

## Lesson 108

# God Defends His Glory

God is sovereign over earthly rulers.

# Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

## Introduction

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. The nations of Israel and Judah received God's punishment for their continued disobedience to God and his commands.

How did God punish, or judge, each nation? Israel was defeated and taken into captivity by the Assyrians. Judah was defeated and taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

Slide #3

Slide #4

Refer to Lesson 106 Theme Poster. The prophet Jeremiah kept warning the people to repent before God's judgment came, but the people refused to listen. The people of Judah were exiled, which means taken to foreign lands far from home. But even in their captivity, God did not abandon his people.

Refer to Lesson 107 Theme Poster. Our next lesson was about some young men from Judah who were taken to Babylon. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah were

chosen to be trained to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. The king wanted these Hebrew (Jewish) men to forget about their God and their country, so they were given new names: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The young men were told to eat the king's rich foods and drink his wine.

Why did these men not want to eat the king's food? It was food that had been dedicated to idols (false gods). It was food that was against God's laws for the Hebrew people to eat.

God gave Daniel and his friends favor with the eunuch in charge of them. The eunuch agreed when Daniel suggested that he and his friends be given vegetables and water then be compared to the other young men who ate the king's food. After 10 days, Daniel and his friends were found to be healthier than the others, so they could continue eating foods that didn't go against God's commands. God blessed Daniel and his friends because of their obedience and so that he would be glorified through them in that pagan nation. They received high positions serving King Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel was given the ability to interpret dreams. But things were about to change for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Pass out the Fiery Furnace Cards.

## The Fiery Furnace Trial

Pass out the Fiery Furnace Cards. As we go through this account of what happened to Daniel's three friends, those of you who have a card, be ready to read when I call on you.

### Slide #5

Daniel 3:1

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to Daniel chapter 3. What section of the Old Testament is the book of Daniel in? Major prophets.

Let's find out when and where the trouble started. Who will read Daniel 3:1? Choose a reader.

What did King Nebuchadnezzar make? An image of gold.

This image of gold was about 90 feet tall and nine feet wide. That's as tall as three school buses stacked on top of each other! The image may have been one of the Babylonian false gods or a statue of King Nebuchadnezzar himself. It would have been an impressive sight intended to show the king's greatness and power. After all, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over an enormous empire, including Judah and all the other nations he'd conquered.

King Nebuchadnezzar gathered all his leaders, the governors, counselors, judges,

and officials to dedicate the image he had set up on the plain of Dura in Babylon. Then he gave a command, read by his herald.

Who has Card 1? Please read the herald's announcement. Have student read Card 1. What were all the people commanded to do when the music played? Fall down and worship the golden image.

What would happen to those who didn't obey this command? They would immediately be thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

So, what do you think everybody did when they heard the instruments playing the music, signaling the time to worship the golden image? They all fell down and worshipped the golden image. They obeyed the king's command.

The people feared the king's punishment if they disobeyed, so they bowed down and worshipped. But not everyone! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the image—they worshipped the true God. They knew God had commanded them to worship only him, and they wanted to obey God's command rather than the king's. But some Chaldeans (Babylonians), possibly priests of the false Babylonian gods, hated Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were jealous of the success of the three Jewish (Hebrew) men from Judah. They went to King Nebuchadnezzar to report them.

Who will read what the Chaldeans said in Card 2? Have student read Card 2.

Why do you think the Chaldeans reported the three Jewish men to the king? Allow discussion. They wanted them to be killed (thrown into the fiery furnace) for disobeying the king's command. They wanted their positions.

The Chaldeans wanted to get rid of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When the king heard their accusation against the three men, he was furious! He commanded that they be brought before him.

Who will read what the king said to them from Card 3? Have student read Card 3.

So, the king gave them another chance to obey his command. If they would worship the golden image, the king would be pleased. But if they didn't, he would kill them.

This was a scary situation for the three men. Their choices were hard: obey the king and disobey God to live or disobey the king and obey God then die in the fiery furnace.

Who will read what the men replied to the king from Card 4? Have student read Card 4.

What choice did the three men make: to obey the king or to obey God? To obey God.

These brave men chose to trust in the Lord and obey him rather than fear the punishment of King Nebuchadnezzar. This made the king even angrier.

Who will read what he said next from Card 5? Have student read Card 5.

The guards bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego while still wearing their cloaks, tunics, hats, and other clothing.

