



LESSON 34

God protects Daniel's friends

DANIEL 3:1-30



God alone is powerful to save.



“If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Dan 3:17–18).

Supporting Truths

1. God alone is to be served.
2. God can deliver His people from any difficulty.
3. It is better to obey God than man.
4. God is with His people in hard times.
5. God will not share His glory.

Objectives

1. State the reason why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were punished.
2. Describe the difficulty the three men faced.
3. Explain when it is right to disobey the government.
4. Identify one blessing of God’s presence with His people.
5. Explain why Nebuchadnezzar was wrong to worship God alongside other gods.

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Lesson Summary

Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to worship the idol he had constructed, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship his god. Even the threat of death could not move these men from their steadfast commitment to God. Whether God rescued them or not, they refused to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's statue. However, God demonstrated His power by preserving the men and consuming Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers in the flames. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar recognized God's power to save.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished when God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He exclaimed, "No other god is able to rescue in this way!" (3:29). That is the point: no other god can save. God alone saves, and He saves with great power. We all face something worse than a fiery furnace, but God gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us with great power from sin and death. Will you entrust your life to Him as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did?

LAST WEEK



God uses Daniel to
interpret the king's dream
Daniel 2:1–49

THIS WEEK



God protects Daniel's
friends
Daniel 3:1–30

NEXT WEEK



God humbles
Nebuchadnezzar
Daniel 4:1–37

EXILE

Lesson Commentary

God alone is powerful to save.

In Daniel 2, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream and a miraculous interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar rightly acknowledged God's supreme wisdom and knowledge, but he did not yet understand that God was supreme in every way (2:47). He thought he could just add God to his collection of gods. So through the steadfast faith and courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God would teach Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews living in exile another lesson about His greatness: God alone is to be worshiped, for He alone has the power to save.

Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to worship his gods (3:1–7)

Rather than worshipping God for His sovereign wisdom and power (2:21), Nebuchadnezzar built a new god who was just as ignorant and powerless as the rest of his idols (3:1). Perhaps he was inspired by the statue he had seen in his dream, but whatever the reason, he quickly forgot the lesson that dream was supposed to teach and commanded all his government officials to worship the statue (3:5). Those who refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's god would be thrown into the fiery furnace (3:6). These furnaces, with flames and smoke shooting out, could reach extremely high temperatures.

But while everyone bowed low in worship of Nebuchadnezzar's god, three men stood tall. These three men knew that God alone is God (Deut 6:4), that God demands the whole of our devotion (6:5), and that He alone is to be worshiped (Exod 20:3–4). So when human governments require believers to be unfaithful to God, the right response is obedience to God, not human governments (Acts 5:29). However, even in our faithfulness to God we must continue to show honor and respect to human leaders (1 Pet 2:17). Faithfulness to God must never become an excuse to sin. Though our ultimate authority is God, we must strive to honor and respect our God-appointed leaders. This is a power testimony to a watching world. Throughout the history of the Church, men and women have stood up and given their very lives because they faithfully worshiped God alone.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gods (3:8–18)

As administrators over the province of Babylon (Dan 2:49), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were present when the command was given to worship Nebuchadnezzar's statue. However, Daniel was away at the royal court (2:49). Given Daniel's godly character, it is certain that he would have stood alongside his three friends had he been there.

Some of the Chaldeans, wise men of Babylonian heritage, spoke badly to the king about the Jews. They charged that these Jews paid no attention to the king and his command, did not serve the king's gods, and did not worship the idol that the king had built (3:12). In their jealousy, these officials wanted their Jewish rivals executed. This is often the way true believers are treated (Ps 31:11).

Nebuchadnezzar was furious. How could these foreigners refuse to worship the gods who had conquered God's people by destroying Jerusalem?

