

DANIEL

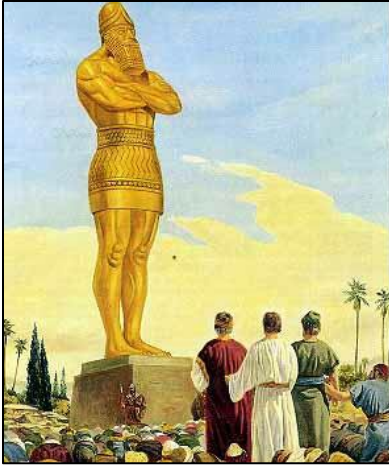
“Keeping the faith when the heat is on”

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CHAPTER 3 NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE



Nebuchadnezzar had a 90 ft statue built based on his dream (Chapter 2).

It arrogantly represented himself as a grandiose expression of his greatness and glory. It was not necessarily made of solid gold, but more likely would have been overlaid with gold, like many objects found in the ruins of Babylon.

The word “image” usually means a human form. Everyone in his kingdom was compelled to worship the image or die. This was in direct conflict with God’s first and second commandments.

Daniel’s three friends were now faced with another faith crisis. Should they quietly go along with everyone else or stand firm in obedience to God?

I. THE CHALLENGE

What can Christians do when they are hit with a crisis?

II. THE CRISIS

Daniel Chapter 3

A. God’s People Forced to Worship an Image It (3:1-7)

King 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. 2 He 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. 3 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. 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: 5 As 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. 6 Whoever

does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." 7 Therefore, 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.

B. God's People Refuse to Worship the Image (3:8-23)

At this time some astrologers¹ came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "May the king live forever! ¹⁰ Your 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, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace.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, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up." ¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ and 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? ¹⁵ Now 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?" ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us¹ from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ But 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."

C. God's People Face the Crisis (3:19-23)

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²² The 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, ²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

D. God's People Protected in the Crisis (3:24-27)

Then 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." 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." ²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar 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,²⁷ 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.

E. Nebuchadnezzar Worships the True God (3:28-30)

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

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. Who was the 4th being with them in the furnace, protecting them (Dan. 3:25, 28).
1. Possibly preincarnate Christ (Christophany).
 2. Possibly an angel representing God's presence (3:28).
- B. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego showed incredible faith by refusing to worship an image thereby facing a horrible death in a fiery furnace for this refusal. These three young men displayed a "super faith" in God. Do you think such super faith is possible today? Explain your answer.
1. Yes, as we experience God in previous difficult situations (trials) our faith (trust) grows. These three men had confidence from the previous crisis: They also saw how God miraculously saved them from being killed by Nebuchadnezzar when he demanded to know what his frightening dream meant (Ch. 2).
 2. God's presence was there (4th being) with them, protecting them (Dan. 3:25).
 - a) Possibly preincarnate Christ.
 - b) An angel representing God's presence (3:28). "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." (Ps. 91:11 NIV)
 3. Our faith comes from God.
 - a) God gives faith because of His grace and mercy, because He loves us (Ephesians 4-5).
 - b) Faith comes from God in the form of a gift (Ephesians 2:8).
 - c) First Peter 1:7 says He will use trials to test our faith and to make us stronger Christians.
- C. What was Nebuchadnezzar's eventual view of God in Dan. 3:29?

1. He was their God, not his God.
 2. He probably saw their God as one of many gods (polytheism).
 3. Later he learned that God was not one of many but the only God (Dan. 4).
- D. How does knowing that God's presence is with you at all times strengthen you?
- E. What do the following verses tell us about God's presence in our lives? (Matthew 28:20; Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; Deut. 31:6; Psa. 23:4; Isa. 43:2).
1. Matthew 28:20 (NIV)
"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
 2. Joshua 1:9 (NIV)
"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
 3. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)
"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
 4. Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)
"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."
 5. Psalm 23:4 (NIV)
"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."
 6. Isaiah 43:2 (NIV)
"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

IV. THE CONCLUSION

What can you do when you are hit with a crisis?

- A. Remember God's **presence** will give you the power you need to face any crisis!
- B. Prayer will **reinforce** your awareness of his presence.
- C. Peace will **reveal** your awareness of his presence.