



## DANIEL 3:19-30

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## STRUCTURE

- I. **Babylon's image exposes its vulnerability (19-23)**
  - a. The king's face exposes the distortion of false worship (19a)
  - b. The king's furnace exposes the excess of tyranny (19b-21)
  - c. The king's urgency exposes the failure of godless allegiance (22-23)
  
- II. **God's presence reveals His power (24-26)**
  - a. God's presence unsettles the false king (24)
  - b. God's presence frees and preserves His servants (25-26)
  
- III. **The servants' vindication reveals a pattern (27-30)**
  - a. God's servants are vindicated before the watching powers (27)
  - b. God's servants are vindicated before the humbled king (28)
  - c. God's servants foreshadow a pattern for the last days: first the test, then the vindication (29-30)

## GENERAL COMMENTARY:

The last half of Daniel 3 continues the story of three faithful servants who refuse to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's "image." Having defied the tyrant's decree, their faithfulness exposes Babylon's vulnerability. The king is so overcome by rage that his face—literally, his "image"—changes. The king who commands the worship of an image cannot keep his own image intact. The image on the plain projects glory; the image of his face reveals tyranny. Through parallel language, Daniel exposes the truth: the demand for people to worship the image was truly a demand that people worship him. Empires exalt themselves, and they ruthlessly destroy rivals. In Nebuchadnezzar's case, the attempt backfires. He overheats the furnace designed to punish dissent. Instead, his loyal soldiers perish. Their allegiance to a godless king ends in death.

In contrast, God's servants are preserved in the fire. The scene of their salvation answers Nebuchadnezzar's challenge in verse 15: "Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Unlike the impotent gods of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar will soon concede, "there is no god who is able to rescue in this way" (v. 29). The "way" God saved was indeed unique. He did not extinguish the fire; He walked with them in it. A fourth man appears with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, walking freely and without harm. The pagan king searches for words to describe what he sees: a "fourth" man; one "like a son of the gods"; a powerful "angel". Much debate exists about the identity of this messenger (see below), but many consider it to be a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. Regardless, it was God who saved

them. In the story of Daniel, the purpose is to show how God preserves His people in “the latter days”: He saves us *through* the fire, not *from* it.

The story concludes by reinforcing a pattern that runs throughout the Book of Daniel. In chapter 1, Daniel and his friends endure a test of formation. In chapter 2, they pass a test of revelation. In chapter 3, Daniel’s friends face a test of allegiance. Chapter 6 then presents a deliberate parallel to chapter 3: just as Daniel’s friends are cast into the fiery furnace, Daniel is cast into the lions’ den. In both cases, God sends a heavenly messenger to preserve His servants. And in every case, the testing is followed by public vindication.

The pattern reveals how God’s servants endure the machinery of empire in the latter days. The apocalyptic visions in the latter half of Daniel make clear that great hardship awaits the people of God. We pass this test not by withdrawing from the world, but by serving faithfully within it. We pass it by resisting ungodly demands, yet doing so with quiet wisdom rather than revolt—trusting God for vindication. God’s vindication is why we endure. The message of Daniel 3 is this: trust the pattern. God’s people serve, suffer, trust, and endure. In due time, God vindicates.

## **VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:**

***19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.***

—“Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury”:

- Daniel could have titled his book, “How to Spot a Tyrant.” Nebuchadnezzar has anger issues. Tyrants are like toddlers, but with immense power.
- Nebuchadnezzar “was angry and very furious” (2:12); “Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage...” (3:13); now, he is “filled with fury” (3:19).
- Other characteristics of tyrants in Daniel: They redefine identity (1:6-7). They behave rashly (2:12-13; 3:13, 19-20; 6:6-9). They demand total conformity (3:1-7). They turn politics into worship (3:1-15). They despise dissent (2:12; 3:12, 19). They punish disproportionately (2:5, 2:12-13; 3:6, 3:19-21). They boast (7:8, 20, 25). They surround themselves with flatterers and enforcers (3:8-12; 6:6-9). They manipulate the law to make resistance look criminal (6:7-15). They devour people like beasts (ch. 7). They try to change divine decrees (7:25).

