

The Fiery Furnace

📖 Daniel 3:1-30

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 July 3, 2016

🌐 fgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Question from Previous Week

Q: What about eating food prepared by Muslims?

A: God has declared all foods clean. It doesn't matter who prepares it. If your conscience bothers you, don't eat, if it doesn't bother you, eat. Jesus said, it is not what enters a man that defiles Him but what goes out of man. By that statement He declared all foods clean.

Today's Lesson

If you'll turn once more with me to the Book of Daniel. Last week in Dan 2 God exalted Daniel by revealing to him Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the interpretation of the dream. This is one of the largest scale prophecies in the Bible. God granted these four successive Gentile kingdoms sovereignty in order to discipline the nation Israel. Jesus referred to these kingdoms as "the times of the Gentiles." The first is Dan 2:37-38, Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold. He's the only king identified as a part of the statue and he is said to be a king of kings, so he is a great, great Gentile king. After him, verse 39 will arise another kingdom inferior which is Medo-Persia, led by Cyrus the Persian, signified by the breast and arms of silver. Then a third kingdom, also in 2:39 which will rule over all the earth which is Greece, led by Alexander the Great, signified by the waist and thighs of bronze. Finally, a fourth kingdom, 2:40-43, which is a divided kingdom, the first division we know as Historic Rome, led by Caesar, signified by the legs of iron, so it's only strong and then a second division referred to as Revived Rome and it is currently in development but will one day come into focus, led by anti-Christ, signified by the feet and toes, partly of iron and partly of clay so partly strong and partly weak, and these will try to combine with one another in the seed of men. It has ten toes and these are ten kings, I'm looking at Dan 2:44 where he says, "in the

days of those kings," meaning the world will be divided into ten kingdoms and some will be strong and others weak and they will try to unite and form a global kingdom but they will not adhere to one another, meaning it will not succeed. So this is giving us the framework for interpreting further prophecy. And take note that in Dan 7, which is parallel, in that vision there are ten horns that answer to the ten toes and so are also ten kings. Then an eleventh horn rises up and puts down three of the ten horns. So you see that when Revived Rome comes on the scene as described here the world is divided into ten divisions with ten rulers, some say just Europe, but I take it the whole globe, and after some time another ruler arises, that's anti-Christ, and he militarily defeats three of the ten rulers and tries to make himself great, but it won't succeed. In verse 44 it won't succeed because a fifth kingdom, an eternal kingdom, signified by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, showing it is a supernatural kingdom, will break into history and crush and put an end to all these Gentile kingdoms, but it itself will endure forever. This is premillennialism, this is the Messianic kingdom coming on the earth, which later is defined to last for one-thousand years. These are all building blocks for seeing the whole prophetic picture. Daniel is the key to prophetic revelation and we are moving quickly to this picture as we speak so we live in exciting times.

Notice that the kingdom of Messiah was Daniel's focus; he was looking at the latter days, the end of Gentile supremacy and the re-establishment of Israel at the head of all nations. Because of that the dream gives Israel hope, it shows that their discipline is temporary and not eternal, it shows that God is sovereign over Gentile nations and will one day crush them and God will never cast away His covenant people Israel. As for Gentiles the dream serves the purpose of warning against arrogance. Gentile kings and rulers should not get arrogant because God gave them their kingdom and power and authority and just as easily can take it away. So the dream serves the two purposes of giving hope to Israel and warning Gentiles against arrogance. In my view, this is entirely relevant to the current world political stage. When I see arrogance in a person in office or running for office that is an automatic red flag, because that arrogance is only going to be amplified, as Daniel tells us later in chapter 10, by demonic forces that influence governmental leaders. Human leaders are virtually pawns in the hands of much greater powers.

Today we come to Daniel 3, the fiery furnace and you know this story from childhood so I hope to tell it to you afresh today. Let's make some introductory remarks. First of all, we've made mention of the fact that Daniel 2-7 are the Aramaic portion of the book. That language was the lingua franca of the day, so it could be widely read by any Gentiles involved in politics, in commerce, in trade because it was necessary to the communication between foreign nations. So these chapters are addressing the nations in particular but Jews as well since they live within these nations. And we observe a literary structure within these chapters. I mentioned last week that chapter 2, the four kingdoms crushed by the stone cut out without hands would be paralleled in chapter 7 by the four beasts destroyed by the Son of Man. So chapter 7 answers to chapter 2, they're talking about the same material. And today in chapter 3, the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace will be paralleled in a few weeks by chapter 6, Daniel in the lion's den. Both cover the exact same themes. And finally, to

round out the structure, chapter 4 will be paralleled by chapter 5. So we find a common literary structure known as a chiasm where the first and sixth element are parallel, the second and fifth element are parallel and the third and fourth elements are parallel. Observe this literary structure that apparently Daniel organized or at least did so under the inspiration of the Spirit because these themes are repeated for emphasis. We are to know these things like the back of our hands.

