

# Life in the Lion's Den

## "Coming Through the Fire"

### (Daniel Chapter 3)

#### Lesson #4

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:2 "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

#### **Introduction:**

Years ago, Monroe Parker was traveling through South Alabama on one of those hot, sultry Alabama days. He stopped at a watermelon stand, picked out a watermelon, and asked the proprietor how much it cost. "It's \$1.10," he replied. Parker dug into his pocket, found only a bill and said, "All I have is a dollar."

"That's ok," the proprietor said, "I'll trust you for it."

"Well, that's mighty nice of you," Parker responded, and picking up the watermelon, started to leave.

"Hey, where are you going?" the man behind the counter demanded.

"I'm going outside to eat my watermelon." "But you forgot to give me the dollar!"

"You said you would trust me for it," Parker called back.

"Yeah, but I meant I would trust you for the dime!"

"Mack," Parker replied, "You weren't going to trust me at all. You were just going to take a ten-cent gamble on my integrity!"

Haddon Robinson.

#### **Transitional Statement:**

Trust is something that we don't give out lightly. Physiologists say that trust is a product of continued behavior plus time.

Church the sad reality is that our culture cultivates the idea of trusting only in ourselves, which leads to captivity. But rather, God calls us to a complete trust in Him. A trust that will move us to look past the external circumstances of this world and focus our attention on our Father in heaven.

## I. King Nebuchadnezzar sets up an image of gold.

Daniel 3:1

*“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.”*

- A. The first thing to note is that image here means statue or idol in the Hebrew
- B. So as I thought about what this image was:
  - 1. I did the math and was alarmed that this statue was said to be 90 feet tall and only 9 feet wide.
    - a. That’s more like a bean pole than a statue.
    - b. Apparently bible scholars have had similar concerns and it turns out that at the ancient ruins of Dura a statue pedestal 20 feet high still exists today. So when you include the base pedestal in the total height the statue takes on the exact proportions of a man.
  - 2. Also taking into account that it was a common practice of the Assyrian kings to erect images of themselves...as symbols of their dominion.
    - a. The word image is the same word used latter in Daniel 3:19 to describe Nebuchadnezzar’s facial expression.
  - 3. Along with the dream that Nebuchadnezzar just had in chapter 2 it seems most likely to me that Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t satisfied with only a head of gold but wanted the world to see him as all powerful and glorious.
- C. I stopped here to consider why anyone would build an idol.
  - 1. The first thing that comes to mind is our tendency to think as long as statues aren’t involved we really haven’t made idols.
    - a. Idols today take the shape of dollar signs, houses, sail boats, and even churches.
    - b. We even name our TV shows “American Idol”
  - 2. Idols are created for two basic reasons as I see it:
    - a. To honor, glorify and exalt ourselves.
      - 1) In this sense idols are a product of low self esteem...a person not understanding their value before God.
    - b. And idols are often times used as a measure to control others.
      - 1) The human mindset bent on position and dominance.

D. You know what the most ludicrous thing about idol building is?

1. Idols have to be “*set up*”, it can’t stand on it’s own.
  - a. Isaiah goes on to say that these idols have to be nailed down so they won’t topple. Isaiah 41:7
  - b. Then Paul talks to us about those who choose to worship the created instead of the creator...Romans 1:25
2. Yet people like Nebuchadnezzar and a multitude of people today still without hesitation bow down to the products of their own hands.

E. The sad reality is that God’s people had been involved in this very thing.

1. And many today still are.

## II. Nebuchadnezzar calls his ruling class together to dedicate the image

Daniel 3:2-3

*2 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.*

A. Nebuchadnezzar gathers his ruling class together to dedicate the statue

1. Dedicate here carries the idea of consecration or setting something apart as important.
2. The statue itself could not declare its own importance.
  - a. The object had no power to make its will known...for it had no will
    - 1) The will belonged to the king
    - 2) Nebuchadnezzar was like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain pulling the strings on a puppet.

B. His ruling class were called because this whole statue business when boiled down has a lot to do with control and his rulers will need to understand that Nebuchadnezzar wants the folks of his kingdom allegiant to him and to him alone.

1. Ultimately the Consecration / devotion was in regard to Neb.
2. To establish a control his power and dominion

3. Control and taking things into your own hands is something that Israel struggled with that landed them in captivity. Nebuchadnezzar's statue, in many ways represents a wayward Israel.
  - a. Idolatry among God's people is still prevalent and the need for control is still one of the devil's finest weapons.

### III. Nebuchadnezzar commands everyone to worship the image

Daniel 3:4-7

*4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, 5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.*

A. Worship is a God word, which denotes our faithful allegiance, adoration and praise of our creator.

1. Worship is only meant to be in connection with God.
2. Our English word worship comes from an old English word "worth-ship" a word which denotes the worthiness of the one receiving the special honor or devotion.
  - a. So Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon was trying the old tower of Babel gig....the exaltation of self to the realm of God.

B. Nebuchadnezzar also establishes a penalty for not worshiping his statue.

*6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."*

1. The penalty was imposed by Nebuchadnezzar because the statue had no power of its own.

B. Apparently most if not all of those gathered bowed the knee to his image.

*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.*

1. The language of Verse 12 makes me think that some Jews bowed their knees also....and this should come as no surprise to us at all.
2. One thing is true of all those knee benders....they didn't know Jehovah God.

