

# The Test of True Worship (Part 3)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're in Daniel, of course, and you know that.

! At least you should know that. Been there a little while now, so we've got ways to go. We're just going to finish up chapter 3 tonight, so you know that we've got ways to go.

So, we've been looking at what really is one of the familiar stories in Daniel, the story about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and the fiery furnace.

You know, that's, again, one of those stories that we learned when we were kids. That is, if you were brought up in church, you certainly learned this story. And even if you were barely brought up in church, you probably had heard about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Fiery Furnace because they refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image.

And so, the issue here really is worship. That's why I entitled this The Test of True Worship. And so, they would not bow down to the king's image, which, if you'll recall, as we studied that part of the chapter, really represents Nebuchadnezzar's desire for self-worship, almost a deification of himself.

[ 1 : 25 ] I mean, just really, really not only an idolater in the fact that Nebuchadnezzar and really all of Babylon had multiple gods that they believed in and worshipped and made sacrifice to and so forth.

But Nebuchadnezzar, I think, really was adding himself to the number of the gods that they worshipped. He wanted to be worshipped, and so he made it a law that when the music started, everybody was supposed to bow down to his, you know, giant statue of himself, I think, made in his own image.

Well, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, of course, did not. And we know that part of the story. They would not bow. And so, that brought them a little bit of a problem, because there were those, of course, among the leadership in Babylon who were ready to, you know, to do whatever it took to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into disfavor with Nebuchadnezzar.

And so, they brought it to the attention of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was angry, very angry. And enraged, he pitched a fit, and so he brought them before him and gave them another opportunity. And they still would not. So, they would not bow, and they would not bend. And so, tonight, we're ready to kind of finish it up, get to the most familiar part of the story, most interesting, maybe most interesting part of the story.

[ 3 : 02 ] And under this heading, the Hebrews would not burn. So, they would not bow, would not bend, would not burn. And that's exactly what happened. In fact, when they came out of that fiery furnace, they didn't even smell like smoke.

So, it's a tremendous miracle, and we'll get to that as we go along here. But I want to go ahead and read that part of the story, just to bring it all back to our minds, so that we can remember some of the details of it before we pick it apart.

And actually, I want to start reading with verse 16, which helps us kind of set the story up. Verse 16 says, Remember, they'd been brought before the king, because their accusers had called their disobedience to the attention of Nebuchadnezzar.

So, they're brought before the king. And so, they answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. That is why we didn't bow down. We don't even have to tell you why. If that is the case, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from your hand, O king.

[ 4 : 21 ] But if not, it doesn't change anything. If not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.

All right? So, they're very resolute. It would not bend. Then Nebuchadnezzar, and this is the part of the passage we're going to be looking at tonight, then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury.

Not the first time we've seen that, have we? Is it? And the expression on his face changed towards Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the burning, fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments and were cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

[ 5 : 39 ] And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound in the midst of the fire?

They answered and said to the king, True, O king. Well, look, he answered, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

The Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace and spoke, saying, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came from the midst of the fire. So the fire is still burning, right? And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men in whose bodies the fire had no power.

The hair of their head was not singed, nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him.

[ 7 : 06 ] And they have frustrated the king's word and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own god. Therefore I make a decree, that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

By the way, I meant to go back and count how many times we have it repeated, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. I did read the one commentator who said, you know, it's repeated so many times because God so honored them because of what they did.

Maybe that's right. All right, so he said, if they speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made in ash heap, because there is no other God who can deliver like this.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. All right, so that's, again, the, I think you would agree is, you know, the most interesting part of the story.

I mean, really, you think about it. I think it's interesting about the statue and some of the details about that. And, of course, you don't have a story without all that other part too.

[ 8 : 26 ] But it's when we get down to this part about the fiery furnace that, you know, we're more interested. This is, because it's a miracle, and it's awesome here.

And so, I guess we could say, if you just take the part that I read or the part that we're going to focus on tonight, I guess you could say that King Nebuchadnezzar really expressed some extreme emotions or reactions from one extreme to the other.

You could say that King Nebuchadnezzar went from fury, and that's the word that appears right here in the text. He went from fury to favor in relation to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

He was furious with them, and then he favored them, ultimately. And there's a lot, of course, that takes place in between. And so, that really kind of identifies the first and last point of our outline.

Pretty lengthy outline. Number of points. And it begins, then, with the king's fury. The king's fury. That's what it says in verse 19, at least in the New King James Version.

