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# “Open Church – Open Bible

Min. Marossa Davis

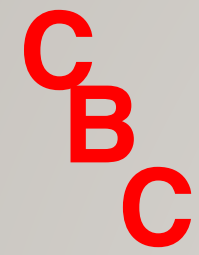


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# Sunday Church School

AUGUST 8, 2021

“ Three Young Men Refuse to Bow ”  
Daniel 3:1, 8-18



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“ Three Young Men Refuse to Bow”

Daniel 3:1, 8-18 ( KJV)

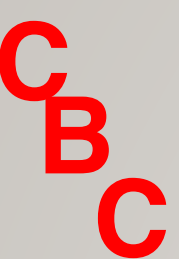
**v. 1. “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.**

v. 8. Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

**v. 9. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.**

v. 10. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:

**v. 11. And whoso falleth not down and worshippingeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.**



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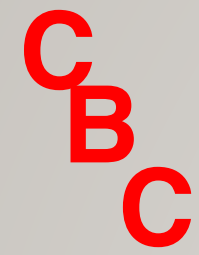
Daniel 3:1, 8-18 ( KJV)

**v. 12. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**

v. 13. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

**v. 14. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?**

v. 15. Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not,

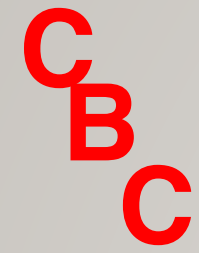


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Daniel 3:1, 8-18 ( KJV)

- v. 15. ( cont'd) ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**
- v. 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.
- v. 17. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.**
- v. 18. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

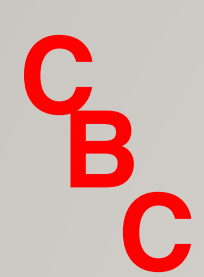
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Daniel 3:1, 8-18 ( KJV)

**In 605 b.c. King Nebuchadnezzar’s armies** had invaded Judah and taken as captives the brightest young men from Jerusalem for the services of the king. ( Daniel 1:1-4 ). Among them were Daniel and his 3 godly friends - Hananiah ( “Yahweh is gracious” ) , Mishael ( “ Who is like God? ) , and Azariah ( “ Yahweh has helped ” ) They were given Chaldean names in place of their Hebrew names: **Shadrach** ( “royal scribe” ) , **Meshach** ( “ the king’s guest” ) , and **Abednego** ( Nebuchadnezzar’s servant” ). The men were handsome, extremely knowledgeable, and perceptive. They were educated in the Chaldean language as well as in Babylonian literature, history, philosophy and military strategy.

**Nebuchazzer quickly found out**, though, that he could educate the minds of these men, but he could not change their hearts. They were faithful to their duties, but their ultimate devotion was to the Lord.



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## TODAY’S AIM

**FACTS**: to acknowledge that the world we live in often stands in opposition to the things of God.

**PRINCIPLE**: to stress that God’s people are to stand against whatever stands against the Lord.

**APPLICATION**: to resolve to willingly accept unpopularity and hostility from the world because we stand up for Jesus Christ.

## LESSON OUTLINE

**I. THE GOLDEN IDOL**

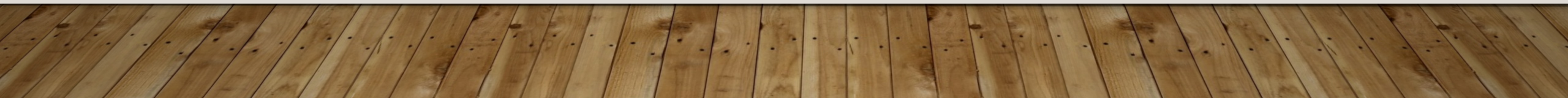
**DANIEL 3:1**

**II. THE SCHEMING INFORMANTS**

**DANIEL 3: 8-12**

**III. THE BRAVE YOUNG MEN**

**DANIEL 3: 13-18**



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## I. THE GOLDEN IDOL

**DANIEL 3:1**

**Because of their integrity,** intelligence, and especially Daniel’s ability to interpret the king’s dream ( chap 2 ) , these 4 men rose high in the Babylonian administrative system. They were given authority unheard of for members of a captive nation. Their success proved a strong testimony to the greatness of the God they served, but there was also a **backlash**, one that is clearly seen in this lesson.

**King Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest** ruler the Near East had seen in centuries. A brilliant and ruthless military commander, he transferred Babylon into the most feared, powerful and dominant empire in the region. As powerful as he was however, he was to learn that there was One with even greater power.

