

Chapter 3 – Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace

Chapters three through six of the Book of Daniel describe the mighty deeds that God performed before the eyes of kings, the highest nobility, and courtiers from throughout the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. All of these events have a common message. They tell the kings of the earth to respect the Creator, who is capable of performing such mighty deeds and who gives and takes away power from kings as he pleases. This is also related to the relationship between rulers and governments and his creation. Respecting God the Creator means respecting his divine order in nature and the order given to man, according to which humanity has been governed throughout history. And if any culture ceased to follow it, it ceased to exist. Humanity, especially its rulers and governments, has no excuse, because everything they need to know can be found in God's word. Christian and Jewish spiritual authorities bear the main responsibility for ensuring that rulers and governments are aware of the most important message of chapters 3–6. They should warn governments against the actions described in the prophetic second Psalm.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

King Nebuchadnezzar, to whom Daniel described and interpreted his own dream about a great statue, ordered a great statue to be made of gold and worshipped as a deity under threat of punishment by being thrown into a fiery furnace. The command applied to everyone: *“Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,”* (verse 4). In today's world, with global government, this command would apply to all of humanity.

Note: Notice the striking similarity to the text: *“And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, that had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”* Rev 13:14b-15; The Greek word *ejkón*, translated as image, can also mean likeness or appearance. Therefore, some translators translate the word *ejkón* as statue. This is probably a technology for which there was no term in Greek at the time.

On the report of some Chaldeans, the king summoned Daniel's friends to urge them to obey the king's command to bow down to the statue he had made. It is worth quoting the entire scene here: *“Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do you not serve my gods, nor worship the*

golden image which I have set up? Now if you are ready that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if you worship not, you 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? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 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 your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Da 3:14-18;

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not afraid of the king's warning, even though they knew that after such a public refusal, punishment was inevitable. They showed extraordinary faith in their God and were prepared to die rather than bow down to anyone or anything else, as the law commanded. The king was very angry and ordered all three of them to be thrown into a fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual. The heat of the fire killed the men who threw them into the furnace at the king's command. Let's read what happened next:

"And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come forth, and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth out of the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, and governors, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats affected, nor had the smell of fire come upon them. Da 3:23-27

The punishment ordered by the king was certainly public, as a warning to all. To his amazement, however, God's messenger saved all three men from the heat of the fiery furnace. Not a hair on their heads was singed, nor was there any smell of fire on them. The king's reaction is very important. He publicly honored the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "Then Nebuchadnezzar declared: Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I

issue a decree to every people, nation, and language that anyone who speaks lightly of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut into pieces, and his house shall be turned into a heap of rubble, for there is no other god who can save in this way." Da 3:28-29;

From the king's statement, we see that God's power amazed him, and he further decreed throughout his empire that no one should speak lightly of the God of gods.

Conclusion

King Nebuchadnezzar understood the message that God sent him by demonstrating His power. That message is intended for all kings and governments of the world. Through it, the God of Israel tells us all that He can save His people even from the most powerful human ruler. Just as He allowed His people to cross the Red Sea on dry land when they left Egypt. And He tells the kings and rulers of the nations to respect Him. King Nebuchadnezzar understood this and gave honor to God the Creator, which he also commanded all the people in his empire to do. This message remains relevant until God's kingdom comes into power. From this perspective, the behavior of today's rulers and politicians is more than foolish. By attacking God's natural principles and institutions, such as the family consisting of a man, a woman, and their offspring, or by supporting people with unnatural sexual behavior, legalizing same-sex marriages and adoptions, legalizing euthanasia, or abortions without serious reasons, they provoke God and His beloved Son to anger. Let us seek above all God's justice and God's natural principles.