—“the expression of his face was changed”:

- We are reminded of Dan. 5:6 where, “the king’s color changed.”
- The face of the king changes because the mask has slipped. The man demanding worship cannot even control his countenance. The face can’t hide emotions of this magnitude. The king projects power, but he has lost control.
- We are also reminded of Pr. 16:15: “In the light of a king’s face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.” Daniel’s friends had received the king’s favor in 2:49. He promoted them with Daniel. But royal favor turns to hostility.
- “expression” can be literally translated, “image”—as in, “the image of his face changed.” The king who demanded everyone worship a false *image* now has his own *image* distorted by rage. The parallel language seems intentionally ironic.
  - The irony exposes reality: Nebuchadnezzar demanded people worship a statue (“image”). In truth, he demanded worship of his own “image”—his face—the ultimate expression of himself. The man demanding worship is deformed by his own idolatry.
  - It also exposes the weakness behind his power. The king who commands the worship of an image cannot keep his own image intact. The image on the plain projects glory; the image of his face reveals tyranny.

—“He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated”:

- When measured by survivability, the difference between 500 and 3500 degrees is negligible. Even if “seven times” was a manner of speaking—like, “turn it up to the nth degree!”—the increase reflects the king’s hot anger more than it does logic.
- In fact, his demand will backfire (no pun intended), as we’ll see in v. 22.

—“burning fiery furnace”:

- Repetition is a favorite literary tool in Daniel:
  - In chapter 2, we observed the repetition of phrases for Babylon’s wise men: magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, diviners, and Chaldeans.
  - In chapter 3, the style has continued: not just “government officials” but “the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces.”
  - Not just instruments but “horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music.”
  - Not just nations but “peoples, nations, and languages”.
- The “burning fiery furnace” is no different. “Furnace” would have been enough. “burning” furnace would have intensified it. But “burning fiery furnace” helps you feel the heat.
- The name of the furnace is exaggerated because Babylon’s power is exaggerated. The kingdoms of this world can heat the furnace—they can posture and flex—but the fire burns their own. Their weakness is exposed; God’s strength is magnified.
- Hamilton: “The phrase used by the Old Greek translation of Daniel, ‘into the furnace of fire,’ appears verbatim in Matthew 13:42 and 13:50. Matthew also uses the same verb for ‘cast’, but in a slightly different formation. In this text, Matthew... presents Jesus warning that those who do not respond to his message of the kingdom will be penalized: ‘The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.’ The phrase from Daniel 3:6 is not the only way Matthew 13:41-43 reflects Danielic language and imagery: [quote continues in the following bullet points]
  - Matthew presents Jesus speaking of himself as the Daniel 7:13 son of man (Matt. 13:41).
  - The kingdom Jesus claims (Matt. 13:41) is the one prophesied in Daniel.
  - Those who respond rightly to his message of the kingdom will experience the Daniel 12:2-3 resurrection to shining glory.”
- Jesus inverts the imagery from Daniel 3 to show that He is the opposite of Babylon’s tyrant. Nebuchadnezzar throws the righteous into the fire; Jesus casts the wicked in the flame, and He rewards the righteous. Jesus is the anti-tyrant, the king we all long for—the One who punishes evil and rewards good. He is perfectly good.

—“their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments”:

- Another repetition. This one emphasizes God’s preservation. Verse 27 will say, “their cloaks were not harmed”.
- It’s not as though God saved them partially. They entered the fire, and God preserved everything attached to their person.
- God is not a half-way Savior. He saves us completely.

—“Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego”:

- Daniel lays blame at the king for these men being lost. The verse subtly critiques his manufactured urgency and foolish demand.
- This is more than a tragic story. It is an illustration of empires. Led by foolhardy kings, they devour their own—yet refuse to own the blame.
- The king imagines himself a god, but his scepter is limited. He cannot decree death beyond the Lord’s permission. Only the Most High God determines our day of death.
- Longman: “Loyalty to a godless and foolish king brings death, not the life one would expect.”

**24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."**

—"rose up in haste":

- The Aramaic word translated "haste" often carries the sense of being troubled, startled, or alarmed elsewhere in Daniel (4:5, 19; 5:6, 9-10; 7:15, 28). The king does not just rise quickly; he rises alarmed.
- The tyrant who was enraged by dissent is now shaken by divine intervention. His emotional temperature spikes—first with fury, then with astonishment.
- The Kingdom of God disturbs the Kingdom of Man. However secure tyrants appear on their thrones, they do not sit there comfortably when God begins to act.
- It's as if the Kingdom of God is turning up the heat, not the other way around.

—"Did we not cast three men into the fire?": At first, the king is confused. He wonders aloud if he had miscalculated, and he had—not the number of men, but the God who saves.