He scoffed, "Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15). But Nebuchadnezzar had not yet understood the reality that God is the "God of gods and the Lord of kings" (2:47). He did not realize that kings and nations are in God's hands; even Nebuchadnezzar's victory over Jerusalem had been orchestrated by God (Deut 28:45–57; Isa 39:5–7). In self-exalting pride, Nebuchadnezzar set himself against the God of gods. A foolish mistake, for God crushes the proud (Isa 13:11).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had made up their minds to serve God. Not even the smell of smoke and the sight of flames could threaten their allegiance. Nebuchadnezzar boasted in the power of his hand,

THINK ABOUT IT

We also are called to worship God alone, no matter the consequences.



THINK ABOUT IT

If we love God, we should not be shocked when we are bitterly slandered.



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but these three knew that God had the power to deliver them from the fiery furnace (3:17).

Even if God did not rescue them, they would still not worship the idol. They **trusted** God. They depended fully on Him. They trusted His power to save (Heb 7:25). They also trusted that His will is best even when He does not save (Rom 12:2). This is hard to do. Sometimes we think our situation is hopeless; we do not trust God's power to save. Other times we demand that God take us out of trouble; we do not trust that God's will is best. God's will is best even when He chooses to let His people suffer, for He provides grace to endure (2 Cor 12:9), the privilege

of suffering for His name (Phil 1:29), and the opportunity to grow in faith and holiness (Rom 5:1–5; Jas 1:2–4). So we should learn from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.



THINK ABOUT IT

Being in the king's hand was nothing compared to being in the hand of God.

God demonstrated His power by protecting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (3:19–30)

Nebuchadnezzar hated them for their faith. He commanded that the furnace be made as hot as possible (Dan 3:19). His command was so urgent that the executioners did not have time to protect themselves from the flames

(3:22). But look! Even though the scorching flames killed the soldiers, the three Jews were unharmed and walking about freely in the fire! By faith they quenched the flames (Heb 11:34).



THINK ABOUT IT

We should trust God to save and to do what is best, just as Jesus did (Matt 26:39; 1 Pet 4:19).

And there was a fourth man—one “like a son of the gods” (3:25). This man may have been the pre-incarnate Christ or an angel of God. God had sent His messenger to be with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, preserving them, walking with them, and encouraging them in the midst of the flames. No matter what hardship

or difficulties believers go through, Christ is always with them (Matt 28:20), and the Holy Spirit is present to encourage, bless, and sustain (Ps 139:7–10; John 14:16–17; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 4:14).

When Nebuchadnezzar called to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he identified them as “servants of the Most High God” (Dan 3:26). He praised the men for ignoring his word, yielding their bodies to be burned, and not worshiping any god except their God (3:28). Once again, God had instructed Nebuchadnezzar that He alone is God. Unlike worthless idols, the Most High God is trustworthy (3:28) and powerful to save (3:29). So Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all his subjects respect and honor God.

Even so, Nebuchadnezzar still did not admit that God alone is God, that He alone is worthy of worship. Nebuchadnezzar had already seen God's knowledge; unlike idols, God knows all things and reveals knowledge to men (2:47). Now Nebuchadnezzar also saw God's **omnipotence**: unlike powerless idols, God has absolute power to do as He pleases (3:29). But even though he called God the Most High, he still did not realize that God alone deserves the **glory**, all honor and praise for his splendor, greatness, and perfection. He would learn this lesson next (Dan 4).

Do you believe that there is no other God who is able to rescue in this way? Not only can He save from fire, but with great love He saves sinners from spiritual death (Eph 2:4–5). He can break the chains of sin that enslave us (John 8:34–36). But there is only one way to receive this salvation: by faith (Eph 2:8–9). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego show us what this kind of faith looks like. It is trust in the power of God alone to save. It is steadfast allegiance to God alone as King (Deut 6:4–5; Mark 12:30).

THINK ABOUT IT

Do you worship God but also worship possessions, activities, sports, attention, approval, and self?