Secondly, as chapter 3 begins it is apparent that Daniel had already been promoted into the two positions described in Dan 2:48, "ruler over the whole province of Babylon" he was in the king's own court and "chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon," those men who were scheduled to be torn limb from limb but God saved them and they probably pledged their lives to Daniel in return. As far as Daniel's three friends are concerned, verse 49 reports, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego" were also promoted at Daniel's request and so they now serve in governmental positions as administrators of the province of Babylon. It seems clear that chapter 3 is happening after chapter 2. I'll argue that the image in 3:1 that Nebuchadnezzar sets up is related to the statue he saw in chapter 2.

Third, one of the problems with Dan 3 is we don't know where Daniel is, he's not mentioned in the chapter, and this has been a subject of intense debate. Probably the chief solution has been to claim that he was out of the country handling some administrative affairs of the king but there are other possible solutions we'll entertain, especially in light of the fact that the wise men of Babylon were in deep gratitude to Daniel and so wouldn't snitch on him. But whether Daniel was there or not, there is no doubt that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were there and are going to have to face the fire on their own, or are they? Up to this point Daniel had been their leader. He had led them to commit civil disobedience in Dan 1 by refusing to be defiled by the king's choice food and wine. But now with this second challenge to their worship they don't have Daniel to lead the way. So we learn some about the character of these three men.

Fourth, having stated plainly that Daniel 3 occurs after Daniel 2 there's a debate about how long after. When did this occur? And the most common view is that it occurred around the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC which would have been Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year. However, another view that has recently come to light is that it occurred between 594-593BC, about six years before the final siege on Jerusalem began. And the reason is because a clay prism was discovered from the time of Nebuchadnezzar that records a ceremony of some sort headed by Nebuchadnezzar that sounds similar to the one recorded in Dan 3. On the prism three names are reported that by linguistics have been shown to possibly be the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Further evidence is put forth that what stimulated this ceremony was a rebellion within the kingdom of Babylon in 594 in which Nebuchadnezzar had to kill some of his own soldiers. In light of the rebellion Nebuchadnezzar summoned all the rulers of his kingdom, several of which are listed in verse 3 as well as on the clay prism, in order to affirm the loyalty of his administrators and solidify his kingdom and sovereignty. So if the clay prism and Dan 3 are reporting the same ceremony of dedication then 594-593BC seems like the best date for this event.

This would also be within a close time frame to the dream of Dan 2 which was 603BC, so Daniel and his friends would have been ~26-27 years of age, they would have been working in the government for nine or ten years.

Let's look at verse 1, **Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.** Now this is a rather large image but strange proportions. We're not told what the image is, though if we connect it with the statue of Dan 2 then it's an image of a human. It's a human after the Babylonian form of art which didn't follow natural proportions. Notice its **sixty cubits** in height and **six cubits** in width. A cubit is approximately one and a half feet so the image is 90 feet tall and nine feet wide. The ratio is 10:1 which is extremely disproportional. A typical human is 4 or 5:1. If I were 10:1 I'd be just as wide as I am now but I'd be 15 feet tall. So this is an extremely narrow image of a human. It's towering above the plain mentioned there, **the plain of Dura.** **Dura** was a common name referring to a "walled" or "enclosed" area so it's a **plain** that is walled in or enclosed, probably by surrounding hills or mountains. It says the plain was **in the province of Babylon** so it can't have been too far from the city of Babylon. Julius Oppert in the 1850's did his archaeological excavations in Babylon and found a square base or pedestal, 45 feet per side and 20 feet high about six miles SE of the ancient city of Babylon that he identified as the pedestal this image stood upon. That's the most likely location of the image Nebuchadnezzar had constructed of gold. Now it wouldn't be pure gold, that would be far too heavy and expensive, but it would have been wood overlaid with gold, which was a common construction technique; the ark of the covenant itself was acacia wood overlaid with gold plates. But it would appear quite impressive when the sun shone on it; it would have reflected an immense brightness and would have towered far above everything for miles.

