

The Test of True Worship (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, we are kind of working our way through chapter 3.

! I'll go ahead and tell you right now, we're not going to finish chapter 3 tonight. Not just because I don't think there's enough time, but I've not even prepared all that needs to be prepared.

I've got my outline to the end of the chapter, but I'm kind of working my way, kind of finalizing segments of this chapter that I think we could possibly cover in one evening.

So we're going to get all the way up to the fiery furnace, okay? And then we'll take that very key part of the story next time and finish that out.

Now, let me remind you, because you probably don't have your notes from the last couple of weeks, but we've been looking at Roman numeral number 1, and the outline was the Hebrews would not bow.

[1 : 05] We've looked at several things under that point, like the deification of the king, King Nebuchadnezzar having this image created.

And though it's not just absolutely explicit in the text, I really think that it was an image of himself. So kind of a self-deification.

Then we looked at the dedication of the king's image. Talked a little bit about that. Then we finished with the decree of the king. So when the music starts and, you know, all the various instruments are playing, and then that's the signal for everyone to bow down to the image.

And everybody did, except for three young men, young Hebrew men. And so that gets us to where we will start tonight. The disobedience to the king, all right?

The disobedience to the king. So there are a couple of things to see here. Really, we need to see what the text tells us or reveals to us about the majority, and then what it reveals about the minority.

[2 : 16] So, number one, the malignant hatefulness of the majority. The majority. See, the issue here is not just that the majority bowed down to this image.

I mean, they did. The issue is their, many of them, their feelings or thinking toward these Hebrew men who did not bow down.

So verse 8 says, Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward, came to the king, and accused the Jews.

That's what it says there in verse 8. They accused them. At least that's how it's translated in the New King James Version. And so, here's the idea. The vast majority obeyed the king's edict.

This command. They bowed down to the image. That's what verse 7 tells us. And, you know, really, when you think about it, that's usually what the majority do. The majority usually do the wrong thing.

[3 : 18] They make the wrong decision. In fact, someone has said, if you want to know what to do, just look at what the majority is doing and then do the opposite. Because usually, the majority is going the wrong direction.

And that's very clearly what was going on here. Now, among these people who were bowing down, the majority, were certain Chaldeans.

That's what it says in the text. Certain Chaldeans. I just want to explain that. The Chaldeans would be, I guess we could call them ethnic Babylonians.

You know, the Babylonian Empire, even at this point, at this time, Nebuchadnezzar being their first king. And a great conqueror, great leader, great general.

And they had conquered many, many people. It had become a vast empire. And so, in the empire, the Babylonian Empire was made up of many, many different nationalities, nations, cultures.

[4 : 19] And so, when it says Chaldeans, that would kind of be the original Babylonians. And so, these would be the ethnic Babylonians. And so, the point is here is that they were jealous.

They were jealous of who? The Hebrews. These Hebrew young men who were honored, not only just brought in to the king's palace, you know, but they were also honored with places of leadership. And we know how that came about. We studied that back in chapter 2, where Daniel not only was able to tell the king what he dreamed, but also gave the interpretation.

Of course, it was God who gave that through him. And because of that, Daniel was put in a really high place of leadership. And by way of Daniel's request, his Hebrew brethren, who were they? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were also given places of leadership. I think it's just clear that these certain Chaldeans, these Babylonians by nationality, they were jealous.

[5 : 31] In fact, the word accused is really is a translation that kind of misses just how much these guys hated the Hebrews.

The Hebrew word literally means, if we were to take the word and just give a very wooden, literal translation, it would be like this.

They ate the pieces of. Now, that's strange. I mean, it's a good thing that it wasn't translated that way because it wouldn't make any sense to us. But that's the literal meaning of the word that in the New King James translated accused.

And if you think about it, do we have a counterpart to that in our culture or in, you know, kind of expressions that we use?

Well, how about this one? They chewed them out. Chewed them out. You know, it might be a comparable English expression. And that's what we have in verse 9. O king, live forever.

[6 : 33] So they're coming to the king. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. So you get the sense of their jealousy here.

They're really upset. You said the certain Jews who you set over the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not paid due regard to you.

They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up. So this is, these are these certain Chaldeans. Now, why is it, it's just my thought as I was studying this passage.

Why is it that unbelievers seem to go out of their way to hate us? Believers. I mean, they really kind of do, don't they? Why is that?

You know, think about the situation here. Thousands of people worship that image. Bow down. Only three refuse. Just three. Why such a fuss?

[7 : 40] Over three, just three believers who refuse to worship what they believe to be a false god. I mean, what's the big deal? Why can't you just let a person do what they want to do?

Why are they so upset with those three guys? But it's always that way. It really is. When you think about it. You know, even on some of the most simple levels of this, you know, it's always the one who doesn't laugh at the dirty jokes who is despised by the majority.