### Slide #6

Daniel 3:22–23

Someone read Daniel 3:22–23. Assign a reader.

What happened to the guards who threw the three men into the fire? They were killed by the fire.

What happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? They fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

The fire was so hot that it killed the guards who had to throw in the prisoners. The three men fell into the flames tied up.

King Nebuchadnezzar was watching and expecting the men to be burned up. But he saw something astonishing!

Who will read Card 6? Have student read Card 6.

What surprised the king when he looked into the furnace? The men were not hurt;

they were walking around freely in the fire and a fourth man was with them. How did the king describe the fourth person in the fire? Like a son of the gods. Who was this fourth person with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire? Allow answers.

### Slide #7

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that this fourth man in the furnace was special. He was either the Son of God (called Jesus in the New Testament) appearing in human form to save the men and walk with them, or he was an angel of God sent to protect the men.

The king went to the door of the furnace and called for the men to come out. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the furnace on their own, completely unharmed by the flames that had killed the guards. The Bible says that there was not a hair on their heads or an article of clothing that was burned. They didn't even smell like smoke! But the fourth man the king had seen did not come out. He was gone!

God had protected them. They believed and trusted in the one true God. He is the omnipotent one. He is all-powerful to protect and save—if that is his will. He had power over the fiery furnace! God showed



the king and the people of Babylon that he was able to save those who trusted in him.

This impressed the king so much that he commanded that no one speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego or they would be punished. He realized that God's power was much greater and stronger than the false gods of his people.

Pass out the Class Notes.

Let's start our Class Notes. You'll circle the correct bold word or phrase in each statement.

Slide #8

Slide #9

Slide #10

Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. Image. Have students complete #1.

And #2, who will read that? Choose a reader. Music playing. Have students complete #2.

Who will read #3 about the Chaldeans? Choose a reader. Jewish. Have students complete #3.

And #4? What was the punishment for disobeying the king's command? Choose a reader. Furnace. Have students complete #4.

Who will read #5? Choose a reader.

Protected. Have students complete #5.

And how did the men leave the fire for #6? Choose a reader. No smell of smoke. Have

students complete #6.

## **The Humbling of King Nebuchadnezzar**

King Nebuchadnezzar witnessed an amazing act of God's power when God saved the three men from the fire. But he still didn't understand or respect God's sovereignty.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Who will read the definition of sovereign from the Attributes of God Poster? In complete control of everything; does all that he pleases.

Based on this definition, who made Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and allowed him to take over so many nations and build a mighty kingdom? God.

Nebuchadnezzar was proud; he thought he'd accomplished great things on his own and didn't need God. One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a terrifying dream. He called his magicians, enchanters, and other wise men so they could tell him what his dream meant. But they could not!

But who do we know whom God had given the ability to interpret dreams? Daniel.

That's right! Daniel was not with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego at the time they were commanded to worship the golden image; otherwise, he would have stood with

them. But he came before the king to hear his dream.

Slide #11

Slide #12

Slide #13

Slide #14

Slide #15

Daniel 4:10–17

Let's read Nebuchadnezzar's dream from Daniel 4:10–17. Assign readers.

What did Nebuchadnezzar see first in his dream? A great tree.

The tree in the dream grew tall and strong until it could be seen from the whole earth. It produced leaves and fruit and food and protected animals and birds.

Who came and made the proclamation that the tree would be chopped down? Look in verse 13. A watcher, a holy one. Who do you think this was? Allow guesses.

This was an angel, a servant of God, sent to deliver a message to the king.

What did the angel say would happen to the stump, all that was left of the great tree? It would be wet with the dew, live with the beasts in the grass, and have the mind of a beast.

How long would this punishment last?

Seven periods of time.

Why would this happen? Look in verse 17.

So that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

The punishment of the tree was so that all people would know that God, the Most High, is sovereign—in control of the kingdoms of men and their rulers.

God enabled Daniel to understand the meaning of this dream. Daniel was afraid to tell the king what it meant, but he did.

Who do you think the tree in the dream represented? Allow guesses.

The tree was King Nebuchadnezzar. Just as the tree grew and became strong, so God had made King Nebuchadnezzar a powerful king, ruling over many nations and peoples. The beasts and birds living under the tree represented all the people under the rule of the king.

But the angel's warning meant that Nebuchadnezzar would be driven away from among the people and live as a beast of the field, eating grass and getting soaked with dew. This would last until the king knew that God, the Most High, is sovereign.

