

FPFWC Christian Development



The Righteous Live By Faith

February 2024

Winter Quarter

February 10, 2024

Lesson #2 – Faith In the Fiery Furnace

SCRIPTURE TEXT –Daniel 3:19-28

ICE BREAKER –

1. What qualities does the believer need to best exemplify faith while in the fiery furnace?
2. How has hardship strengthened your walk with the Lord?
3. Why must believers NOT worship “false gods” or “idols” even though society wants us to?

Key Verse: “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.”—Daniel 3:28

LESSON BACKGROUND

By telling the stories of the prophet Daniel and his associates, the book of Daniel depicts Jewish life in a foreign land. A series of deportations from Judah by the Babylonians began in 605 BC (see Daniel 1:1–2). These continued until Judah fell in 586 BC (see 2 Kings 25). Among the deported were talented young men selected for their fitness for service to the Babylonian king (see Daniel 1:3–4). Daniel and his associates were taken to Babylon during this time, in approximately 605 BC. The book describes the wisdom of Daniel and his friends as they lived and served in Babylon (example: 2:17–24). Their positions required that they demonstrate some loyalty to the Babylonian king, evident in their name change (see 1:6–7). This book’s events occur from the time of their arrival in Babylon until at least 537 BC, “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (10:1).

Part of the book of Daniel is preserved in Hebrew (Daniel 1:1–2:4a; 8:1–12:13), while another part is preserved in Aramaic (2:4b–7:28). The use of two languages indicated the different cultures depicted in the book: Hebrew for the Jews and Aramaic for the Gentile empires (2 Kings 18:26; Ezra 4:7). Today’s Scripture comes from the part of Daniel preserved in Aramaic.

Today’s lesson Scripture is the second part of the narrative that begins at Daniel 3:1. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (reigned 605–562 BC), had erected a large image of gold at “the plain of Dura” (Daniel 3:1). This location is suggested to have been several miles south of the city of Babylon. Royal subjects, advisors, and kingdom officials arrived for the image’s dedication ceremony and to worship it (3:2–5). Refusing to worship the image would result in inevitable death in a “burning fiery furnace” (3:6). But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—men the king had placed in a leadership position (see 2:49)—refused. They had confidence that the Lord would be with them (3:17–18).

LESSON COMMENTARY

3:19–23. The infuriated king gave **orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated**, an idiom for “as hot as possible.” When the appointed guards cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego into the furnace, the heat was so intense that its flames **slew those men who carried** God’s three faithful servants to the furnace. This indicates that there was no naturalistic explanation for the survival of the three.

The ancient furnace was shaped like an old-fashioned milk bottle and built on a small hill or mound with openings at the top and side. The ore to be smelted would be dropped in a large opening at the top and wood or charcoal would be inserted in a smaller hole on the side, at ground level, to heat the furnace. There would have been two other small holes at ground level in which to insert pipes connected to a large bellows to raise the temperature of the fire. (Archer, “Daniel,” 56). Some have estimated that this furnace could reach a temperature of 1,800 degrees fahrenheit (Miller, *Daniel*, 115, 122). Most likely this furnace was used to smelt the gold ore and bricks for Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Thus, the three men **fell into the midst of the furnace** (3:23) from the top and the king was able to see into the furnace (3:24–25) from its side opening.

The Lord’s Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace (3:24–27)

3:24–25. When the king looked into the furnace, he **was astounded** to see **four men ... walking about** in the furnace, and the **fourth** looked **like a son of the gods**. This may have been an angel or even more likely, the Angel of the Lord, meaning a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that a pagan king would have understood this. Rather, his statement is indicative of the glorious appearance of the deliverer whom he saw. The faithful reader is to understand who was in the furnace even though the pagan king did not.

3:26–27. Having called the men out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar and all his government officials saw that **the fire had no effect on their bodies**. Not only did the fire fail to burn their hair and clothing, they did not even have **the smell of fire** on them. Hebrews 11:34 cites this miracle of faith, referring to those who “quenched the power of fire.”

The King’s Recognition of the God of Israel (3:28–30)

3:28–30. King Nebuchadnezzar continued on his odyssey of faith, begun in Dn 2. There he learned that the Lord is a true God, powerful enough to reveal secret dreams and to control the destinies of nations. In a sense, he recognized the God of Israel as a part of the panoply of gods. However, in Dn 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were “servants of the Most High God” (3:26), indicating that he saw the God of Israel as the one who is greater than all other gods. Even so, he remained a polytheist, believing in many gods. Despite Nebuchadnezzar’s praise of **the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego** for His deliverance and the king’s prohibition against saying **anything offensive against** the God of Israel (3:28–29), he still had not come to a full knowledge of the one and only true God.

The three young men remained faithful to the true God despite intense pressure to acquiesce to idolatry. They experienced the promise of Is 43:2: “When you walk through

the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.” Thus, they became a model to the faithful remnant of Israel in the times of the Gentiles as well as to any person today who has become a follower of the Lord Jesus. Despite living in a pressure-packed society that consistently invites disloyalty to the Lord, His followers can be assured of His presence in the midst of the fire. God is fully capable of supernatural deliverance from the intense heat of pressure or to bring His faithful ones safely home to Him.

LESSON NUGGET – Transformers – The three men did not know for sure that God would deliver them, but even if He did not, they would still obey the Lord and not worship the king and his idol. Were they trusting Isaiah 41:10 and 43:2? The fire brought them two blessings; the Lord came and walked with them, and they were set free from their bonds. Fellowship and freedom are often found in the midst of the furnace, if you are committed to the Lord.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary