









COOL!



Skeptics downplayed the fiery furnace NOT CONSUMING Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by saying, "Oh sure it was **HOT**, but it was a **DRY HEAT**." **Daniel 3:19-27**



First, let's do a little recap...what's happened so far in Daniel ch. 3: 1-23?

When we last saw the major players in this chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar was "filled with fury..." (v. 19), and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "fell bound into the burning fiery furnace" (v. 23).

- In other words, it didn't look good for our three faithful friends.
- An absolute monarch who is furious at you and has a burning fiery furnace "heated seven times more than it was usually heated" (v. 19) at his disposal...well, that's not a good combination.
- The worst case scenario had happened to them.

Here's the title we're using for the book:

The King of the Nations

Our key verse for the book is 4:34b—"His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation."

The book divides naturally into two halves...

- Daniel in the King's courts ~ chs. 1-6
- Daniel and the King's visions ~ chs. 7-12

Daniel 3—How Nebuchadnezzar failed to learn the lesson of 2:37-38, 44-45

- The worship of the golden image ~ v. 1-7
- The false accusation against the Jews ~ v. 8-12
- The fury of the king against the Jews ~ v. 13-23
- *The faithfulness of God to His people ~ v. 24-30*

So now let's read the rest of the chapter, v. 24-30.

And before we do anything else, let's make sure we understand not just *what* this chapter says, but *why* it says it.

- Is this chapter an example of something that is supposed to be a blueprint for deliverance?
- In other words, are we supposed to expect God to do something dramatic and miraculous like this for us? Do we have a guarantee of this?

God did not keep His servants out of the fiery furnace. And even though He protected them in this instance, they died later on anyway. No—something else is going on here...

The faithfulness of God to His people ~ v. 24-30

Here's what this passage looks like...

- The fourth man in the furnace ~ v. 24-25
- The three men who left the furnace ~ v. 26-27
- The response of King Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 28-30

The fourth man in the furnace ~ v. 24-25

Well, once again, last time we saw King N., he was "filled with fury" (v. 19).

- The furnace is super-heated...
- The three men are bound...
- They were thrown into the furnace...
- The men who threw them in were killed...

And now we see the king again in v. 24...

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

Just a minute or two ago Nebuchadnezzar was “filled with fury,” and now he is “astonished.”

- He is waiting for the instant death and quick burning of the bodies of these three Israelites, but something goes wrong.
- It goes from “three men bound” in v. 24 to “four men unbound” in v. 25 (cf. Acts 12:6-7, 16:25-26).

The writer records Nebuchadnezzar’s observations:

- “four men unbound”
- “walking in the midst of the fire”
- “they are not hurt”
- “the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

There was something clearly different about this fourth man in the furnace, something easily observable to those outside of the furnace looking in (from a safe distance). How'd he get there?

- The only description we get is the king's, who said his appearance was "like a son of the gods."

Which means what?

Notice also that the king refers to this fourth man in v. 28 as "His angel," which may—or may not—clarify things for us. Who was this fourth man in the furnace? What are our options? And more importantly, what was the point?

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

Thinking on what we know now of Scripture (and what they did not know then), our options on the identity of the fourth man in the furnace are these:

1. A pre-incarnate physical manifestation of Christ, or *Christophany*.
2. An angel.

Which one is it?

Does it matter? Think of Daniel's audience before you answer. None of *them* were being delivered like this...they were still languishing in exile, captives, and even if they *could* leave, what would they go back to? Their city—and their temple—was in ruins.

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

The *identity* of this fourth man in the furnace, who had the appearance of a divine being, is not the point here. The point is this:

- God is with His people in the fire of exile. This is a physical demonstration of His presence with His people.
- This is what Isaiah 43:2 looks like.
- The trials and hardships of exile in a foreign land could be endured and would not be overwhelming if the people knew that God was with them.
- God may, or may not, deliver them in dramatic ways—either way, He was with them always.

The fourth man in the furnace ~ v. 24-25

The *identity* of this fourth man in the furnace, who had the appearance of a divine being, is not the point here. The point is this:

“Notice that God didn’t promise to take His people around the waters or to keep the fire far from them. On the contrary, tribulation was the anticipated path for God’s saints, then and now (see Acts 14:22). Trials provide the context in which the faith of believers shines with unmatched clarity before the eyes of a watching world, as 1 Peter 1:6-7 makes clear.” ~ Iain Duguid

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

Does all this bring a word to mind?