**Nebuchadnezzar had great respect** for Daniel and his friends, but

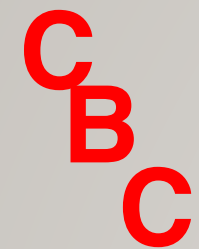
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he had even greater esteem for **his own majesty** and was given to grandiose gestures and self promotion. That is how he conceived of a plan to reflect universal glory back on himself. Verse 1 tells us that “ the king made an image of gold ” that measured 90 feet tall by 9 feet wide. It was no doubt set up in a place where it could be seen from a long way in all directions.

**We cannot say whether this image** depicted one of the Babylonian gods or Nebuchadnezzar himself, but it’s nature was clearly idolatrous. According to the king’s decree , loud instrumental music would be played at the dedication ceremony to which people from far and wide were summoned. Upon hearing the music, everyone ( governors, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, rulers etc ) was to fall to the ground and worship the golden statue ( v. 2-5) It was a **loyalty test** of the most brazen sort, and the penalty for not participating was uncompromising: immediate incineration in



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the blazing furnace.

**Verse 7 informs us that** , not surprisingly, compliance was swift and virtually total. When the music sounded, people of all nationalities and languages bowed low and worshipped Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image. The music was played repeatedly at various intervals. There was a chink in the universal worship, however. A tiny handful of individuals - three to be precise - stood out conspicuously from the masses.

## **II. THE SCHEMING INFORMANTS**

**DANIEL 3: 8-12**

**Most politicians today** are pleased with an approval rating of 51 percent and thrilled if they get an approval rating of 60 percent. Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate anything less than 100%, and he had advisors that were quite happy to take advantage of that fact.

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**Over time, the Chaldeans became the predominant** component of the Babylonian Empire. The term Chaldean is usually synonymous with Babylonians. Here the term seems to have a specific meaning of the learned class of priests, magicians, and astronomers. They rose high as royal advisors and administrators , but they suffered humiliation when they proved unable to tell Nebuchadnezzar the content of his dream, much less interpret it ( Daniel 2:1-10 ). To have been shown up by Daniel no doubt upset them a great deal.

**These advisers must have been** filled with resentment and jealousy, because of the **favor** shown to the young Hebrews and were looking for ways to cut them down to size. Verse 8 tells us they came into the king’s presence “and accused the Jews”. But first they had to follow protocol and give the expected flattery. “ O king, live forever” was the standard form of addressing

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the monarch. It was similar to “ God save the king ” but perhaps with more emphasis on the king’s own preoccupation with his own supposed immortality.

**To set their case on solid footing**, the advisers repeated to the king the content of his own decree even down to the full list of instruments used in calling for the worship of the golden image. They found it necessary to remind him of the **penalty** for failing to answer the orchestral call to worship. Nebuchadnezzar had not forgotten this but they helpfully brought it to his attention. Anyone who did not bow down to worship the image would be thrown into a “ burning, fiery furnace “ ( v. 11 ). The language is deliberately redundant in order to underscore the terrible severity of punishment. That furnace was really hot!

**Finally, the advisors informed the king** that there were a few Jews who had not complied with the king’s decree. They specifically named Shadrach,

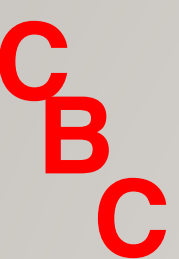
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Meshach and Abednego. They also reminded the king that these were men whom he had placed in high positions of administration over the province of Babylon.

**The motive for this reminder** was no doubt to highlight the **ingratitude** of these three for their promotions and to emphasize their unworthiness to fill their positions. Instead of showing appreciation to the king for the high honor bestowed on them ( certainly unwarranted for conquered foreigners) they had defied him. They did not serve the Babylonian king’s gods, and they refused to worship his golden image.

**To spurn the service and worship** of the king’s deities was insult enough against his royal majesty and goodwill. Now they added to that insult the injury of disobeying a direct decree of the king. That was something that Nebuchadnezzar was not going to be able to ignore.



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## III. THE BRAVE YOUNG MEN

**DANIEL 3: 13-18**

**As the informants no doubt hoped,** Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage at their report and immediately ordered that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be brought in to answer for their insubordination. They were quickly hauled before the king and the interrogation began.

**Some wonder where was Daniel,** in the absence of information in the text we cannot say, but we are certain that Daniel would never have bowed down to the statue. For a man who refused to eat the king’s diet on the grounds of faithfulness to God’s law ( Chapter 1) and at another time praying to the Lord despite an edit prohibiting it ( Chapter 6 ) such an act would be inconceivable. Secondly, the advisers would not have missed an opportunity to entrap Daniel along with the other men. He would have been the grand prize. They would have pounced on him without hesitation.