C. If it is not plainly understood, let it be said for all generations to hear and understand....God is the only one who has the authority to command worship.... and He is always the object of that worship.

#### **IV. Three more young men step forward and make God the purpose of their hearts.**

Daniel 3:8-12

*8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. 9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: " O king, live forever! 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."*

A. Daniel had set his heart on God...and now three more step forward.

1. Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego

a. Refused to bow and worship.

b. They set their hearts on God even in the face of death.

2. Church when we establish our purpose with God:

a. First of all, it is contagious

b. And by the act of one faithful man God can raise an army

B. These guys probably weren't in the direct presence of the dedication...but latter they were found out.

1. Obedience to God is truly a light set on a hill...it can't be hidden.

C. The truth is, I wish the Chaldeans were gone from the face of this earth...but the truth is there will always exist those who will bring accusations against the people of God.

#### **V. Nebuchadnezzar in a rage calls Shadrach, Meshach and Abendnego on the carpet.**

Daniel 3:13-15

*13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar 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? 15 "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?"*

A. Neb gives them an out.

1. He simply tells them to bow and worship and it will be "very well"

- a. This is the place that many Christians fall to the temptation of compromise.
  - b. Hey, if I'm going to die....I'll just bend the knee but not my heart. They could have reasoned with all human wisdom to appear in compliance while staying dedicated to God in their hearts.
    - 1) Compromising our faith is really nothing more than a lack of trusting God's sovereign hand in our lives.
    - 2) Compromise is an attempt to control our own destiny and in that since is really nothing more than idolatry.
- B. But Nebuchadnezzar tells these guys if you don't bow and worship...you'll be thrown into the furnace.
- 1. Then Nebuchadnezzar raises the real question at hand.
    - a. **What God can deliver you out of my hands?**
    - b. i.e. who is above me to protect you?

**VI. Well it's funny that Nebuchadnezzar should ask such a question...that he thinks is rhetorical (obviously answered)**

Daniel 3:16-18

*16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 " 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."*

- A. There answer is simple and to the point.....we don't need to answer you!
  - 1. Now just in case you don't understand the human condition...if you want to tick off an angry tyrant, this would be your answer.
  - 2. But this answer is not sarcastic, but it simply reveals that they answer to God, not Nebuchadnezzar.
  - 3. On that day they became real men of God...placing their trust in God, even in the face of death, without wavier or hesitation.
  - 4. Implicit in all this is the answer.....
    - a. NO! we will not worship your image.
- B. But to answer your question about what God can deliver us...
  - 1. Our God is able to deliver us....and He will

2. But even if He doesn't...we will not serve your gods or worship the image.
  - a. Here they were acknowledging that even if God doesn't physically walk them out of the fire, that He will deliver their spiritual souls and that they will remain faithful unto death. Rev 2:10

## **VII. So Nebuchadnezzar has them thrown into the furnace.**

Daniel 3:19-23

*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. 20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego 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. 23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.*

- A. Filled with wrath, Neb has the furnace heated 7 times hotter than normal...which just happens to be God's own number.
  1. What Neb once gratefully acknowledged after Daniels interpretation has now all but left his memory.
- B. He has them tied up, bound at the hands of humans, clothes and all and thrown in.
  1. The fire was so hot it consumed those soldiers doing the throwing in.

## **VIII. In the midst of the fire the God of deliverance shows up.**

Daniel 3:24-25

*24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; 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!"*

- A. Nebuchadnezzar saw 3 men walking about in the fire not being harmed and a fourth man that looked like a son of the gods.
  1. He probably expected screams and sudden death like his soldiers.
- B. Remember that Nebuchadnezzar had them tied up and bound.
  1. But what he had bound, was now loosed and the power of his flames was taken away.
  2. Whether this was Jesus Himself or an angel, at the direction of God almighty deliverance was issued.

3. And Nebuchadnezzar was amazed

a. He stood up and pointed it out to his officials.

### **IX. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the fire.**

Daniel 3:26-27

*" 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. 27 The 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.*

A. An important note here is that Neb called these guys out...but God delivered them.

1. These guys didn't have any burns, blisters or even a singed hair
2. They didn't even have the smell of fire or smoke.
3. Church, our God is not a partial deliverer

B. As all of Israel looks on the King of Babylon once again acknowledges God as Most high.

1. And Israel is given a firsthand example of what God expects from His servants
2. If I were an Israel there in captivity....and seen this with my eyes
  - a. I just might have burst forth singing the battle belongs to the Lord.
  - b. I might have sang with all my heart ... "we place you on the highest place"
  - c. My heart might have been moved to think of Faithful Love
  - d. Surely my mind would have been moved to a deeper devotion and a renewed commitment before God.

### **X. Then Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God has more power than he does.**

*28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said,*

*Daniel 3:28-30*

*"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."*



A. Nebuchadnezzar blessed God

1. This is an Aramaic expression meaning to kneel before
2. He was reminded that there was something much more powerful than a measly old statue made of gold.

B. So he makes the decree that no-one could speak anything offensive against God

1. Or be torn limb from limb and houses reduced to rubble.

C. So the king cause Shadrack, Meshach and abednego to prosper.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion we should remember that more often than not God's deliverance is not always immediate or even geared toward a glorious earthly end.

But like these guys if we rest our faith in God we know beyond all doubt that His deliverance will be right for us.

Romans 8:28 says: *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*