You know, there's something wrong about that guy. Matthew, our son, I've mentioned this a couple times, different references to it. Of course, in the army, went to basic training and served two tours, Iraq, Afghanistan.

And I'm telling you, his fellow soldiers gave him a hard way to go because he didn't have dirty pictures, didn't look at pornography, didn't tell dirty jokes, didn't cuss and curse and use foul language.

Many of them just gave him a hard time for that. I mean, why is that? You see, it's always the one who doesn't go along with that, who doesn't watch the dirty movies or look at the pornography or talk about women in immoral ways that is looked down upon and criticized and ridiculed by the majority.

[9 : 05] And it's always the uncompromising Christian who is blasted for being intolerant. I mean, that's just the way it is in our culture. I mean, ask yourself, why is it that a gay rights group can protest in front of a church and the media calls that free speech?

But if a preacher stands in his pulpit and condemns homosexuality as sin, that's hate speech. That's called hate speech. That's just the way it is. But thank the Lord for examples that we have not only in our day, but this example from Scripture with these three guys who would not bow down.

And of course, they're going to receive a lot of grief from it. So that leads to the second thing, not only malignant hatredfulness of the majority, but the determinant faithfulness of the minority.

And that's what we want to be part of, part of that minority that is determined to be faithful. They did, and this was said of them, they did not serve Babylon's gods or worship the gold image which the king had set up.

They did not do it, while the majority did. And so that leads then to a second thing. First, the Hebrews would not bow. And now second, the Hebrews would not bend.

[10:29] They would not bend. So they would not bow initially. And now they're going to be coerced. They're going to be commanded to bend on that conviction, and they would not bend.

So in verses 13 through 18, we see a couple of things. First of all, we have the king, that's Nebuchadnezzar, the king's attitude toward the Hebrews.

The king's attitude toward the Hebrews. When their refusal to bow down to the images reported to King Nebuchadnezzar by these certain Chaldeans who were jealous, what was his reaction?

How did he respond? Well, several ways, actually. First of all, he was angry. He was angry. Verse 13, Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

All right? So, rage and fury. All right? So the idea here, of course, is that the king became not just angry, but violent.

[11:40] Violent with anger. Violent with anger. In fact, the phrase, and it's rather interesting, and it's just kind of a lesson in some rhetorical devices that were used by people, used by people who write the phrase, in rage and fury.

Is, or literally, anger. It really ought to be translated, rage and anger, because that's what the word means, fury or anger. It's a figure of speech, in a sense.

I guess in its construction, there are a lot of different ways it could be used, but it's a certain writing technique. technique. And the technical term is hendiadesses.

Now, that's a good one. H-E-N-D-I-A-D-E-S-S. Hendiadesses. Have you ever heard of it? Hendiadesses? Never heard of it, have you?

Well, I'm going to explain it to you. It's a Greek word, for one thing. And, of course, this was written in Hebrew, but the certain technique goes by this name, hendiadesses.

[12:48] And the word literally means one thing by means of two. All right, now, you following me here? One thing by means of two. Now, what does that mean? All right, so instead of, you know, writing it this way, a noun, just a noun like anger, with, you know, preceded by an adjective.

All right, so it could be, it could be, you could say it this way, enraged anger. So you have the noun, that's anger, and the adjective that modifies that noun.

Give me a little grammar lesson here. Enraged anger. All right? Instead of that, this rhetorical device, this hendiadesses, hendiadesses, uses two nouns connected or joined together by the word and.

Two nouns. So rage and anger. You'll find examples of this many places in scripture and also literature. Rage and anger. And the reason for this hendiadesses is to convey an extreme kind of condition.

And in this sense, in this case, to convey the extreme violent nature of Nebuchadnezzar's anger. So he's not just angry.

[14:08] And really more than just kind of an enraged kind of anger. He was enraged and anger. Angry. He was rage and anger.

He's out of control. That's the idea. Totally out of control. And so he's he was emotionally angry but also physically angry.

And I think we maybe imagine this. Maybe picture this. Maybe he's yelling and screaming and hitting things and breaking things and tearing up things.

You know, he's just in a fit of rage. Or maybe since he's the king we would say he's pitching a royal fit. But, you see, so this gives us actually gives us a window into Nebuchadnezzar's personality.

Very troubling. Troubled personality. Nebuchadnezzar was given was kind of given to these episodes of violent anger. In fact, this is not the first time we've seen this.

[15:15] This is actually specifically the second time. We're going to see it again a little bit later but in chapter 2 verse 12 you might remember. Remember, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he was troubled by it and so what did he do?

He called all of his counselors together, his magicians, astrologers, you know, all the really wise men in his empire, his counselors and so forth and called them together and what did he ask them to do?

Reveal the dream. All right, so you've got to tell me what I dream and then tell me what it means. All right, now, what did they say? They said, this is unreason.