[ 9 : 42 ] I think there are other translations that use, for example, the word rage, maybe even anger. But verse 19 says, then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury.

Fury. Now, you can't just take that word fury alone. You need to put it all together, full of fury. Full of it. And that's a strong expression, strong description.

The phrase, full of fury. Strong expression. And it really is a very strong description of Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to the Hebrews' disobedience.

The word fury points, really, to outward expression of rage. We've already talked about this, concerning Nebuchadnezzar.

So, this is not a surprise to us. We've already seen it a couple of times already. But it's his rage. And when you add the word full to it, so you've got to take the phrase together.

[10:46] When the word full is added, it pictures a man with an explosive anger. All right? And again, we've come to expect this from King Nebuchadnezzar.

Made this point last week, or two weeks ago. So, clearly, you know, Nebuchadnezzar had some major anger issues.

Anger management issues. Without a doubt. And, you know, sometimes we just kind of expect that with kings. And especially those that we read about in history and in Scripture.

All right, remember, we saw this back here in verse 13 of this chapter. when he first heard about, you know, Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego refusing to bow down.

We first heard about it. He was enraged. We saw it also back in chapter 2, verse 12. Remember, when the wise men, his counselors, his magicians, and so forth, could not tell him what his dream was.

[11:52] You know, couldn't give him the substance of the dream. And he was beside himself. In fact, had a lot of them put to death because of it. All right, so the king's fury.

But before I say any more about that, let's go to the second thing in the text. That is the king's face. The king's face. Not only his fury, but his face.

And so it says in the next phrase in chapter, or verse 19, and the expression, here's how it's worded in the New King James, the expression of his face changed.

The expression of his face changed towards Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That's interesting. It's very visual. Very visual. You can even imagine seeing this.

It means that literally Nebuchadnezzar's facial expression was altered. Dramatically altered. And why?

[12:49] Well, this change came, remember, immediately after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gave their answer to the king, remember. Let's just remember what has transpired just before this major facial expression changes.

Nebuchadnezzar had the Hebrews brought before him. He was willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. I mean, if you read between the lines there, he was going to give them the benefit of the doubt.

It had been reported to him that they had disobeyed. All right, so he's going to give them the benefit of the doubt. He wanted to believe that there was some kind of misunderstanding. I really think that he was hoping that they just didn't understand the instructions.

It's obvious, you know, from passages that come before this, not only with Daniel, but also in relation to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that Nebuchadnezzar had a certain kind of connection, a certain kind of admiration for these fellas, gave them places of honor and leadership. And so I think he just was hoping that they just misunderstood something. And so he's going to have the music played again. You know, let's play it one more time and this time you know what to do, okay?

[14:10] But they still refused. They refused. In fact, they said, remember, said, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods. We don't serve any of these other gods.

And nor will we worship the gold image that you have set up. We're not going to do it. All right, so they've said that and you can almost imagine the change that came over Nebuchadnezzar's face.

I can imagine, first of all, from a kind of benevolent kind of smile. You know, he's giving them another chance, you know. And now he's going to listen to what they have to say.

Kind of just benevolence on his face. And that changes to kind of a cold stare as they're giving their answer, you know, to him about bowing down to his image.

And that cold stare begins to turn into a rosy colored flush over to say, have you ever known people like this? It's kind of turning red and that gives way to a full, bright red, full-blown anger.

[15:18] Can you picture that? Eyes bulging out of their sockets, you know, veins popping out on his neck, steam rising on top of it.

I shouldn't say this, but I had a deacon like that. Except you're not here. All right. We've got great deacons here. And every deacon I've worked with has been wonderful.

But I had a deacon who would sit in some of our meetings, he'd get so angry, his face would turn bright red. I'm literally, veins would pop out on his neck.

And that's what I picture here with Nebuchadnezzar. And I think that's the idea behind this expression, you know, that his, the expression of his face changed.

He's about to blow a head gasket. I really think. Because he was given to this. You know, and really, I think we can just admit that it didn't take very much for him to just lose control.

[16:17] And I've met people like that. You probably have too. All right. So that leads then, first the king's fury, then the king's face, and that leads then to the king's furnace.

All right. King's furnace. And so the next few verses here highlight really not only what, how he responds and some of the things that he does, but I think they really highlight the extent of his rage. And it's kind of interesting if you'll see the parallel here. First of all, he commanded that the furnace be heated up to its hottest possible temperature.