—"unbound... walking... not hurt":

- God did not just save the three men from high temperatures; He unbound them. Babylon's strongest act of control becomes the occasion for God's liberation. The empire can cast them in, but it cannot keep them bound. Those who serve the Kingdom of Man are bound by it, but those who serve God walk in freedom.
- "walking" is a casual act. It accentuates how safe they are. Furthermore, they are walking with a heavenly figure, which speaks of their friendship with God.
- "not hurt": The three soldiers were killed; the three servants were not even hurt.

—"I see four men... the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods":

- The fourth being in the fire is described as:
  - One of four "men".
  - "like a son of the gods".
  - An "angel" sent by God (3:28).
- Scholars agree that the fourth being is heavenly, but they disagree about whether he is just an angel or the pre-incarnate Christ. Complicating matters is that throughout the Old Testament, Christ is associated with "the angel of the LORD"—particularly in passages where this divine messenger is Himself divine.
- Jim Hamilton argues that the fourth being in the fire is probably an angelic messenger and not the pre-incarnate Christ. His case includes these observations:
  - Other angels in Daniel have human characteristics. Having the appearance of a man does not, by itself, mean this is the pre-incarnate Christ.
    - "one having the appearance of a man" (8:15; 10:18).
    - "the man Gabriel" (9:21)
    - "the man clothed in linen" (10:5; 12:6-7).
  - There are no strong linguistic links to Daniel 7:13, where the messianic figure is explicitly described as "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven to receive everlasting dominion.
  - Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 appear to correspond in the book's narrative structure, and in Daniel 6:22 Daniel explicitly says, "My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths," which may suggest that Daniel 3 is also describing an angelic deliverer.
- I agree with that we cannot conclude decisively that this is the pre-incarnate Christ. Still, I do not think Hamilton's arguments prove that it is only a normal angel.
  - The "man clothed in linen" in Daniel 10:5 and 12:6-7 is read by many Christians as more than an ordinary angelic figure, especially since Revelation later uses similar imagery for Christ. That does not settle Daniel 3, but it does caution us against treating every humanlike heavenly being in Daniel as non-Christological.
  - While Daniel 3 lacks the explicit wording of Daniel 7:13, that may not be a decisive objection. We are not in a vision of enthronement here, but in a narrative of deliverance. We would not

- expect Nebuchadnezzar to say, "I see one like a son of man coming with the clouds to receive dominion." The settings are too different for that.
- The connection with Daniel 6 does not rule out a christological reading. For Christians, the category of "angelic messenger" is not incompatible with a manifestation of the divine Son, especially in light of Old Testament passages where the angel of the LORD seems to speak and act as God.
  - There are also positive reasons why many Christians have seen here a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ:
    - In the Old Testament, God's saving presence is sometimes mediated through a figure who is both distinct from God and yet identified closely with Him. That pattern makes a Christological reading at least possible.
    - Nebuchadnezzar refers to the heavenly being as "a son of the gods". No passage in Daniel refers to mere angels this way. It leaves the door open—especially with a canonical reading—that this is THE Son of God.
    - The broader theology of the chapter supports the idea that God does not merely rescue His servants from afar; He is present with them in the fire. Many have naturally seen in that presence a foreshadowing of the Son.
    - Church fathers have often understood the text in this way:
      - Irenaeus, who speaks of "the Hand of God" being present with the three children in the furnace, "namely the Son of God."
      - Hippolytus, who explicitly says Nebuchadnezzar saw and recognized the Son of God in the furnace before the incarnation.
      - Tertullian, who identifies the fourth figure as Christ, "the fourth, who was like the Son of man," and connects Daniel 3 with Daniel 7.
      - Ambrose, who uses the angel in the furnace as part of his argument for the Son's divine identity and unity with the Father.
      - Jerome, in later allusive use, also speaks of the fourth in the furnace as one "bearing a form like the son of God."
    - My conclusion is this: we should not speak as though the text makes the identification airtight. Daniel 3 itself allows us to say confidently that the fourth figure is a heavenly deliverer sent by God. A Christological reading is not certain, but it is plausible and well represented in early Christian interpretation. The safest wording is probably: this may be an angelic messenger, but it may also be a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ; the text leaves room for both, and the church has often seen Christ here.
    - Longman: "Was this 'fourth' being Jesus, as many interpreters from the earliest Christian times have suggested? It is impossible to be dogmatic... It is safest to say what we have here is a reflection of Immanuel, 'God with us.' God dwelt with the three friends in the midst of the flames to preserve them from harm. In this sense, the Christian cannot help but see a prefigurement of Jesus Christ, who came to earth to dwell in a chaotic world and who even experienced death, not so we might escape the experience of death but that we might have victory over it."
  - We must remember that Nebuchadnezzar is a pagan, reaching for categories to describe what he sees. His speech is not our best source for theological precision. And yet God repeatedly humbles this king and then draws from him words that are strikingly true (2:47; 4:34-37). The same may be true here in 3:24-28: his language may be imprecise, but it should not be dismissed.
  - I find it notable that God saved them in the midst of the fire rather than putting the fire out. Furthermore, He appeared with them in the flames, which was unnecessary to complete the salvation. What is the message in this?
    - God doesn't always prevent danger; sometimes He walks with us in it.
    - In light of Daniel's broader purpose—to show us how to survive "the latter days"—saints should expect tribulation, not exemption. The good news is: God meets us in the fire.