Daniel urged the king to turn from his sins, recognize, or acknowledge, the Lord as the ruler over all, and show mercy to avoid this judgment.

Slide #16

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

Daniel 4:28–33

Let's read what happened a year later. Who will read Daniel 4:28–33? Assign readers.

What was wrong with King

Nebuchadnezzar's statement in verse 30?

He was saying it was by his power and for his glory that Babylon was built. He was proud. He did not acknowledge God.

The king was up on his royal palace roof, admiring the glory of his accomplishments, and he said it was all because of him that Babylon was so great and powerful.

What did the voice from heaven say? He would be driven from men and dwell with the beasts of the field and eat grass like an ox until seven periods of time passed and he learned that the Most High is the true ruler.

What happened right after the voice pronounced this judgment? It came to pass. The king was driven away from men and ate grass like an animal.

How long do you think the “seven periods of time” was since Nebuchadnezzar’s hair and nails grew long? Seven days, seven months, or seven years? Allow discussion.

The seven periods of time was probably seven years since his hair and nails couldn’t grow that long in just seven days. Also, the phrase “periods of time” was a way of saying years rather than months back then, and there are other places in the Bible where similar phrases mean a year.

### Slide #20

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. Can you imagine this punishment? It’s quite terrifying! King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king in his time. He ruled over an enormous kingdom. He was also known for his building projects, which he took great pride in. But here he is, driven away from civilization, living like an animal in the fields and eating grass.

### Slide #21

### Slide #22

### Slide #23

### Slide #24

Daniel 4:34–37

Listen and follow along as I read what happened next, starting in Daniel 4:34. Read verses 34–37.

God restored Nebuchadnezzar's mind. Then what did Nebuchadnezzar do? Bless and praise and honor the Most High.

Yes! The king offered a declaration of praise. He said that God's dominion, or rule, is everlasting.

What else did the king say about God? Allow discussion. People are nothing compared to him. God accomplishes his will. No one can stop him, and no one can question him.

When Nebuchadnezzar repented of his pride and acknowledged the Lord as sovereign, God restored him to his kingdom. His counselors came and found him, and he returned to ruling as king. But he was a changed man after his humiliating time living as an animal. He understood now that God humbles the proud.

What attributes of God do you see in this passage? Allow discussion.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. We see that God is sovereign over everything, including kings and nations. God showed his omnipotence by controlling the mind and actions of the king. God was just to punish Nebuchadnezzar for his pride but showed him mercy when he repented. God was gracious to give him his kingdom back and restore his mind.

We also see that God will defend his glory. He will not share it with another, whether it's false gods or proud kings.

Slide #25

Slide #26

Let's finish the Class Notes. Who will read #7 about Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Choose a reader. Tree. Have students complete #7. For #8, why was Nebuchadnezzar punished by God? Choose a reader. Pride. Have students complete #8.

What attribute of God did Nebuchadnezzar praise in #9? Choose a reader. Sovereignty. Have students complete #9.

And #10, what attribute did God show when he restored Nebuchadnezzar? Choose a reader. Mercy. Have students complete #10.

## **Application**

Slide #27

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. God defended his power and glory before King Nebuchadnezzar and the people of Babylon when he miraculously protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. God honored the faith and obedience of the three men and saved them.

An important point is that the three men were willing to die for obeying God. In this account, God chose to save them from death, but does God always save his



children from trials or death when they're doing what's right? Allow discussion.

God does not always save us from trials. There are believers around the world, both now and in the past, who have suffered terrible persecution, and even been killed, for following Jesus. But whatever the trial, God never leaves us alone. For the believer, the trials on earth are only temporary, and we have the promise of eternal life in heaven with God! Regardless of the outcome, we should always obey God rather than man.

Even after seeing God's power over the flames, Nebuchadnezzar thought he was great and powerful. God warned him in a dream, but Nebuchadnezzar didn't repent of his pride. As punishment, he was forced away from people and lived like an animal until he acknowledged that God is the all-powerful, sovereign ruler.

The Bible contains many warnings against pride. What are some ways we may show pride? Allow discussion.

When we focus on ourselves and our accomplishments, it can lead to an incorrect view of God. Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself and his achievements, which led him to an improper view of God and his sovereignty. Instead, we should follow the example of Jesus, who showed humility and

obedience to God. Jesus washed his disciples' feet, as a servant would, to set an example for his followers. When we serve others and put their needs first, we are being like Jesus.

## **Lesson Review**

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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