Nobody can do that. But in this verse, chapter 2, verse 12, he was angry and very furious. There's another in Diabetes. Angry and very furious and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Now, we just kind of read over that but do you stop and think how extreme that is? He said, well, he's a king and we have this kind of idea of ancient kings and often portrayed that way.

[16:32] Men of such absolute power that, you know, that they do extreme things. but this is done out of anger, totally out of control kind of anger and so this is giving us, you know, a window into his personality and these two examples actually prepare the reader for what's going to happen in chapter 4.

We'll get to that by and by. Remember when Nebuchadnezzar, you might remember the story, when Nebuchadnezzar got so mad, goes mad actually, and is essentially transformed into a wild beast.

You remember that story about Nebuchadnezzar? He's eating grass like an ox, the Bible says. His hair grows out as long as eagle's feathers.

Kind of a strange expression. We'll talk about that when we get to it. His fingernails become like bird's claws. I mean, what a picture. I mean, he's just going absolutely mad.

Because we know in chapter 4 it's God's judge upon Nebuchadnezzar. Let's see, he's given to this kind of out-of-control rage and anger and that is what happened here when these certain Chaldeans come and inform him that certain Jews that he had made leaders in his empire were not bowing down, not obeying him, and he went absolutely berserk.

[18:13] So that's the idea. So we're talking about the king's attitude. First he was angry. Then he was amazed. He was amazed.

We might even say dumbfounded. Verse 13, 13, or the latter part of verse 13 and 14. So they brought these men before the king.

You know that's Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

That's kind of a strange question. I mean, is this true? I think the idea is disbelief. Couldn't believe this. That they would do this.

It made no sense to him. You know, in his kind of pagan way of thinking, from his viewpoint, perspective, I mean, how could they do this to him?

[19:15] How could these Hebrews be so audacious as to refuse to obey me? And refuse to worship my gods and my image?

I mean, after all, look at what I've done for them. Look how I've made their life so much better. Look at all that I've given to them.

I mean, I've made you rulers in my kingdom. You at least owe me this. He thought he bought them. And so it just didn't make any sense to his way of thinking.

He's absolutely amazed. I read a story about P.T. Barnum, you know, the circus guy, and Barnum and Bailey, but this is about P.T.

Barnum. And P.T. Barnum, of course, was all about making money, and he did make a lot of money, very successful in the circus business.

[20:17] And, of course, to make money, what does he have to have? He's got to have huge crowds pay the price of admission into the big circus tent and to watch the show, and so he was the place always crowded.

Well, P.T. Barnum, as the story goes, had read about Charles Spurgeon. They lived at the same time. They were contemporaries. Charles Spurgeon in London, and he read how Spurgeon was able to attract huge crowds to come and hear him teach and preach and speak.

And so, you know, being the shrewd businessman that P.T. Barnum was, kind of sounds like what churches do today, you know, some high powered singing group so we can fill the place, you know, kind of thing.

And so, this is P.T. Barnum's idea, and so he wired Spurgeon back in the day when they wired him, he wired him and invited him to come and speak during one of his circus shows, to speak.

That sounds by great idea, thinking, of course, you know, that thousands of people have come because the great, you know, Charles Haddon Spurgeon is preaching. If he can draw great crowds there in London, then maybe he can draw a great crowd here.

[21 : 36] And with the invitation, of course, of P.T. Barnum, promised to pay all its expenses and to pay him a large amount of money to come and do this. Well, Spurgeon immediately wired back his response.

And it consisted of a single verse of scripture. Acts chapter 8, verse 20, thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

That's how Spurgeon responded. In part, I can tell from the story, that was the extent of his response. That's all he said. Now, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were that same kind of thing.

They could not be bought. What a lesson. A lesson to us. So, he was angry, he was amazed, and there's the third thing, he was arrogant. Arrogant.

And his arrogance is revealed in a number of ways here, different ways in this passage. Starting with verse 15, his arrogance made him determined.

[22 : 40] It made him very determined about this thing. This whole idea of people bowing down to his image, very determined about that. Verse 15, now, if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good.

What is that good? So, what's he doing? He just won't let this go. Instead of throwing them in, just go ahead and throw them in there, he's determined to get these guys to bow down to his image. And so, really, I think we should understand that he's going to have the orchestra play it one more time for these guys, just for them.

And now, you know, he likes these guys, it's obvious, and we find that out a little bit later, too. He likes these guys, but not only that, but he's very practical, he needs them.

His kingdom benefits from their intellect and how they kind of bring blessing to his kingdom. He needs their leadership, their capable leadership in his kingdom.

[24 : 00] He doesn't want to lose that. He's invested a lot of time and money, you could say, resources in these young men, and they're friends of Daniel, too.

And that's important to the king, and yet, he's so arrogant that his arrogance wins out. It wins out, they must bow to his image, they must bend to his authority.