Now the question is, where did Nebuchadnezzar's idea for this image come from? All images humans construct come from images that are first in their mind. I'm suggesting that the thought behind the image was the dream Nebuchadnezzar had in Dan 2. Strangely very few commentators take this route but it seems obvious the image was inspired by the earlier dream. But you will notice there are differences in the image he's constructed over against the statue in the dream. There's no shift from gold to silver to bronze to iron and so forth. The entire image is gold and he was the head of gold. So this is a manipulation. It is what I call strategic envelopment. What this statue is about is the strategy of unbelief, that unbelief has an agenda, it's not neutral and it doesn't just sit there and absorb data and interpret it independent of its ultimate beliefs. It rather strategically envelops the data and interprets it accordingly. That's what Nebuchadnezzar has done. He has re-interpreted the dream according to his ultimate belief system so that he who was once merely the head of gold on the statue is now the entire statue and there is no stone at all that destroys the statue. This means something, but let's see if we can deduce how the principles of paganism work.

First, how the flesh operates, what it does to truth and we can't get too arrogant here just because we're believers, we share the flesh too, so we are fully capable of doing these types of manipulations. The flesh, our flesh is at enmity with God, and therefore we can't expect any kind of good to come out of the flesh. Secondly,

Paul says in Romans 1 that our flesh suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, that is, it's not that the flesh doesn't know the truth, it's not that the flesh isn't confronted with the truth, it's rather what the flesh does with the truth is suppress it, and the result is a distorted image of the truth. There may be similarities to the truth but in the overall we have a different image, an image that has taken the truth and manipulated it. That way I feel safe from the God with whom I have to do, that way I have shielded myself from Him so I don't have to think about him.

When we look at these principles of the flesh and we apply them to Nebuchadnezzar we know Nebuchadnezzar is operating by the flesh, that he is at enmity with God, he's hostile to God and now that he has been confronted with the truth about the future of world kingdoms, he had it all laid out before him very plainly in the dream of Dan 2 and his kingdom is not forever. His kingdom is going to be destroyed and succeeded by another kingdom. So what has he done by constructing an image entirely of gold with no stone destroying the statue? What is he saying? He's saying my kingdom is the final kingdom, my kingdom is eternal, I am sovereign, I am great, I am colossal, I am mighty and no one will ever destroy my kingdom. Do you see the arrogance of what this man has done here? Nebuchadnezzar is so great and so mighty that he has the power to direct and manipulate the rest of history such that his kingdom will never be destroyed. That's one of the major purposes of this chapter, to reveal the sheer arrogance and audacity of Gentile rulers. They think their decisions are so mighty that they can direct and control the future. That is such nonsense. What happens in Washington is not even a drop of water in a bucket. All the nations of the world are just a drop in the bucket. Remember that. Washington and the decisions that come out of there are nothing more than a speck of dust to God. He rules in the heavens and it is His will and His decisions that are controlling whatsoever comes to pass, not some judge, not some president, not some congressman but the God who created the universe and all the nations of the world.

Now here we have a Gentile ruler who has become very arrogant. In nine years he has distorted and twisted the truth about future history and he has re-written the future as an establishment of his kingdom and dynasty forever. The first step in establishing his future history is to construct an awesome image of himself, one that towers above everyone in the plain. Verse 2, and here we come to step two, establish loyalty in your administration, you've got to have loyalty, you can't have opposition. **Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.** ³**Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.** You can see clearly loyalty is the issue, everybody in the key leadership positions in the country have to profess loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. He can't have any opposition because opposition is what causes weakness and his kingdom has got to be strong, intact. So the purpose here is to solidify the kingdom, ensure the loyalty of his administration in order to secure his kingdom forever.

Verse 4, they've all assembled in the plain, they're wearing their official uniforms, hundreds and hundreds of men assembled in formation before the great image. **Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,** notice Nebuchadnezzar had a diverse administration, he had conquered many kingdoms and taken members of the royal and upper class to train and install in his administration, that way he could rule more effectively over all the kingdoms he had conquered, he particularly needs to ensure their loyalty. So the herald proclaims in verse 5, **that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music,** this was some kind of orchestra Nebuchadnezzar had put together, it was a royal ceremony, and when they begin to play, **you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.** **"But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."** Now apparently this furnace of blazing fire was within sight because there's an immediacy to the threat, if you don't fall down and worship you will immediately be cast into this furnace. The furnace was a lime kiln, it would have been very large, the large opening was at the top and you'd have to go up a series of steps to get to the top and drop the limestone in, down the shaft would be a location to feed wood into the kiln, control the draft and remove the ash, at the very bottom there was a receptacle for catching the lime.

