

SUNDAY SCHOOL

H

A. P. 07-15-2018

HIGHLIGHT: Daniel 3:8-18

⁸Some Chaldeans took this occasion to come forward and maliciously accuse the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever. ¹⁰You as king have issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music must fall down and worship the gold statue. ¹¹Whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. ¹²There are some Jews you have appointed to manage the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men have ignored you, the king; they do not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” ¹³Then in a furious rage Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to bring in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king.

¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar asked them, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you don’t serve my gods or worship the gold statue I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you’re ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music, fall down and worship the statue I made. But if you don’t worship it, you will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire—and who is the god who can rescue you from my power?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “Nebuchadnezzar, we don’t need to give you an answer to this question. ¹⁷If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. ¹⁸But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”



EXPLAIN

It is around 605 B.C., and Nebuchadnezzar—the king of Babylon—is the most powerful man in the world. He sieges Jerusalem for the first time and takes back with him a number of the Jewish nobility, including Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They are assigned to Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. While in captivity, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream which The Lord interprets through Daniel—a dream involving a colossal statue that represents a worldwide unity. Nebuchadnezzar sees this as a sign to erect a physical statue and force everyone to bow to it, which inspires a famous act of defiance about which we will read about today. Those who worship God are to worship nothing above Him, even when the inevitable trials come.

- v.8 “Chaldeans” here refers both to the ethnic term for the Babylonians and to the specific group of astrologers mentioned in the verses leading up to this section. Their hate for the Jewish people and their God led to the extreme charges they brought against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. “Maliciously accuse,” in the original Hebrew, is the word for “chew up” or “eat their pieces.” The hate and venom against the Jewish captives cannot be overstated.
- v.12 “These men have ignored you, the king.” The Chaldeans have brought two charges against the Jewish trio: treason (not serving the king’s gods) and insubordination (refusing to obey the king’s command). Treason and insubordination have never received light punishment, particularly when they were against the most powerful man in the world. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew full well what they were getting into by defying Nebuchadnezzar’s orders.
- v.16 When Shadrach and company replied to the king, they did not refer to him using his title or position (calling him King, Your Majesty, etc.); rather, they simply called him “Nebuchadnezzar.” Anybody listening would have immediately recognized the nerve of these three Jewish men—not only did they stand accused of treason and insubordination, but they didn’t even use his kingly title when addressing him. This demonstrates the depth of their devotion to God, whom they trusted with their lives and whom they would worship even if it cost them everything they had.
- v.18 “Even if He does not rescue us” is where much of the force of their response lies. They understand that 1) God does not miraculously intervene in every one of our circumstances; 2) Devotion to God is not something we cling to in order to preserve our lives or make them easier; 3) Worship is entirely about glorifying God. We often try to make worship about us; Daniel 3 teaches us that it *in no way* is.



A**APPLY**

1. What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you read in the text?
2. When you think of people who lived their lives by a set of principles or a code of conduct, who pops to mind? What do all of these people have in common?
3. We might not have 90-foot tall golden statues that we're being forced to bow down to, but there are certainly issues, opinions, or world views we're told to conform to if we want to be socially accepted. What might some of these be? What can you do to ensure you are approaching them in a way that would honor God?
4. In James 1:2 it says that we are to consider it pure joy when we face trials of various kinds. How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the challenge they faced? Share about a time when you've faced a trial, and how you responded to it.
5. The best time to prepare for a fight is before it, not in the middle of it. What are steps that you, personally, can take to make sure you're ready when the trials come your way?

R**RESPOND**

- What is one thing you can do differently this week on a daily basis to prepare yourself better for the trials Jesus promised would come our way?
- Meditate on John 16:32-33: "Look: An hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