- The fire becomes the stage of revelation. If God had saved these exiles by letting them escape notice, the scene would not have played out. Nebuchadnezzar would not have praised the God of heaven. His advisors would not have eaten crow. The nation would not have seen how the God of heaven vindicates His servants. His servants would not have been promoted. The list goes on. God uses fire to illuminate His salvation.
- Presence is better than escape. A God who only removes pain might still feel distant; the God of Daniel 3 shows Himself willing to enter the place of suffering with His people.

***26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.***

—"Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace": The king who claimed total power cannot step into the realm where God is present and active. He stands at a distance, looking in. The faithful walk in the fire with heaven's messenger; the tyrant can only peer from the threshold.

—"servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here":

- Nebuchadnezzar refers to Yahweh as "the Most High God", a title that acknowledges Him as the highest king.
- Originally, the king commanded them in a furious rage to be brought before him and recant (3:13-15). Now he summons them in awe to honor their God (3:28).
- The same king who once threatened them with fire now publicly acknowledges the God who preserved them through it.

—"satraps... prefects... governors... counselors":

- The same list of political officials who once gathered to enforce conformity now gather to witness God's deliverance, their own folly, and Babylon's fragility.
- The same imperial machine that assembled to enforce the image now assembles to inspect the miracle. This is not private comfort; it is public vindication before the watching powers. That matters for Daniel's theology of witness in exile. God vindicates His servants publicly.

—"no] power over the bodies of those men... hair of their heads was not singed... cloaks were not harmed... no smell of fire had come upon them":

- Their bodies, their hair, their clothes, and even their smell remained unchanged. God delivered them completely.
- The fire had enough power to kill Babylon's mighty men (3:22), but it had no power over God's servants. What the empire meant for destruction, God turned into a stage for His preserving power.
- We are reminded of Revelation 13, where a tyrannical kingdom raises up an image, demands worship, and threatens harm to resisters. Beastly kingdoms never change. Nor does the Kingdom of God. We proclaim our highest allegiance, not to earthly kingdoms, but to the Most High God. Daniel 3 is a preview of the church's calling: do not bow, do not take the mark, and trust the Most High God to deliver.
- In Revelation 13, however, deliverance feels less dramatic: "If anyone is taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword he must be slain. This is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints" (13:10). Sometimes God delivers miraculously; sometimes He lets us perish (cf. Heb. 11:32-40). In Revelation, our ultimate hope comes not through miraculous rescue but through resurrection. The same saints who perished by the Beast's sword are observed in the next section worshiping the Lamb around the sea of glass (15:2-4). They "conquered the beast and its image" (15:2) like the Lamb they submit to: through death. A tyrant's greatest weapon is the sword. Resurrection dulls the edge. In the words of Soren Kierkegaard, "The tyrant dies, and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins." Resurrection means the Beast's sword is not ultimate.

*28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.*

—This is the second of three acknowledgements by Nebuchadnezzar that Israel's God is supreme. Each comes after a contest:

- In Daniel 2, God reveals what Babylon's wise men cannot. Nebuchadnezzar confesses, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries" (2:47). The contest in chapter 2 is over **wisdom and revelation**. Babylon's wise men are exposed as powerless, while Daniel's God reveals the hidden dream and its meaning (2:10–11, 27–28, 47).
- In Daniel 3, God delivers where Babylon's furnace cannot destroy. Nebuchadnezzar now declares, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants" (3:28). He adds, "there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way" (3:29). The contest in chapter 3 is over **power, allegiance, and deliverance**. Can the king compel worship? Can the furnace destroy God's servants? The answer is no. The God of Israel proves Himself greater than Babylon's image, Babylon's fire, and Babylon's threats (3:15, 17, 25, 28–29).
- In Daniel 4, God humbles the king who seemed unshakable. After being brought low, Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven and says, "I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever" (4:34). He goes on: "his dominion is an everlasting dominion" and "none can stay his hand" (4:34–35). The contest in chapter 4 is over **sovereignty and kingship**. Who truly rules—the emperor of Babylon, or the Most High? By the end of the chapter, even Nebuchadnezzar himself must confess that "those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (4:37).

