



# REVEALER OF MYSTERIES

## the book of Daniel



### Lesson 3

### Daniel 3

Daniel chapter 3 is one of the best-known stories in the Bible. It is so rich and vivid and graphic that it is easy to think of it as a mere fable or myth told only to convey the idea of courage. And yet it is an historic incident just as true as any other Biblical story. Put yourself in the place of these three young men, whose roller-coaster experience seems to change almost daily. How do you think you would respond when put to the test?

3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image...

<sup>4</sup>Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language:

<sup>5</sup>As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

<sup>8</sup>At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup>You have issued a decree... <sup>12</sup>But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego — who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up." <sup>13</sup>Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

What connection is there between what just happened in chapter 2 and this scene at the beginning of chapter 3?

How many kinds of leaders does the king "summon" in verse 2. How often is this list repeated in this chapter? What do you think is the point of naming so many different kinds of leaders?

How many kinds of instruments are named in verse 5? How often is this list repeated. What do you think is the point of such a list?

**NOTE:** It's hard to know if the king made an image of himself or of his god Bel-Marduk, and therefore is demanding worship of his god or himself. Shortly before his death in 323 BC, Alexander the Great issued a "deification decree" demanding that all of the cities in his realm publicly acknowledge him as a god. Others did this as well, such as some of the Roman Emperors, as well as Herod (Acts 12:21-23). According to the Acts passage, what happened when the ruler kept the glory instead of giving it to God?

Verse 8. These "astrologers" seem to be suffering from jealousy. Why? (see the end of chapter 2.)

Why should they have been more grateful? (again, see chapter 2.)

How old were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego by this time?

**LIFE RESPONSE:** Have you ever been singled out and criticized when you hadn't done anything wrong? Was it ever because of the other person's jealousy? How did you deal with the situation? How would you counsel your kids to deal with it?

<sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup>But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

<sup>19</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ...

<sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, O king."

<sup>25</sup>He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

<sup>26</sup>Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

<sup>28</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

<sup>30</sup>Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Verse 18. Compare this statement to the Queen's in Esther 4:16. What common attitude do they reflect? (By the way, where is Esther when she utters these words? Look it up in a Bible dictionary.)

**LIFE RESPONSE:** Read Hebrews 11:32-38. Some men and women of faith were delivered from tough situations, while others were not. Their faith did not seem to be dependent upon immediate circumstances, or conditioned upon God answering their prayers in a certain way.

How do you respond when God doesn't deliver you from something quickly? How can we develop the kind of strength that these 3 young Jewish men had?

Verse 22. What happens to the "executioners"?

One of the reasons that Daniel is such a good book is that he writes in a very lively way. He records the emotions of the king, not just his actions. What are some of Nebuchadnezzar's moods in this chapter (and throughout the rest of the book as well)?

Verse 25. What do you think is the identity of the "fourth" man in the furnace?

**NOTE:** Many scholars see this as a "theophany", an instance where the 2nd person of the Trinity appears on earth. (The word "theophany" comes from "theos"—God, and "phany", or "phanerao"—to appear). See Genesis 18, Genesis 28:10-17 and Exodus 33:11. Often "the angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament (rather than "an angel") is identified with a theophany.

Verse 28. How would you evaluate the king's spirituality, based on verses 28 and 29?

This is the third time that Daniel or his friends have been promoted or honored. But judging by the tempestuous nature of the politics so far, how secure do you think they feel?

**LIFE RESPONSE:** Have you ever been encouraged in your faith as you witnessed the courage of someone else? Who was it and what was the occasion?