Lesson Outline

God alone is powerful to save.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God alone is worthy of worship (3:1–7).
2. God alone can be trusted to save (3:8–18).
3. God alone is powerful to save (3:19–30).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. **Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to worship his god (3:1–7).**
 - Nebuchadnezzar built a great statue covered with gold (3:1).
 - Nebuchadnezzar commanded all the officials to worship the idol (3:2–6).
 - Everyone bowed down and worshiped the idol (3:7).
2. **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worshiped God alone (3:8–18).**
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the idol (3:8–12).
 - Nebuchadnezzar thought his power was greater than God's (3:13–15).
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God's power (3:16–18).
3. **God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with great power (3:19–30).**
 - Nebuchadnezzar sentenced the men to death (3:19–23).
 - God protected the men and sent an angel to be with them (3:24–27).
 - Nebuchadnezzar freed the men and praised God for His power to save (3:28–30).



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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What were the names of Daniel's three friends?**
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
2. **What did Nebuchadnezzar build?**
King Nebuchadnezzar built a 90 foot statue.
3. **What did the king do to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they refused to bow down to the statue?**
He threw them into a fiery furnace.
4. **Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego burn up?**
No. God sent His angel into the furnace to be with them.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What did King Nebuchadnezzar demand all the people to do?**
He commanded all the people to worship his gold statue.
2. **Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worship the idol?**
No. They knew that God alone is to be worshiped.
3. **Why did the Chaldeans speak badly against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?**
The Chaldeans were jealous of their position and hated them for their godliness.
4. **Did Nebuchadnezzar think that the three friends would survive?**
No. He did not think any god could save them from his hand.
5. **Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego still refuse to bow down?**
They believed that God could rescue them. Even if God didn't, they knew God was in charge and would do what was best.
6. **What was so amazing about what Nebuchadnezzar saw?**
Even though his own soldiers died from the heat, the three men were walking around in the fire unharmed, and a fourth man was with them.
7. **What did Nebuchadnezzar learn about God from this?**
He learned that God is powerful to save. God is not powerless like an idol.
8. **How can you experience God's power to save?**
If you trust Jesus with all your heart, He is powerful enough to save you from sin and hell.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



NEBUCHADNEZZAR SAYS

In ancient times, a king's instructions were to be carefully obeyed. By not bowing down to the golden statue, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego showed that they were attentive to God's Word and trusted in Him. Introduce the children to the lesson by playing a game of "Simon Says." In this case though, it's "Nebuchadnezzar Says," and there are certain actions that the children must not do, even if Nebuchadnezzar says to do them. Show them what actions they are not to do before starting the game. They are going to have to pay careful attention to your instructions. In the same way, Shadrach and his friends had to pay careful attention to God's Word so that they would not disobey God even when the king told them to.

BUT I DID RIGHT!

Ask the children for some examples of wrong things they have done and been punished for. Have they ever done something good and been punished for it? In today's lesson we will learn about three of Daniel's friends who did something right and were punished for it.



ALL YOUR HEART

Bring a red, heart shaped, paper cut-out to class. Show this to the children and ask them where their hearts are. Then ask them how many hearts they have. Finally, ask them if their heart can be divided. It can't be divided, but when we try to love God and idols we divide our heart. Get out a pair of scissors and cut off part of the heart. One part is devoted to God and another part devoted to something else. Use tape to unite the heart again to illustrate the love that Daniel's friends had for God.

WHAT'S THAT SMOKY SMELL?

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire they did not smell like smoke. Blindfold some children and ask them what various things smell like. In one container have liquid smoke. Explain that this is what Daniel's friends should have smelled like, but they didn't. God not only protected them from being burned, He even kept them from smelling like smoke!



SAFE INSIDE THE FURNACE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, cardstock, black and orange construction paper, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-cut pictures from crafts sheets. Pre-cut orange flames and black bars for the front of the furnace. Have children color the pictures. On one side of the cardstock, glue the men facing forward and place flames and bars as shown below. On the reverse side of the cardstock, glue the other picture that shows the men not bowing in worship to the statue.