And that's a result of his rage. That's what verse 19c says. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

Now, we need to understand that this is an expression. It's an idiom, actually, is the technical term's expression. The expression seven times more, it's proverbial.

[17:26] It's a proverb. It's not literal. And, again, it's an idiomatic way of saying as hot as physically possible.

That's the idea here. So don't make so much about the number seven and so forth. And there would be people that said, you know, numbers in the Bible always mean something. Well, it's just an expression, figure, speech.

It means let's just make it as hot as it can possibly be. And what does that parallel? Well, the heat of the furnace parallels the heat of Nebuchadnezzar's anger, the extent of his anger, his rage.

So I guess we could say that Nebuchadnezzar is as hot as his furnace is hot. All right? Second, he commanded his best and strongest soldiers to carry out his orders.

All right? Verse 20 says, Now, the phrase mighty men of valor simply refers to men of great strength.

[18:41] All right? So now, they're soldiers part of his army, but they're the best and strongest. I mean, there's some he-men here. And why? I mean, what's the big deal here?

I mean, these, you know, Shadrach, Meshach, and Benigod, they're just young guys and they're not soldiers or anything like that. So what's he afraid of?

And I think the idea is that nothing is going to rob Nebuchadnezzar from carrying out this vengeance upon these Hebrew boys. Nothing's going to rob him.

No one's going to take that away from him. Not any man and not any God. God. So he gets the strongest guys possible to come and bind these guys and commands them to throw these fellows into the fiery furnace.

Again, an indication of how angry, how enraged, and I guess you could say how offended he was that these guys would disobey his commands, his orders.

[19:44] third, he commanded that the Hebrews be thrown in with all their clothing on. You say, well, what's the big deal about that?

Well, verse 21 says, then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments. It's very deliberate to describe, to name all these various articles of clothing. I mean, why give that information? Why not just say, then they were bound and cast in the midst of the burning fiery furnace? Well, see, the extra clothing was part of the deal.

That clothing would have immediately caught fire and engulfed these Hebrews in flames. And what a horrifying spectacle that would have been.

And it was designed for effect, you know. We already know how hot the thing was, or we're going to find that out here in a minute. You know, that it even burned up these guys that didn't even get in the fire.

[20:47] I mean, it's hot. So you throw in some guys that are bound up in all kinds of clothing, and man, they're just going to ignite like that. And again, I think it highlights the extreme and external nature of the king's rage.

See, the king's rage was like an out-of-control fire, like this furnace. anger, and so it's not an internal kind of smoldering kind of anger, which is something we sometimes experience, so we don't kind of keep it underlid.

Now, this is an external, it's an outburst of rage that immediately ignites everything around him. Another thing about the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's rage, number four, his rage caused collateral damage.

Verse 22, therefore, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Really, I thought about going back and just adding another main point and calling this the king's folly. But, don't want to muddy up the water there. It really is another indication of just how out of control his anger was.

[ 22 : 15 ] It could not be controlled. And, really, we know this to be true about anger, about rage, you know, the destruction caused by anger, our anger and rage always goes further than we want it to.

And, it hurts people that we never intended to hurt. And so, that's an indication of that. And then, one more thing, he sat down to watch the Hebrews burn. I don't know if you caught that from the passage and thought anything about that.

Do you really think that Nebuchadnezzar watched all the people that he tortured and put to death? I don't think so. But, he did for these guys. He sat down and watched this thing.

That's clearly understood from verse 25. He says, look, he's talking to his counselors, come look.

Well, he was already looking. I think he just kind of pulled up a chair and sat there to see these guys burn like torches.

That shows the extent of his anger. It's so complete that he wanted to watch the objects of his anger suffer. All right, so, the king's fury, the king's face, the king's furnace, and then the king's, you'll love this word, fluster.

[ 23 : 33 ] That's F-L-U-S-T-E-R. I had to find a word to start with F that was descriptive here, and I could have put the king's frustration, but it's really more than that.

He's flustered. Verse 24, then the king, then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished. Now, that's the word from the passage, from the text, but it doesn't start with an F, so I had to change it.

But actually, that's the idea is he was flustered, he was bewildered. And he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound in the midst of the fire?

They answered and said to the king, True, O king, look, he answered, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.

