

“RATHER BURN THAN BOW”

Daniel 3

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INTRODUCTION

This is the “time of the Gentiles”; the Powers of the evil world kingdoms dominate the people of God. *Must God’s people fear? Are they helpless?*

When did this happen—likely the middle of Neby’s reign. Possibly after the fall of Jerusalem.

Where did this happen: The Plain of Dura in the province of Babylon

Where was Daniel here?

You must take your stand. It is better to burn than to bow to Satan, his workers, or even your own lusts.

TAKE A STAND FOR WHAT IS RIGHT AND DON’T GIVE IN.

I. THE FORTITUDE OF GOD’S SERVANTS (1-12)

A. Their Testing (1-7)

1. Construction of the Image (1)

- Why—Testing of loyalty—like the test of the wise men in chapter 2. Compare the dream image and the golden head of it.
- Its size and shape—Human form; very awkward: **90 ft. high; 9 ft. wide!**
- Most likely not solid gold, but overlaid with gold.

2. Convocation of the leaders (2-3)—the scene is set.

3. Command of the herald (4-6)

4. Conviction of the 3 Hebrew Men (7)—**Everyone fell down: peoples, nations, languages**—but there were 3 exceptions as we shall see!

DIFFICULTY OF THIS DECISION NOT TO BOW:

- Evidently Daniel was not there.
- They would lose their status.
- They would give their adversaries an opportunity against them.
- The punishment was terrible!

B. Their Adversaries (8-12)

1. Review of the Decree (8-11):

2. Accusation against the Jews (12)

- a. Disregarded the king.

- b. Didn't serve his gods.
- c. Don't worship before the image.

II. THE FURY OF THE KING (13-23) **"Rage and Fury"**—how dare anyone cross ME?

A. Confrontation with the Faithful (13-18)—3 men brought before him

1. The Charge (13-15)

- Is this true? (Note he omitted "disregard me")
- I'll give you another chance, then into the furnace (15).
- "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" **Not even the God I acknowledged earlier! (2:47)**

2. The Defense (16-18)

- a. Admission of guilt (16): "We are not careful (We do not need) to answer you in this matter"—it is obvious that we did not bow!
- b. Submission to God's will (17) God's ethical ability is the issue—His omnipotence not questioned here: "If He is able, then He will do so."
- c. Refusal to bow—even if God chooses not to deliver them (18)—**"We will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."**
 - God won't always do what pleases us!
 - Their obedience is **not contingent** of God's doing what they wanted!
 - They neither ask for nor expect a miracle!
 - Job 13:15: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

B. Conflagration of the Furnace (19-22)

1. Firing of the furnace (19)—*Heat the furnace 7 times hotter than usual.*

2. Fastening of the Ropes (20-21)

- "The most mighty men that were in his army"—**Human helplessness**
- Their clothes: they were bound in all of their fancy, festive clothes.

**Note the superlatives here for this event: Tallest image, most valuable, highest officials, all officials, most terrifying penalty, seven times hotter, strongest men.*

3. Falling of the Men (22-23)

- a. The body guard (22)—died due to the extreme heat of the fire.
- b. The 3 Hebrews (23)—fell down into the fire—**still bound with the ropes**

Why did God let things go so far? Was He forsaking them?

*Maybe in order to have a powerful effect upon Nebuchadnezzar and on all Babylon.

*In order to be a blessing on the 3 young men—so miraculously delivered.

III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (24-30)

A. His Preservation of His People (24-27)

1. The Conditions in the Furnace (24-25)
 - a. Bound→Loose
 - b. Helpless→Walking
 - c. Burning→No harm or pain
 - d. Panic→Not seeking escape
 - e. Three men→Now 4 men
 - f. The 4th like “a son of the gods”→a divine being; **God is with us in our trials!**
 2. The Effects of the Fire (26-27)
 - a. The order to exit the furnace (26)
 - He called them “*Servants of the Most High God.*”
 - He recognizes that it is only because of their relationship to their God that they well alive and well. **He admits that God is stronger than He!**
 - b. The obedience to the order (26b)
 - c. The examination by the King and multiple officials (27): all the officials of v. 2
 - **Bodies** unharmed
 - **Hair** un-singed
 - **Boots** un-damaged
 - **No smell of smoke**
 - Only the ropes burned! So it is with our trials; the fires bring only benefit.
- B. His Praise by the Gentiles (28-30)
1. The king’s Blessing (28)
 - a. On their God
 - Sent His angel—messenger (either an angel or Son of God)
 - Delivered His servants
 - b. On the Three Young Men
 - They trusted in God alone
 - They resisted a false master—“changed the king’s word”—violated it.
 - They are totally dedicated to the true master: **yielded up their bodies**
 - Refused to serve or worship any god except their own God.
 2. The king’s decree: (29) (same as in 2:5 with the magicians and wise men)
 - a. He did not command worship of God.
 - b. He did prohibit anyone to make harmful, derogatory comments about the God of these three men.

- c. He acknowledged Yahweh's Supremacy—"There is no other god that can deliver after this sort."
 - d. **Compare what he had said in v. 15: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"**
3. The king's Reward (30)—he "promoted" [caused them to prosper] the three men "in the province of Babylon." [Position, money, gifts, housing]

Let's give some credit to Neby: he had been severely and publicly humiliated, yet he admits that he is wrong and credits them and their God. What would all of his pagan priests think of this?

CONCLUSION

Here we have:

Man's **Greatest and Strongest** against "helpless" servants of God

Man's **Fury** against God's Faithful servants.

GOD'S SERVANTS WIN!

I WOULD RATHER BURN THAN BOW? WOULD YOU?

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