*Safe Inside the Furnace
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2*



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AGES 6–8



DO WRONG TO DO RIGHT

Ask the children whether it ever is okay to do wrong. The children probably will say no. But explain that if someone tells us that we must do something against God's instructions, we must disobey them and obey God instead. In today's lesson we will see that the king told Daniel's friends to do something wrong. They obeyed God instead of the king, and God blessed them for it.

BEING OBEDIENT IS HARD WORK

Ask the children to perform a task that is easy at first but then gets more and more difficult. One example is holding your arms straight out in front of you (hold soup cans to make it even more difficult). Allow a few children to participate in this exercise. Explain that following an instruction may be easy at first, but it can become more difficult over time, especially when the people around you no longer are trying to obey. Tell them that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's decision not to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol only got more difficult as everyone else in Babylon bowed down, but these three men remained obedient and trusted God.



MIRROR, MIRROR

Have a volunteer to come to the front of the class. Explain that you're going to show him who each of us naturally worships. Position yourself with your back to the class to conceal a mirror that only the volunteer can see. Allow the volunteer to look into it, but don't allow him to say anything. After a few more volunteers have had the opportunity to look into the mirror, ask the class if they've figured out the answer. Show them the mirror and explain that we naturally worship ourselves. We pursue our own wants and desires.

FIRE DRILL

Ask the children to imagine that their house is on fire. They only have time to grab two things as they race out of the house to safety. What two items would they save? (Explain that in a real fire they should leave everything behind and get to safety as quickly as possible). Allow numerous children to answer. Were most of the answers worldly things? Would anyone take their Bible? Explain that these items say a lot about what's important to us. Use this activity to talk about the nature and reality of idols.



INTO THE FIERY FURNACE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, black construction paper, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Have students color and cut out the pictures from the craft sheet. Glue the pictures to a black sheet of construction paper. Help students to create a furnace from black construction paper (as shown below).

Into the Fiery Furnace
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 2



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

WHICH HALL?

Many professional sports leagues have a Hall of Fame where its greatest players are honored and remembered. During an induction ceremony, it's not uncommon for an inductee to say that he or she had been dreaming about and working towards this day their entire lives. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego may not have dreamed about being inducted into any Hall of Fame, but they were. Read Hebrews 11:34 to the class, and ask the children which Hall of Fame they most desire.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PRIORITIES

Give the children a list of items to prioritize and ask them to list the items in order of importance from greatest to least. One list might include eating, breathing, and drinking. Which item must be our greatest priority? Explain that we make decisions like this all the time. We think about the things we're going to do each day and prioritize the ones that matter most to us. Then ask the children where serving God fits on their list of daily priorities.



ILLUSTRATE

PEER PRESSURE

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol, but everyone else fell down and worshiped the golden statue Nebuchadnezzar had set up (Dan 3:7). It's easy to see ourselves standing tall next to Daniel's friends, but if we had actually been in that situation it might have been more difficult than we think to resist joining those who worshiped the idol. Why is this? Peer pressure. Use this opportunity to talk about the power of peer pressure. However, we must not follow the crowds. We must follow the word of God, not turning from it to the right or the left (Josh 1:7).

FOXES' BOOK OF MARTYRS

God does not always rescue Christians from danger. Sometimes God allows Christians to suffer for His name. Read a short selection from Foxe's Box of Martyrs that describes one Christian's steadfast commitment to God no matter the cost.



APPLY

SUFFERING FOR SOMETHING GOOD

Ask the children whether they ever have been disciplined for doing something good. Usually they are punished for disobeying the rules and doing something bad. Ask the children whether they would do something if they knew it was right but that they would also be disciplined for it. There are many times in our lives when we will have the opportunity to do something right or wrong. Sometimes when we do the right thing, we will not be praised for it, and sometimes it will even hurt us. In today's lesson, we learned that we should always do what is right, regardless of the consequences. Give the children some scenarios where the consequence for doing what is right results in discipline or something negative. Ask the children what the right action would be in this situation. Help the children to understand that we should always do what is right, no matter the consequences.