All right, so what flustered the king here? Well, the king looked and he saw several things. He saw the Hebrews were loose, first of all, they're loose.

[ 24 : 33 ] Now, they were thrown in bound, right? Bound probably hands and feet, and these mighty guys probably needed these strong guys just to pick them up.

But he looked and he saw they were loose, all right? And really the idea behind that word loose is not just simply that they were loose from their bindings or their bonds, but they were loose and walking around.

All right? When they were thrown in, there was no way they could stand or walk around, but they're walking around and they're loose. They don't have any bindings on their hands or feet. So he saw that they were loose.

He also saw that the Hebrews were unhurt by the fire, unharmed by the fire. You can use either word, okay? Unharmed. They weren't affected by the fire in any degree, in any physical sense.

He also saw the Hebrews were unburned by the fire. They were not burnt. Now, see, the only thing on them that was burned away by the fire were the binding ropes, right?

[ 25 : 50 ] That's the only thing that was burned. Verse 27 says the hair of their head was not singed, nor were their garments affected, and the smell of the fire was not on them. They didn't even smell like smoke.

Now, what is this? It's a miracle. It's an absolute miracle. Now, you think about this description of these guys, no hair singed by the fire or even the heat of it, garments not burned at all, the only thing burned, of course, burned away were the binding cords, not even the smell of fire on them.

And what a stark contrast that is from what happened to those mighty men who bound them and threw them in. They got too close to the fire and the fire burned them up.

But yet, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the very midst of the fire and they didn't even smell like smoke when they got out. It's a miracle. And this is what the king saw.

The king saw something else, though, more amazing, and that is that the Hebrews were not alone. They were not alone in there.

[ 27 : 05 ] Hebrews, verse 25 says, look, he answered, I see four men loose. I mean, he had to ask his counselors, remember? You know, how many did we throw in there?

I only gave orders to throw in three guys. Why is it that I see four? There are four in there, loose, walking around in the midst of the fire and they're not heard in the form of the fourth, is like the Son of God.

Literally, the Hebrew would read the appearance of a God. I know we like to take the King James rendering, Son of God, and we make the connection with Christ.

And that's a valid connection because we know that to be true. But now Nebuchadnezzar, this is just his opinion. I mean, he's looking in, he sees four guys and one of them has the appearance of a God.

And I don't know what that looked like to him and why he thought in that way. I mean, obviously, you know, they didn't put that guy in there, so he got in there on his own, so only a God could do that.

[ 28 : 18 ] Whatever, you know, formed Nebuchadnezzar's judgment or conclusion about this, Nebuchadnezzar's not a believer in the one true God, Yahweh.

He's not a believer in him. That is in the sense that he's the only one, the only true God. He's a polytheist, he's not a monotheist, all right?

So that, you know, makes him open to other deities out there, and so this is what he's thinking, and he had no understanding of the Holy Trinity.

We look at the Son of God and we say, well, that's the second person of the Trinity, that's God the Son, but Nebuchadnezzar didn't know anything about a Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and so we don't base, you know, our conclusion about the identity of that fourth person from Nebuchadnezzar, we base on the fact that it's consistent with all of Scripture.

We know that this fourth person was the third person of the Trinity, God the Son, and we also know what this tells us, that no matter what fire we go through, we're never alone, and God is with us.

[ 29 : 34 ] Now, that fire might consume our physical bodies, it didn't Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but remember they said, our God will deliver us, and if not, it doesn't change anything.

We still belong to him, we still worship him, so God doesn't always deliver his people from the physical dangers, but he is always with his people through those physical dangers, and persecutions, and fiery furnaces, that his people may go through, and we know we're just passing through this life anyway.

So it is definitely a testimony of the presence of God with his people when they go through the fiery persecution, fiery times of life, and since there was a fourth person there, Nebuchadnezzar, had no reason to lie about it, saw that fourth person, we know that that fourth person had to be the son of God there with his people.

All right, so this then led to the king's faith. Now, I'll use that word faith loosely, but let me go ahead and read the passage. Verse 26, in fact, a couple of places.

Verse 26 is the first indication we have of Nebuchadnezzar believing a certain thing. Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and he spoke saying, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and then he says this, servants of the Most High God.

[ 31 : 03 ] So he had already made a conclusion about their God based upon what he saw happen to them. the Most High God. Now, again, Nebuchadnezzar believes in many gods.