Immanuel

- God with us, or, more literally, “with us (is) God.”
- The word shows up three times in Scripture—Is. 7:14, 8:8 (also in v. 10, though it is not rendered there as a name); Matt. 1:23.
- Each time the word is used it is a proper name; and as with all of the names of God, it is descriptive of a profound truth.
- The word describes this promised child’s name, His divine nature, and His gracious work.

The fourth man in the furnace ~ v. 24-25

Does all this bring a word to mind?

Immanuel ~ God with us

The NT gives us the full flower of the revelation:

- This child, Immanuel, is the Son of God Himself:
John 1:1, 18, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20.

The parties on either side of the “with”...

God ~

- “in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)
- “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts” (Is. 6:3)
- He is “of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong” (Hab. 1:13)

The fourth man in the furnace – v. 24-25

Immanuel – God with us

Us –

- “there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Ps. 36:1)
- “deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” (Jer. 17:9)
- “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10)
- “by nature children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3)

Knowing all of that, it could easily have been:

- God against us
- God opposed to us

God *with* us—an astonishing and comforting truth.

The three men who left the furnace ~ v. 26-27

As Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were falling into the super-heated fiery furnace, they did not know God's will for their lives.

- At some point fairly early on, they must have begun to realize that it wasn't all that hot...
- ...in fact, it was pretty comfortable...
- ...and—hey!—the ropes were gone...
- ...and who is this other guy in here with us?
- Now they know God's will for their lives. Or at least for the moment.

Nebuchadnezzar rushes as close as he can to the furnace and shouts to the three men to come out.

The three men who left the furnace ~ v. 26-27

The “servants of the Most High God” obey the king...and walk out of the furnace, careful to step across the dead bodies of those who had thrown them in. A crowd gathers as they stand outside the furnace, and Daniel gives us a detailed description:

- “the fire had not had any power over the bodies”
- “the hair of their heads was not singed”
- “their cloaks were not harmed”
- “no smell of fire had come upon them”

What happened to the fourth man? The text gives us no clues to how he came to be there, or where (or how) he went. The point is that he was with them.

The response of King Nebuchadnezzar – v. 28-30

The question that the king had asked back in v. 15—the question he was convinced he knew the answer to—was finally *really* answered.

- The king acknowledges the intervention of God
- But notice that it is not personal yet—twice (v. 28, 29) it is “the God of S, M, & A.”

But the king’s theology and understanding of what happened is not too bad, really (v. 28)

There is a massively huge lesson that Daniel wants to convey to the exiled Jews by including this story in his account. Reduce all of this to one sentence; what is the lesson?

The response of King Nebuchadnezzar – v. 28-30

It is this: Keep the first commandment even if it kills you—“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

- He demands exclusive covenant loyalty
- He is the only God—He will not tolerate the worship of manmade gods.
- There's a great picture of this in 1 Sam. 5:1-5.

For the exiles to live faithfully in a foreign, pagan culture, knowing that their city and their temple were in ruins, they had to keep the first commandment above all things. In many ways Daniel, S, M, & A were compliant with the king, sought his welfare (Jer. 29:4-7), and served him well, but there was a line...

The response of King Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 28-30

In Nebuchadnezzar's theology of faithfulness, here is what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did:

- They "set aside the king's command"
- They "yielded up their bodies"
- They refused to "serve and worship any god except their own God"
- They "trusted in Him"

Here is what God did:

- He "sent His angel"
- He "delivered His servants"

Whether He delivered them or not, they were going to obey the first commandment.

The response of King Nebuchadnezzar ~ v. 28-30

Brainstorm (and cite Scripture while you're at it) for a minute: how does that kind of faith grow?

In the end, Nebuchadnezzar promoted them to high positions in the kingdom...even though they had blatantly disobeyed him and dishonored him in the sight of all the leading officials in his kingdom (3:2-3).

The king—and the Most High God—honored them for their integrity.

- See Prov. 11:3, 14:2, 19:1, 20:7
- But more important, they were three missionaries sent out into Babylon: any who saw them would certainly know the story of their deliverance.

The closing prayer of John Calvin after preaching on this chapter:

“Grant, Almighty God, since Thou hast instructed us by the doctrine of Thy law and Gospel, and dost daily deign to make known Thy will to us with familiarity, that we may remain fixed in the true obedience of this teaching, in which Thy perfect justice is manifested; and may we never be moved away from Thy worship. May we be prepared, whatever happens, rather to undergo a hundred deaths than to turn aside from the profession of true piety, in which we know our safety to be laid up. And may we so glorify Thy name as to be partakers of that glory which has been acquired for us through the blood of Thine only-begotten Son. Amen.”