

How To Live With Dual Citizenship

Daniel 3:1-30

As Christians, we have dual citizenship.

This dual citizenship makes it sometimes difficult for us to exist in this country.

We live in a world where our culture goes against our Christian values.

What Does The Bible Say?

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever. (1 John 2:15–17 NLT)

Pagans do not behave and think like Christians.

Christians do not behave and think like Pagans.

What Does The Bible Say?

King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. (Daniel 3:1 NLT)

He may have built this stature based on his dream in chapter two.

7 So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. (Daniel 3:7–8 NLT)

11 That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.” (Daniel 3:11–12 NLT)

But, unfortunately, our culture always pushes us to worship man and man’s ideas instead of God’s.

14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? 15 I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what

god will be able to rescue you from my power?” (Daniel 3:14–15 NLT)

King Nebuchadnezzar had a short memory.

47 The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.” (Daniel 2:47 NLT)

How Can You Obey?

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.

17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we

serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16–18 NLT)

They knew their Scriptures.

3 “You must not have any other god but me.

4 “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.

(Exodus 20:3–4 NLT)

They are captives in another country, yet they know their God is superior.

The story is their resolve, not their outcome.

Nate Saint (1923–56) was martyred as a missionary to the Huaorani people group, the Auca Indians, in Ecuador. His willingness to die for Christ should not surprise us when we consider these words of his:

The way I see it, we ought to be willing to die. In the military, we were taught that to obtain our objectives we had to be willing to be expendable. Missionaries must face that same expendability. (Newell, *Expect Great Things*, 51)

We serve God only.

We trust that God knows best.

Whatever comes our way, we trust in God's providential plan.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

In the Insights to the Biblical World segment, it is inspired by Michael S. Heiser, Brief Insights on Mastering the Bible: 80 Expert Insights on the Bible, Explained in a Single Minute, The

60 Second Scholar (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 87 - 88.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

- 1. Following the One True God May Put Us in the Minority
(Daniel 3:1-12)**
- 2. Following the One True God May Put Us at Risk (Daniel
3:13-23)**
- 3. Choosing to Be True to God Is a Witness to Those
Around Us (Daniel 3:24-30)**

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The events in the book of Daniel took place during the

time when God's people had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians and later the Medo-Persian Empire from 605 BC to 536 BC.

Explore:

While chapters 1 and 2 focused mainly on Daniel, chapter 3 shifts to Daniel's Jewish companions known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their faithfulness to God alone would set them apart and put them at risk of their lives. God, however, would intervene in a miraculous way that would bring Him great glory.

Following the One True God May Put Us in the Minority

(Daniel 3:1-12)

Following the dream of chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar sought to consolidate his reign, incorporating all the cultures and nations he had conquered. In the dream he had seen a statue with a golden head. In real life, he commanded the construction of an

enormous image all of gold—90 feet tall (3:1)! It was likely an image of the Babylonian false god Nebo. Most statues of that size in that time contained a core of carved wood, overlaid with gold leaf or gold plating.

The plain of Dura can indicate a place just outside of Babylon. It can also translate to a walled flat area, which would also make sense: all that gold would be a tempting target for thieves seeking to chip off any bits they could.

The king summoned imperial officials from all over the empire to see and bow down to the huge idol. The ceremony served as a loyalty oath: Bow down to the image to indicate that you will serve Babylon's god and king. If not, we will burn you alive.

This was essentially a call to idolatry (verses 2-6).

It was a very inclusive gathering, incorporating musical instruments and styles from all over the kingdom.

Representatives from all the empire's cultures attended.

Considering the consequences, we are not surprised to read that when the music began, the people complied. They bowed down and worshiped the image in order to save their lives (verse 7).

The great show of imperial diversity masked its own set of ethnic tensions. Certain “Chaldeans” or Babylonians were jealous of these Jewish foreigners who had attained high position in their own province. They gleefully brought the king the news that certain Jews paid no attention to his order (verses 8-12). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s commitment to worship the one true God alone set them apart and put them very much in the minority.

Our culture pounds out its own drumbeat and does not accept those who do not go along with it. When we do not accept it, we place ourselves in a long line of people through the centuries who have understood that faithfulness to God is more important than popularity in the culture.

Explore:

The events of chapter 2 help us understand what happens in chapter 3. Chapter 2 chronicles a special dream that king Nebuchadnezzar had. Troubled by the dream, he summoned his magicians, enchanters, and sorcerers (wise men) in search of someone to tell him the meaning of the dream. When none of them were able to interpret the dream, the king ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon, which would have included Daniel and his companions. Daniel, however, requested a meeting with the king to interpret the dream. Daniel acknowledged that no man could interpret the dream, but that the one true God could give him the interpretation. He explained the meaning of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, saving himself, his companions, and the other wise men of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a statue composed of different kinds of metals. The head of the statue was gold. Daniel explained that it represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Other

kingdoms (different metals) would replace his. At this, Nebuchadnezzar elevated Daniel in the administration and issued a proclamation in favor of Daniel's God.

Explore:

Following the One True God May Put Us at Risk

(Daniel 3:13-23)

Furious that they had not bowed before his idolatrous image, Nebuchadnezzar gave the order to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, before him. He did not want to lose three competent and respected officials, but he was not willing to overlook their disobedience either. He gave them a chance to put it all behind them. Surely it had been an oversight.

