

THE PROPHETIC WORD TODAY

Daniel: Trial of Fire

Text: Daniel 3

INTRODUCTION:

The portion of God's prophetic word through Daniel that we examine today is probably the best known of all the stories and prophecies of this great man of God. It is found in the third chapter, and I call it the "Trial By Fire."

I am keenly aware that sometimes for me as well as for you, familiarity breeds casualness when it comes to our level of attention. But my friend, out of this remarkable true story, comes a principle from God's Word that many who are here this morning need desperately. And if all the rest knew the things that would happen in their lives in the next months or years, they would sit up and give such heed to this truth from God that there would be no distraction whatsoever in this house of worship.

When the events of Daniel Chapter 2 came to an end, all was well with our four young men who had been captured and brought from Jerusalem to Babylon: Daniel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah. They had been made a part of the magi, the wise men of Babylon. They had proven themselves as men of faith and prayer. They had also been instruments to demonstrate the great wisdom of the One True and Living God Who not only created the world but who determines its destiny and the destiny of all who live upon it.

Following their revelation of King Nebuchadnezzar's startling dream and its interpretation, Daniel and his friends were all promoted. Daniel was made to be the head of the Magi and became a personal counselor to the king. Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azariah, known in Babylon as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were given authority over the province of Babylon. Thus they served in the government of the powerful King Nebuchadnezzar for the next 24 years, all the while maintaining their faith in the one true God.

Later, and at a time when Daniel was out of the country on a mission for the king, an event occurred which brought fear and trembling to the heart of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Outside the city of Babylon, on the plain of Dura, a large circular plain often used for athletic events, an unusual construction project had begun. The pagan King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his artisans to build a golden statue nine feet wide and 90 feet tall. As the colossus rose from the ground day by day during the construction, the rumor abounded that Nebuchadnezzar was building it so that everyone in the kingdom might worship the image in honor of Nebuchadnezzar and his pagan gods.

When the structure was finally complete, the worst fears of the trio were confirmed. Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed a day in which every government official would join him in a special place before the statue on the plain in the presence of all the people. Nebuchadnezzar had assembled the royal orchestra and before all the people had his heralds proclaim,

Daniel 3:4-6 “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;⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

So when Nebuchadnezzar gave the signal and the royal orchestra played, all the people gathered on the vast plain before the imposing image and powerful king, bowed in worship of Nebuchadnezzar and his gods. That is all but three: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They were summoned into the presence of the king.

Daniel 3:13-14 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.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?*”

A better translation of “is it true?” is “is it on purpose?” that you do not worship the gold image? Here was a chance to escape, to compromise. To say they did not understand or make some other excuse. Nebuchadnezzar continued,

Daniel 3:15 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?”

Everyone knew the furnace Nebuchadnezzar was talking about. It also was there on the plain of Dura and its customary use was for the making of bricks for the vast construction projects of the kingdom. But it had been used before as a chamber of execution, and the Babylonians were known for burning their prisoners to death. This was no idle threat but a very present danger, and the three men knew it well. Yet their response was calm and determined.

Daniel 3:16-18 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.”

The Scripture says, Daniel 3:19-30¹⁹ 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.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.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.²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.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."

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. 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. 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.**"

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

And why did the Almighty God cause this account to be recorded in His Word? Certainly not merely for our entertainment like some short story to be read with amusement and forgotten. He has preserved it for us because it communicates a principle sorely needed by every man, woman, teenager, boy, and girl on the face of the earth.

Here it is. Listen; write it down; memorize it; know it.

PRINCIPLE: GOD PERMITS ADVERSITY IN THE LIVES OF HIS CHILDREN FOR THEIR GOOD AND HIS GLORY.

A. God permitted this trial by fire to come upon His children.

He could have prevented the building of the image.

He could have destroyed the furnace.

He could have had them to be absent as was Daniel.

...but instead He permitted it!

B. God permitted it for the good of the three men.

Their faith was deepened and enlarged.

Their testimony was enhanced.

Their opportunity for service was increased (promoted).

C. God was glorified by their successfully going through the trial.

His presence was revealed.

His power was displayed.

His promises were proven true.

The same is true in our lives.

CONCLUSION: How many are in the midst of a fiery trial, a period of adversity right now in your life? Will you ask God to work this trial for your good and His glory