—These three confessions form a rising pattern across Daniel 2–4. First, God is shown to be wiser than Babylon's wise men; second, stronger than Babylon's furnace; third, higher than Babylon's king.

—Daniel's thesis is not merely that God helps His people in hard times, but that the Most High rules over every rival kingdom and the "gods" they serve. The God of Israel exposes their limits and compels their kings to confess His supremacy.

—"who has sent his angel and delivered his servants": See discussion above about whether this was a normal angel or the "angel of the LORD"—the preincarnate Christ.

—"trusted in him... set aside the king's command... yielded up their bodies... [refused to] serve and worship any god except their own God":

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego display their faithfulness in whom they trusted (God), whom they defied (the king), what they were willing to endure (yielded their bodies), and whom they worshiped (their own God).
- Faithfulness looks the same today:
  - Where do you place your trust—in God or politics?
  - Whom are you willing to defy for God's sake?
  - What are you willing to endure for God's sake?
  - What do you center your life around—God or something else?

—"Any people or language or nation": The global population that had once been summoned under Babylon's rule is now drawn nearer to Yahweh's. This anticipates the day when all peoples, nations, and languages will come under the reign of the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13–14). As God's people remain faithful—trusting Him, defying sinful commands, enduring suffering, and worshiping Him alone—God bears witness to the nations through them.

—"shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins":

- This is the second time Nebuchadnezzar has threatened ruin and dismemberment. Earlier, he promised the same fate to the wise men if they could not tell him his dream (2:5). So while he has moved, however slightly, toward acknowledging God's kingdom, his instincts remain Babylonian. He honors Yahweh with his lips, but he does not yet rule like Him. And, as the next chapter will show, he has not yet truly submitted to Him either.
- This passage contains multiple decrees (3:10–11, 13–15, 19–20, 22, 26, 29). Nebuchadnezzar's word determines what people do and what will be done to those who resist. The subtle undercurrent is that

his decree falls flat before God. Without speaking a word, the King of Heaven undermines the King of Babylon's words.

—"no other god who is able to rescue in this way":

- Daniel 3 is not just a contest between Jewish leaders and Babylonians leaders; it is a contest between the God of Israel and the gods of Babylon.
- Nebuchadnezzar's statement answers the question he posed in 3:15: "who is the god who is able to deliver you out of my hands?"
- The application for us is this: trust the God who can actually save. We live in a world of rival saviors. Earthly pleasures promise escape but deliver a hangover. Earthly achievements promise significance but leave us empty. Earthly possessions promise security, but those who worship wealth still fear losing it. Every "savior" makes promises. God alone keeps them.

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

- Chapters 1 and 2 both end with royal advancement: first recognition before the king (1:19–20), then formal promotion within Babylon's government (2:48–49). Another test ends with promotion here in chapter 3. Later, Daniel is cast into the lion's den, then he prospers (6:28). This appears to be a pattern: testing, then promotion.
- The pattern reveals how God's servants endure the machinery of empire. The apocalyptic visions of future chapters reveal that great hardship awaits the people of God. Some will be tempted to withdraw—to hide the light God has given them. Others will turn revolutionary, riling up the masses. Neither response is faithful. God's servants don't withdraw; they engage. They don't stoke rebellion; they display calm wisdom. And when the servants of empire "out" us like the jealous officials of chapter 3, we quietly entrust ourselves to God for vindication. This is the pattern: we serve; we suffer; God vindicates.
- Hamilton: "These historical deliverances correspond to the apocalyptic indications that the people of God will suffer and then be vindicated and receive the kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:25–27; 8:25; 9:27; 12:7). Such considerations indicate that the 'end of the time' (1:18) in which Daniel suffers before his exaltation (1:17–20) is a kind of enacted parable typifying 'the end of the time' in which the people of God will suffer before receiving the kingdom."



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