**The most reasonable answer,** is that as one of the highest and most

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trusted officials in Nebuchadnezzar’s court ( 2:48 ), Daniel presumably made regular trips around and beyond the province in overseeing the king’s business. We can justifiably conclude that he was away from Babylon at this time on some matter of official importance. If he had been present, he undoubtedly would have taken his place with the three men now facing the enraged king.

**Nebuchadnezzar seems to have found it difficult** to believe that anyone would dare defy his decree, especially these three whom he had so generously favored. He then asked if the report was true. Had they really refused to serve his gods? Without waiting for the answer he decided he would give them one more chance. All they had to do was bow down one time when they heard the music play again, and all would be well. But if they refused there would be no further appeal. They would be immediately thrown into the blazing furnace. He did not want to look weak in the eyes of his



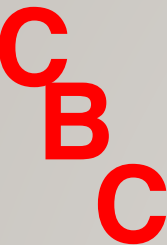
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subjects. He ended with a challenge: what god would be able to rescue them from his power?

**The initial reply of the three men was bold.** Even though they did not owe him an answer, they proceeded to answer the final challenge he had just uttered. Nebuchadnezzar had asked what god could save them from his death sentence; they declared to him that the God they served was **fully able** to rescue them from the burning furnace. Not only that, but they were also confident that He actually would do so: “ and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king” ( v. 17 ). Such confidence was surely the last thing that Nebuchadnezzar expected.

**Then the three drew their line in the sand.** By faith, they expected that their God would deliver them, but they informed Nebuchadnezzar that even if He chose not to, they would not be serving the king’s God’s nor worshipping his golden statues. After centuries of Israelites having problems at times with idolatry, here are 3 young men who threw idolatry to the ground in the face of



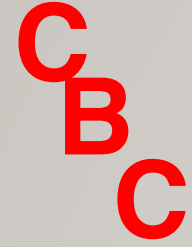
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gruesome death. Some would call it one of the nation of Israel’s finest hours.

**What happened next is well known.** The three men were tied up and thrown into the midst of the fiery furnace. They were obedient to the God they served. Even when they were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace, which had been heated seven times hotter than usual, they were not harmed, though the men who threw them in were slain by it! Fire had no power over them as the Prophet Isaiah had written: “ When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walketh through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” ( 43:2 ).

**Instead of being consumed,** they enjoyed the fellowship of a fourth person ( some have interpreted to be an angel, while others believe He was the preincarnate Christ Himself) all of which was witnessed by an astonished Nebuchadnezzar. At his much more humbly given command, they emerged



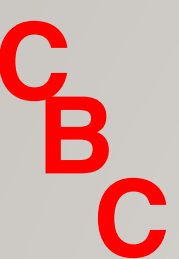
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unscathed from the furnace, bringing honor to themselves and glory to God, who is indeed able to save His people according to His will.

**In conclusion**, imagine what God could do through us if we were to take a stand for the Lord? As God’s people, we are to be different than the world. We are never to place anyone or anything above our Lord. In today’s lesson Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s faithfulness to God was important to them. They had been handpicked from their youth to learn the Babylonian culture. Now they had betrayed the king and made him look foolish. Nebuchadnezzar had done all he could to remove their Jewish identity from them, including changing their names. He could not, however, remove their love and devotion to the Lord.

**We face many pressures in this life** to worship other things, but we must never waver in our allegiance to God. They were courageous because they knew their God, and they had confidence that He would not forsake them in their hour of need. Their faith did not depend on God rescuing them. Their

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faith in God remained strong even when their circumstances were uncertain. They had courage enough to face being thrown into a fiery furnace because they had seen God’s power to deliver, and they knew that He had the power to save them too. Without rebellion or arrogance, they steadfastly maintained their commitment to the Lord. **May our faith be as strong.**

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## Practical Points

1. Those who seek to honor God are often falsely accused of dishonoring proud human leaders ( Dan 3:1,8,9 ).
2. Those who are loyal to God will stand out from the crowd ( vs. 10-11 ).
3. Human pride can drive people to hatred ( vs. 13-14 ).
4. God’s people cannot negotiate victory on the world’s terms ( v. 15 ).
5. We can count on the Lord for security when the world targets us for persecution ( vs. 16-17 ).
6. We can stand firm against evil forces and worldly values only because God stands with us ( v. 18 ).

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## “ Three Young Men Refuse to Bow” For Further Discussion

1. What do you think was King Nebuchadnezzar’s motivation for erecting such a large statue near Babylon? How have leaders used similar tactics throughout history?
2. What practical steps can Christians take to encourage one another to remain faithful to God against popular opinion and social pressure? What Scriptures can help?
3. Why could the three Hebrew boys not bow down to appease Nebuchadnezzar and just ask God to forgive them later ? How does their refusal challenge us as believers today?

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