Believed. Now he knows there's just one, but it's too late. But he's polytheistic, all right? So he believes in his own gods, but now he's willing to acknowledge that the God of the Hebrews is the Most High God.

Verse 28, Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, blessed be or praises be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It doesn't mean he knows him or given any allegiance to him, but he's praising him, acknowledging him and praising him, who sent his angel.

By the way, this is another, in most translations, the word angel is capitalized, and that is somewhat interpreted, but when you put it all together in its context, we know the Bible is speaking of the angel of the Lord and almost in every case throughout the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord is a reference to the second person of the Trinity.

He sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him and they have frustrated the king's word. I mean, he did this even though they disobeyed me and yielded their bodies that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own.

[ 32 : 41 ] So, this, of course, is not faith in a salvation sense. All right? Nebuchadnezzar did not become a believer in Yahweh as the one and only true God.

He didn't come to that conclusion. And we read on the story of Nebuchadnezzar and we know that's true. What did he do then? He acknowledged his existence and that's a big step in the right direction.

He acknowledged his power, might even say his supreme power, he called him the most high God, and he did, in a sense, praise him.

He gave praise to him, gave credit to him, and all those are good things. So, the king's faith in the sense of acknowledging certain things about the one true God and praising it.

Which led then to, the next thing, the king's fiat. Okay, F-I-A-T. His fiat, or decree, his royal decree, royal fiat.

[ 33 : 53 ] Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or language. This, again, is a little insight into Nebuchadnezzar's pride in himself and Babylon, kind of suggesting that he had control over all people.

Well, in a sense, Babylonian empire was a great empire, and they ruled over many, many different people and nations and languages. And so, he said, you know, here's my royal fiat.

Any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be cut in pieces. Pretty severe, isn't it? Cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap, like they're going to care what happens to their house after they're cut in pieces, because there is no other God who can deliver like this.

And so, notice he didn't say there's no other God. There's not another one like this one. All right, so, here's the punishment, you know, pretty severe, and by the way, it's one of his favorite forms of punishment.

He's already said this before. We find the same thing in chapter 2, verse 25. That's what happened to a lot of his counselors when they couldn't tell him what his dream was. They were cut in pieces, and their houses were made in ash heap, burned down to the ground.

[ 35 : 23 ] Now, the reason, though, for this decree, or this royal fiat, is threefold. I think we can conclude.

Nebuchadnezzar, first of all, Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed an indisputable miracle. indisputable. It's indisputable. He witnessed it, saw it firsthand, with his own eyes.

He saw the three guys go in, bound, hand and foot, with all their clothes, and then when he looked in, he saw four in there, but he also saw that none of them were damaged in any way, hurt in any way, and when they came out, they didn't smell like smoke.

This is a bonified miracle. It's indisputable. Now, liberals might say, well, this was just made up. It's fiction. But Nebuchadnezzar saw this, and he's a witness to it, and so he makes this decree based upon what he saw, this indisputable miracle.

There's no way to argue against it. Secondly, Nebuchadnezzar could not deny, then, the reality and the power of the God of the Hebrews, the reality or the existence, and the supreme power of the God of the Hebrews.

[ 36 : 47 ] He couldn't deny that. I mean, if he saw a bonified miracle, he remembers what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had said to him, that our God will deliver us, and if not, it's not going to change anything anyway.

And so he knew that they were trusting in their God to deliver them, and then he saw that deliverance, which was a miracle, an incredible miracle, something Nebuchadnezzar had never seen, nor will he ever see, well, I guess he'll maybe see some other things, but, so he couldn't deny the miracle, and therefore could not deny the existence of their God, and the power of their God, the God.

And then third, Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to try and appease the God of the Hebrews. Why would he be compelled to appease this God?

Well, look what he had done with his followers. You know, I'm sure he's afraid that there's going to be some kind of retribution against him for doing what he did to the followers of this Most High God.

And so he's making this decree really to help himself out, hopefully, of what he's hoping. All right, so we have the king's fury, his face, his furnace, his fluster, his faith, his fiat.

[ 38 : 08 ] Then one more, the king's favor. Verse 30, then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

All right? Now, the word promoted would be better translated prospered. In fact, if you have New American Standard, I think that's the word that's used there and really does mean that because they already had been given places of leadership and authority in the province of Babylon.

They were already leaders there. So now the king has caused them to prosper materially. So this was a great reward to them. He favored them.

And so there you have it, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Bendigo. Thank you. Thank you.