

**GOD REIGNS – p. 4**  
**“The Fellowship of the Furnace”**  
**Daniel 3**

**Daniel 2:20**

*“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.”*

In Daniel chapter 2 we saw the great wisdom of God – In chapter 3 we will see the great might or power of God.

Remember the overarching message of Daniel –

-In spite of present circumstances, God rules!

-He will not abandon His people but will accomplish His purposes through them in their present circumstance.

This is clearly seen in Daniel 3 – This is one of the classic Bible stories – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace!

***An Idolatrous Decree – Daniel 3 vs. 1-7–***

-We learn of this massive statue that is part of the king’s dream – The head of the statue, which is gold, represents the Babylonian empire –

-v. 1 – *“King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.”*

-Look at verses 2 and 3 –

-The king “sent to gather” all the officials in verse 2 –

-Then in verse 3, which is almost exactly like verse 2, the officials “gathered” –

-Why the redundancy?

-It is the author’s way of showing that all these officials are like mindless robots who just go along in order to get along!

-This is how it has always worked –

-The world has a narrative and everyone is expected to just fall in line with the narrative and accept it as 100% true, right and good.

-Now, if you refuse to do what all good little people should do, there will be a price to pay –

-v. 6 – *“And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”*

-There is irony here – The idol comes out of the furnace and if you don’t bow to the idol then you go into the furnace!

-As I said a couple weeks ago, in these stories, Babylon represents the world system –

-This part of the stories illustrates for us that the world demands total allegiance – you won’t make a deal with the world!

***A Malicious Accusation – vs. 8-12***

-v. 8 – *“Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews...”*

-The Chaldeans were earlier identified back in chapter 2 as part of the “magicians, enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans” (2:2)

-Yet in chapter 1, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (children and followers of the True God) prove to be superior and wiser than the Babylonian or Chaldeans wise men –

-1:20 – *“And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”*

-And in chapter 2 it gets even worse for them as they are shown to be frauds...

-These malicious accusations are clearly brought by jealous people.

-v. 12 – *“...these men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods...”*

**A Courageous Confrontation – vs. 13-18**

- Now we get to the real heart of the story – (read verses 13-15)
- The precipice of the confrontation is the question Nebuchadnezzar asks in verse 15 – *“...But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”*
- But here is their response – one of the classic courageous responses in all the Bible! – (read verses 16-18)
  - God is able to deliver! We believe that! But He may choose not to...
  - If He doesn't – we still will not bow down!
- God's people can say this because we believe in ultimate deliverance –
  - Sometimes God will deliver us now but even that deliverance is just a foretaste of glory divine!
  - It is because we believe there is a world more ultimate and eternal than this one that we can look beyond this world and say, “Our God can deliver us from your hand o king...but if He doesn't – we won't bow down.”
- Dale Ralph Davis – *“These men give us then a full-balanced picture of faith: faith knows (1) the power of God (he is able, 17), (2) guards the freedom of God (but if not..., 18a), and (3) holds the truth of God (we will not serve your gods, 18b). There are some in our day, however, who would not be entirely happy with this 'faith'. In their view, faith involves being far more cocksure about God's ways. Their kind of faith is allergic to any uncertainty about details. If they could re-write the chapter, they would have the friends declare: 'Nebuchadnezzar, we are going to call down God's deliverance; we, O king, are going to bind the fire.' But Bible faith doesn't do that. Faith does not predict God's ways; it simply holds to God's word (in this case, Ex. 20:3); faith obeys God's truth, it does not manipulate God's hand; faith is not required to plot God's course but only to obey God's command. Faith's finest hour may be when it can oppose Nebuchadnezzar's three words (burning fiery furnace) with three of its own: 'But if not.'”*

**A Miraculous Deliverance – vs. 19-25**

- Now we read of a “miraculous deliverance” – (read verses 19-25)
- “Deliver” is the key word through this section –
  - verse 15; twice verse 17; verse 28 and verse 29
- Who is the fourth man?
  - We only get Nebuchadnezzar's descriptions –
    - v. 25 – *“...the fourth is like a son of the gods.”*
    - v. 28 – *“...has sent his angel and delivered...”*
  - From other descriptions in the OT we might say this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.
    - While we can't be dogmatic we can say this is clearly what Christ does – He meets his people in their need – He walks with them – He protects them so that they are not consumed by the flames!

**A Radical Reversal – vs. 26-30**

- Read verses 28-30

**Application**

- 1 – I will believe and obey the First Commandment even if it costs me my life**
- 2 – I will prepare my heart for the fiery trial**
- 3 – I will trust that the sweet fellowship of Christ will be my protection and delight in the fire**