

October 11, 2020

## Saved from the Fires of Hell

Daniel 3

### ***Historical Setting***

When this story takes place greatly influences the meaning!

597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar captures Jerusalem, drags off King Jehoiachin and replaces him with his uncle Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:10-18)

The Babylonian Chronicles add:

Dec 595 – Feb 594 Neb. puts down a rebellion in Babylon and purges rebellious officials

Mar–Apr 594 Neb. travels west to collect tribute from vassals (like Zedekiah)

Dec 594 – Jan 593 Neb. takes armies back through western provinces

“King” Zedekiah travels to Babylon (Jeremiah 51:59-64)

This would only be after Neb. had returned

The purpose of such a trip was to profess loyalty to Neb.

BUT returning to Judea (Feb 593), Zedekiah plots against Neb. with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon

Jeremiah advised against this (Jer. 27:1-22)

Late Dec. 594 – Jan. 593 Neb. is gathering vassal kings in Babylon to profess their loyalty

SO- Dan. 3:2-3 “all the rulers of the provinces” would include “King” Zedekiah, there to show loyalty to Neb.

### ***Introduction to the Chapter’s Teaching***

In chapters 1 and 2 the Judean youth could maintain their faith without compromising while at the same time accepting some type of accommodation to the culture of Babylon

Chapter 1— They learn Babylonian language and literature, and accept Babylonian names

They maintain loyalty to God and the dietary laws of the Pentateuch

They submit to the king’s examination, showing loyalty to him, while being loyal to God

Chapter 2— Daniel speaks to Neb. about the power of the true God while serving in a court full of pagans

Daniel complies with the king’s harsh command to give the dream, but credits God

Daniel and three young men serve in Neb.’s court

However! Daniel 3 “will show that believers are obligated to disobey human authorities when they require idolatry or other forms of compromise or denial of the one true faith.” (A. Steinmann, p. 162).

### ***Read Daniel 3:1-7***

v. 1 The massive size implies that this is an

v. 2 “image that King Neb. had set up” repeated (3:2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 15)

+ they don’t say which god is this idol, the importance is loyalty to Neb.

the list of officials – repeated (3:2, 3, see v. 27!)

“all the officials of the provinces”- this would include Neb.’s chosen “king” of Judah- Zedekiah

v. 4 “O peoples, nations, and languages” repeated (3:4, 7 twice, 10, see v. 29!)

v. 5 “the sound of...” repeated call to worship (3:5, 7, 10, 15)

v. 6 “whoever does not...” repeated threat (3:6, 11, 15, see v. 19-23!)

### ***Read Daniel 3:8-18***

v. 12 “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego” repeated use of pagan names (3:12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23)

Where’s Daniel? This is for officials “of the provinces” (3:2-3); Daniel is in the king’s court (2:49)

v. 15 “who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” A taunting question and a blasphemous one

v. 17 Certainty of Deliverance is a martyr’s boldness and confidence

***The Main Point:*** “The hope of life after death is what enables the Judeans here to express their resolute determination to continue to serve God even if the penalty is (temporal, physical) death. They will gladly suffer death in this life in order to gain the promised life of the world to come.” A. Steinmann, 187.

### **Read Daniel 3:19-30**

- v. 19 “the *image* of his face was changed”- the Image of v. 1 cannot change, Nebuchadnezzar can  
v. 23-24 include no other description, hence the Apocrypha add some, but the original story with its bare-essential details highlights the divine intervention of the Son of God.  
v. 24-25 – bound...unbound- they have been set free  
- “walking in the midst of the fire”- they have been preserved and protected  
- “they are not hurt”- unlike the mighty men who were killed instantly  
- “the fourth is like a son of gods”- most Christian commentators take this as the pre-Incarnate Christ  
v. 26 “the Most High God”- Neb. does not confess that He is the *only* God, but the highest of all  
“come out, and come here”- Neb. commands his three officials, but not the divine fourth man  
v. 27 the description asserts that this is a supernatural salvation, beyond scientific explanation  
v. 28 “his Messenger/Angel”- as we saw in Genesis, “The Angel of Yahweh” often *is* Yahweh Himself  
“delivered His servants, who trusted in him,”- the essence of salvation is trust/faith in God  
“changed the king’s command”- their faith in God and obedience to the First Commandment trumped and now alters what the king commands  
“yielded up their bodies”- 1 Cor. 13:3 and Rom. 12:1  
v. 29 “speaks anything against” literally “speaks any blasphemy against”- Judeans have protection & honor  
What is this decree? And what is it *not*? It is not repentance for his idolatry. It is not a statement of faith that excludes the existence of all other gods. It is “civil righteousness” but not the righteousness of saving faith.  
**Catechism Review:** What are the Three Uses of the Law? Curb, Mirror, and Guide And what do they mean?  
Under which use would Nebuchadnezzar’s decree fall? Could a nation, ancient or modern, have all the right laws on the books and still lack saving faith?  
v. 30 Promoted! Does this teach a Do-good, Get-good Theology of Glory? NO!  
**The Main Point:** “Certainly these three Judeans did not assume that God would save them from persecution and physical death (“but if not...,” 3:18). Their theology is the same as the theology of the cross in the NT: followers of Christ crucified cannot expect to be treated any better than was their Lord (cf. Mt. 10:14-25; Acts 14:22; Rev. 11:7-8). God may or may not choose to give his people promotion and prosperity in this life, but his certain promise is his gift of eternal life and glory far beyond anything this world can offer (Dan 12:2-3).”  
A. Steinmann, p. 200.

### **The Song of the Three Holy Children From the Apocrypha Lutheran Edition**

- <sup>28</sup> Then the three with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace:  
<sup>29</sup> “Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and to be praised and highly exalted forever...  
<sup>59</sup> Bless the Lord, all wild animals and cattle; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>60</sup> “Bless the Lord, all people on earth; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>61</sup> Bless the Lord, O Israel; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>62</sup> Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>63</sup> Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>64</sup> Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>65</sup> Bless the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
<sup>66</sup> “Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
For he has rescued us from Hades and saved us from the power of death, and delivered us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace; from the midst of the fire he has delivered us.  
<sup>67</sup> Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.  
<sup>68</sup> All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods, sing praise to him and give thanks to him, for his mercy endures forever.”