They had made their point about their God. Now it was time to move on. He boasted—in the form of a question—that he and his power would prevail over their God Jehovah (verses 13-15).

Their response enraged him. He wasn't used to being resisted, especially in public! Our God can deliver us, make no mistake. But whether He chooses to deliver us or not, we will not bow down to the image (verses 16-18).

It was no more Mr. Nice Guy for Nebuchadnezzar! The furnace was prepared just as hot as his workers could make it. Some may question the phrase seven times hotter, because the Babylonians had no thermometers with which to measure the precise heat. Seven times was also a phrase used to mean as much as possible, to the maximum extent. It was so hot that his own men who threw in the three Hebrews perished in the heat and flame (verses 19-23).

True obedience sometimes proves itself in stages, as with today's example. God's servants obeyed first at the great gathering of all the people, then again when in the presence of

the king himself, and yet again as they were cast into the fire.

We must strive for obedience in all stages of our life experience.

Explore:

Choosing to Be True to God Is a Witness to Those Around Us (Daniel 3:24-30)

The furnace was likely an open-ended structure used for metal smelting. The king could see what went on inside and saw four individuals rather than three. One of them had what he considered to be a very distinct god-like appearance. He verified that indeed only three had been cast into the furnace and called for the three Jewish men to come out of the furnace. When calling them by name, Nebuchadnezzar described them as servants of the Most High God (verses 24-26).

The three men instantly became objects of curiosity and investigation. All the gathered officials examined them and noted the stark evidence of God's great power: nothing singed, burned,

or harmed, not even the smell of smoke! Nebuchadnezzar's servants had perished casting these worshipers of Jehovah God into the fire, yet the Hebrews were unharmed (verse 27). God protected His servants in a clearly miraculous way. God resoundingly answered Nebuchadnezzar's earlier question (Who is the god who will deliver you from me?).

Nebuchadnezzar responded as most serious pagans would: he sought a way to acknowledge the divine power he had just encountered. We should not take his decree as indication of a converted heart. He likely wanted to make sure that none of his subjects offended a deity who could protect people from such peril (verses 28-29).

The Hebrews' faithfulness provided an opportunity for God to be glorified. In this case, God chose to do that by miraculously delivering the Hebrews. King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished to see four figures walking around in the fire, unhurt. He called the

Hebrews to come out of the fire, which had done no harm to them whatsoever. This caused Nebuchadnezzar to recognize that the God of the Hebrews was the Most High God, even if he believed there were other gods. He decreed that no one should speak against this God who alone is able to rescue His people in such a way. As for the Chaldeans who had brought the accusations, they saw the end of their jealous plot to negate the careers of these Jews. Instead of demotion or worse, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego received promotions in the home province of Babylon itself (verse 30).

Explore:

Daniel 3 shows that Nebuchadnezzar had ideas of his own concerning his kingdom and future kingdoms. He built a statue that was all gold, from head to foot, not willing to be content with God's role for him as one leader in a series of empires. A Babylonian document of Nebuchadnezzar's time period contains

text in which Nebuchadnezzar mentioned erecting the statue and encouraged future rulers to honor and protect the statue and his laws and decrees. Those who did so would have a long life and reign. He was determined to consolidate his power in such a way that his kingdom would endure. Human conceit is nothing new among the powerful.

Explore:

The persecution that the young Hebrews were subjected to demonstrates that we are involved in a spiritual warfare and bad things happen because the world is a sinful place.

Explore:

So where was Daniel during this event? Many have noted that Daniel's name does not appear at all in chapter 3, and only his three Jewish companions went into the furnace. However, nothing we know about Daniel indicates that he went along with

Nebuchadnezzar's demands. Daniel held a position of higher authority even than his three friends, and their enemies simply may not have dared to implicate him. Also, it is plausible that Daniel was away on other administrative duties at the time.

Although the text does not specify, it is also possible that Nebuchadnezzar's decree targeted the more regional administrators, not those who were more centrally and highly placed such as Daniel.

Explore:

God saved the three Hebrews in Daniel 3. What about all those in the centuries since then that He has not protected? Why does God not always protect all His people in the same way? God's pattern was to make Himself known among the pagans, to show them that although He had allowed them to conquer His people, He remained steadfastly in control. He made that clear in this case by protecting His three servants. Many have suffered and

perished for God down through the years. Nothing indicates that they were less holy or spiritual than Daniel's friends were. Did God love them less? No, not at all! God works to accomplish His will as He sees best. Sometimes that calls for deliverance from the peril; other times it involves staying present with His people as they are martyred for their faith. (See Hebrews 11 for biblical examples of both.) God is our judge and our protector. We can leave vindication to Him. He knows how to protect His name and His people.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny

depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a

simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

How did Baal, Dagon, Moloch, and other false gods of other countries originate? Did someone make them up?

Question 2 of 5

Share when you found yourself alone in your opinion or belief about something—everyone else believed differently. What was the situation? How did that feel?

Question 3 of 5

What are specific Christian values and beliefs that the world is attacking today?

Question 4 of 5

Why do unbelievers often react strongly when Christians disagree or resist joining in a sinful practice?

Question 5 of 5

What does it mean to view your life as expendable for the sake of God's kingdom? What did these three men care about more than their lives?