter 3.

King Nebuchadnezzar built a ninety-foot-tall gold statue and then assembled leaders from around the kingdom to “fall facedown and worship” (v. 5) it or else be thrown in the fiery furnace. Unlike some ancient cultures, such as the Egyptians, the Babylonians did not believe their king was a god, so it’s likely that the statue was an image of a Babylonian god and not Nebuchadnezzar himself.

In a society that worshiped multiple gods and with the threat of the fiery furnace looming, the masses did exactly as they were told—except for a few Jewish men.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:8-23.

What do we learn about Nebuchadnezzar in this passage? How does this mirror attitudes in our culture today?

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond? How would you describe their faith?

You may notice Daniel was absent from this event, either because he “remained at the king’s court” (Daniel 2:49b) and was in a different location, or because his loyalty to the king had been proven and this act was not required of him. Whatever the reason for his absence, we can safely assume that he, too, would have refused to worship the gold statue.

In verses 8-23, we learn that, while most of the leaders who had assembled fell and worshiped the golden statue, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to do so,



which opened the door for some Chaldean nobles to act maliciously against them. This anti-Semitic act may have been rooted in political jealousy and is not the last time we will see people scheming against the Israelites in our study of Daniel. When King Nebuchadnezzar gave them another chance at idol worship, they refused and gave one of the most poignant statements of faith in the pages of Scripture:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “Nebuchadnezzar, we don’t need to give you an answer to this question. If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”—Daniel 3:16-18

What an enormous act of faith! They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace but acknowledged that He might not choose to. Yet even if He did not, they still refused to act unfaithfully. They chose faith over fear.

Does this remind you of our society today? Daniel is amazing in its modern relevancy. We may not be constructing statues of precious metals for worship, but our society has no shortage of idols being hoisted up with an expectation that we worship them, or risk being thrown in the fiery furnace of cancel culture.

Even in the face of a literal fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn’t jump on the bandwagon and worship the gold statue. They stood firm in their faith, and Nebuchadnezzar was furious.

The note that the furnace was heated “seven times more than was customary” (v.19), which is an idiom meaning the furnace was heated “as hot as possible.” It was so hot that the soldiers charged with tossing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace died just by getting close.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 3:24-30.

What was the outcome of this moment for the three men?

What is the significance of the fourth man in the furnace?

What can we learn about God from this passage?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the fiery furnace. They knew God could do it and found out in the most amazing way that He was willing to save them from the flames. Not only were they preserved from the flames, but a fourth man also joined them there. Scholars believe this to either be an angel or a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. The Lord sent someone to literally walk with them through the flames.



Not only did the Lord deliver them from the flames, but when they came out of the furnace, Scripture also records they were completely unharmed, down to the robes they were wearing. They didn't even smell like smoke.

Following their amazing deliverance, Nebuchadnezzar rewarded them. The Lord's provision was complete in every way. We end chapter 3 with Nebuchadnezzar once again praising God, but we'll learn in chapter 4 that he still hadn't learned his lesson.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How did Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow down to the golden statue mirror the demands of our society today?

Consider the faith that we see from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in chapter 3. How can we pursue this way of living today?

What is your primary takeaway from the first three chapters of Daniel?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for walking with us, even in the hard times. Ask Him to show each of our group members how we can live boldly in faith like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

LOOKING AHEAD

We will take a break from Daniel and Bro. Larry will preach a Christmas message next Sunday. Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

December 22, 2024 --- Luke 2:42-52



COMMENTARY

Daniel 3

Daniel's Friends Refuse to Bow to the King's Image

(3:1–18). Nebuchadnezzar made a huge, gold image. The image may have represented his sovereign authority or one of his gods. The king ordered all of his subjects to attend a dedication ceremony for the image. At a designated time they were to bow down to the image. All who refused to worship the image would be thrown into a fiery furnace. When Daniel's friends refused to bow down to the image, the angry king gave them an ultimatum and warned them of the consequences of disobedience. They explained that their loyalty to the Lord prevented them from worshiping images. They also told the king that the Lord was able to deliver them from the furnace if He so desired.

Daniel's Friends Delivered from the Furnace

(3:19–30). After ordering the furnace to be heated to its maximum temperature, Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's friends tied up and thrown in. The fire was so hot that its flames killed the soldiers who threw them in. However, when Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he saw the three men walking around unbound, accompanied by an angelic being. When the king ordered them out of the furnace, they were completely unharmed. Nebuchadnezzar praised the Lord for delivering His faithful servants, decreed that anyone who slandered the Lord be executed, and promoted the three men.