This is the threat and Nebuchadnezzar gave everyone two choices here, isn't he a nice guy? You can **fall down and worship or be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.** Great options. Live or die, but I'm going to have a loyal administration in my kingdom. So with this furnace blazing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have a little problem. Verse 5 is what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could not do. They could not worship any graven image. It would break the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me... You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God..." So they shouldn't succumb to this but there's tremendous pressure, every ruler in the kingdom is present, it's an official royal ceremony, the orchestra is present, the king is presiding, what are they going to do?

Verse 7, **Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.** And most people would have done the same, it's the obvious choice, just bow down and worship, who wants to be thrown in a furnace. So they pledged loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar and the gods of Nebuchadnezzar. That was the significance.

But verse 8, it comes to Nebuchadnezzar's attention that not everyone bowed down, there was dissent. **For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.** It's always those Jews. Those Jews are such a problem, they're sticklers. This is the story of history. The **Chaldeans** bring the charges against the Jews.

Verse 9, **They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!** Typical flattery. ¹⁰**"You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon,**

psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹“But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. ¹²“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.” At this point the king realizes he has a hiccup in step two of his plan. Step one was build an awesome image of himself outlining future history. Step two was to solidify the kingdom by ensuring loyalty among his administration to secure this future history. Gentile rulers are always trying to control people, to manipulate them into supporting their program. But now he’s got a problem; three Jews, **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** are not going along with his plan. Now he knows these men, they serve in the province of Babylon, have been for years, but this is a challenge to his authority and it’s a public challenge, every ruler from the entire kingdom is watching, so let’s watch. Verse 13, **Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego;** he’s mad, they’re upsetting his plan and I don’t think he expected this. **Then these men were brought before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?** Are these charges accurate? Or do you reject these charges?

Verse 15, I’ll give you another chance. **“Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”** Now it’s that last line where he clearly steps over the line, he’s already been confronted with the God of heaven who revealed the dream through Daniel so he knows what God can deliver. But he’s suppressed the knowledge of this God in unrighteousness and in place of that God he has made himself magnificent. **What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?** What god is there that is greater than I am? I am colossal, I am great. So we see again the arrogance of Gentile rulers and it’s a characteristic of rulers in our day, you can bet your last dollar they’ll turn out arrogant, it’s almost a guarantee.

So he says, surely this can’t be true, I’ll give you another chance to show loyalty and he turns to the orchestra to fire them up again but verse 16, **Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.”** In other words, there’s no need to fire up the orchestra, we’re not going to fall down and worship the image you set up. Now they’re not being rude, some have said they were rude here, they’re not rude, they’re just politely saying, there’s no need to fire up the band again because we’ve already given our answer, we’re committed to our decision. So they’re resigned to the furnace and verse 17 they say, **“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸“But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you**

have set up.” Now this is one of the most courageous answers any believer has ever given. And it’s given publically. Everyone saw this, whether they heard it audibly or not, we can be sure word got around. And this is humiliating to Nebuchadnezzar because they clearly pledge loyalty to their God and not Nebuchadnezzar and his gods. Nebuchadnezzar and his gods do not declare the future; our God is sovereign and our God gave Nebuchadnezzar his finite sovereignty and kingdom and power. That is their message.

Here we see the character of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they have watched Daniel, they have grown spiritually, now they are in the hot seat and they pass the test with tremendous colors. A great illustration of the principle of the NT, do not fear men who can destroy the body but rather fear God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. They are acting on that principle. And the way they state it is very interesting, they don’t act like God told them what was going to happen, they don’t know what’s going to happen, all they know is that God is *able* to deliver them from the blazing fire if He *wants* to. And that’s enough for them. They don’t have to have assurance that they will be saved. God is still on the throne whether He saves them or not. So a clear case of outright civil disobedience.

Let’s put down some principles of civil disobedience. This occurs under the fourth divine institution in Scripture, human government or civil authority or kingdom authority. Any of those titles is sufficient. The important thing is not the title but the fact that human government was given by God after the Flood in Gen 9:1ff, so sin was already in the world and this alerts us to the purpose of human government. It is to curb the effects of sin. Rom 13 says there is no authority but that which is designated by God. So human government is a divinely authorized function. On the other hand, we find instances like this where people commit civil disobedience against the governing authorities. So the problem arises, are their proper times to disobey civil authorities? Or are we always to submit to the states wishes?

Now I would suggest that there are two issues where you are justified in committing civil disobedience and both of these are illustrated in Scripture. I’ve never found any other issue in Scripture. The first issue has to do with the sacredness of innocent human life. When the state comes along and says we are going to commit genocide, euthanasia and abortion, the innocent taking of human life, we have a responsibility to commit civil disobedience. This is modeled in Exod 1 by Shiphrah and Puah, the two Hebrew midwives when the Pharaoh commanded them to kill all the little baby boys as they were being born. But the midwives feared God and not the Pharaoh and so they committed civil disobedience. So issue one is if the government comes in and authorizes the destruction of innocent human life then you have a legitimate reason to say, “No, I’m sorry but I cannot do that.”

The second issue has to do with worship. When the government comes along and says here is how you must worship, who you must worship or when you must worship, when the government tries to control worship then we have a responsibility to commit civil disobedience. This is modeled in Daniel several times, here by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they refused to fall down and worship this image. So issue two is if the

government starts to dictate in the arena of worship and says you must bow down and worship this or at this time or in this way, then you have the right to say, "No, I am sorry, but I can't do that."

Now if you commit civil disobedience over one of these two issues understand there are tactics to how you carry out the rebellion, how you treat the government. The first thing to remember is always show respect for authority. Daniel does this, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego do this, they do not defy the office; they are simply saying "You've asked me to do something I cannot in good conscience do before my God and I'm not going to do it." So there is respect for the office of the fourth divine institution. The second thing is to be praying, praying for the leadership so that we might have peace. There's no reason to start a war with the government, that has never gone well. Finally, be prepared to take the consequences of your actions. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were prepared to be thrown in the furnace. So be ready to accept the consequences. Let's see what happened with these three men.

They've told the king we're not going to comply with the state's wishes, Verse 19, **Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.** Now he was already mad in verse 13 but he's totally angry now and when you lose your temper you lose your rationality. And you can see that's occurred here because if he really wanted to make them suffer he'd have turned the heat down seven times, that way they'd burn for a long time. But he's completely lost it, his facial expression is altered toward them, he's going to make an example of them now, so he gives the order, they start throwing more fuel on the fire, they increase the draft, the fire is really going now.

Verse 20, **He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. 21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. 22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.** So it's just very hot and his own men are dying just throwing these guys in, **But**, verse 23, **these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up. 24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste;** apparently there was a God who was able to deliver them out of his hand and now he's face to face with this God again. **he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." 25 He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"** Now we don't know exactly who Nebuchadnezzar thought this was, later in verse 28 he says it was an **angel** of the God of the three men. And he may be right but I suspect it was God-incarnate. So he's standing there jaw dropped. Verse 26, **Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego,**

come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around *and* saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire *even* come upon them. I can't say it any better than that. They analyzed them and there was not one shred of empirical evidence they were even in the fire! Verse 28, **Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."** ³⁰**Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.** I hope you found that an interesting re-telling of this fantastic history.

We've run out of time. What are we supposed to learn from this? Why is this chapter in the Bible? Besides the fact that it preaches well. First, I think you have to understand paganism and the flesh, it's not that paganism doesn't know; it's not that they need more information; it's that they are at enmity with God and suppress the truth about Him in unrighteousness. The result is they distort the truth, that's what paganism does. There is an agenda to unbelief and don't ever forget it. These people are not neutral. Second, as far as Gentile rulers are concerned it was written to warn them against becoming arrogant. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't write history, Caesar doesn't write history, Obama doesn't write history, God writes history because they are all contained in the times of the Gentiles. But they arrogantly think they can control history just like Nebuchadnezzar did. Yet this example stands, its available for anyone to read, and if you look at the world rulers today and ask yourself if there's one who admits God gave me my position and He can just as easily take it away I think you will come away with a startling revelation. They are few and far between. I wish I could be optimistic about our country but the times of the Gentiles is pessimistic. It's what follows that makes me optimistic, the kingdom of God. Don't put your hope in any administration in this country. Third, as far as these three Jews are concerned, their example is now available to all Jews who live out under those nasty Gentile powers of how to live, how to trust the Lord and obey in a crisis situation and be delivered. Fourth, two issues merit civil disobedience; the sacredness of human life and worship. I've never found any other issue in Scripture that justified civil disobedience; not high taxes, nothing, you're welcome to prove me wrong. And we've gained some basic principles for how to commit it, respectfully and being prepared to accept the consequences. We are preparing now for life in the kingdom to come. Learn humility and obedience now and you will be prepared for a rich entrance later.