So he's arrogant. Secondly, second thing that it reveals about his arrogance, his arrogance made him dangerous. It was very dangerous, obviously.

Verse 15, about a part of it, but if you do not worship my image, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning, firing furnace. So his threat had teeth.

And so their nonconformity had dangerous consequences. Dangerous. And the same is true of Christians today. All around the world, and has been true for Christians since the days of Jesus.

[25 : 11] Persecution toward Christianity. There's been a price to pay. And many have paid the price, a huge price, the ultimate price, for their faith in Christ. And there's always a price to pay when you refuse to follow the way of the world.

Or we might say the way of Satan. there are many different forms of fiery furnaces that a Christian can't experience.

I guess you could say for us, in our culture, it usually comes in the form of ridicule. Though there are other forms of persecution becoming more prevalent even in our society.

And this was what once was a very Christian culture, Christian society. But still, I think the predominant form of fiery furnace, or threat, for your conviction toward your convictions of the believer, would be ridiculed.

I also read a story about Harry Ironside. I don't know if you're familiar with that name. Harry Ironside was a pastor, born in Canada, and I've got many of his sermons that have been published, and read a number of them.

[26 : 27] Harry Ironside was a great preacher. His mother, when he was young, a young man, and an unbeliever growing up in Toronto, his mother was very faithful to talk to him about the Lord, and to encourage him to trust Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

And young Ironside, and this is his testimony, he would say to his mother, he would say, you know, I know I need to be saved, and I certainly would like to be saved, but I know that if I'm saved, the boys will laugh at me, my friends will laugh at me, very simple, they'll laugh at me, ridicule, and his mother would just say, Harry, just remember, your friends can laugh you into hell, but they can't laugh you out of hell.

Pretty strong for a motive to save to a son. But it's true, isn't it? Ridicule has caused not only many to refuse the gospel, but even as believers, the threat of ridicule causes us many times to back down, or at least be silent about our faith in Christ, what we believe from scripture.

All right, so we're talking about the arrogance of King Nebuchadnezzar. His arrogance made him determined, it made him dangerous, and his arrogance made him delusional, delusional.

Verse 15, this is an astounding thing that he said here. He said, who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?

[28 : 08] Now think about that. More literally, the translation would be, what God is there? It's what God is there who can deliver you out of my hands?

And it's written in such a way that it's meant to be emphatic, very strong, stable. And so what is he saying? He's saying there is no God mightier than me.

This is what's going to lead to a severe judgment in the next chapter when God judges him and he becomes a wild animal.

There's no God mightier than me. That's what he's saying. There's no God who can deliver you from my fiery furnace. There's no God who can do that. Which is the same as saying my judgment trumps all others.

My power is greater than all others. Even the God who was able to reveal and also interpret his dream would not be able to deliver these guys from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace.

[29 : 19] That's what he said. And so his arrogance made him delusion. Alright, so we're ready then for B, the Hebrews answer to the king.

Alright, so we have the king's attitude toward the Hebrews and now the Hebrews answer to the king. Their answer really is quite amazing when you think about who they are and who the king is and the circumstances surrounding this and so forth.

When they gave their answer and so forth. And there are three things that their response to the king reveals. Number one, they were courageous in the Lord.

They were courageous. Verse 16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, well, Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

Now, can you imagine, imagine that? Imagine the courage it took them to say that. Think about the setting here. They're standing before the greatest king in the world at that time.

[30 : 34] In fact, if you go back to the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had in the interpretation of the dream, remember, Nebuchadnezzar represented the gold head.

And every kingdom to follow would be of lesser value. So, they're standing before the gold head of this great empire, this great king.

And he's the sovereign king of the greatest empire on the earth, the Babylonian empire. And these Hebrews are conquered people.

They're conquered people. They're essentially slaves. They're not even really, in a technical sense, in any full sense, they're not even citizens.

They're slaves. Now, they've been given places of leadership and they've enjoyed the resources of the palace and the teaching of the best minds of the day.

[31 : 39] And they've been given, again, places of leadership. But they're really essentially slaves to this king. And I can imagine, though I don't know about the proximity where this fiery furnace was, but I imagine it was close by there.

and it certainly was stoked up and ready for whoever would be thrown in there. So, on all of that considered, what do they say?

In effect, they say, your demand to us doesn't even deserve an answer. Talking to the king, we don't even have to answer yours.

Now, they do give an answer. Or we might even think of it, they're kind of saying, we don't have to get together and deliberate about this and then come back with an answer. We've already answered.

We didn't bow down the first time. We won't this time. Or any time. And that's what they're saying. Your sovereignty and your power doesn't matter here. It doesn't figure in.

[32 : 43] Because, you know, they serve the greatest of sovereigns, the Lord God. And so, they're courageous in the Lord. And why?

Well, that leads us to number two. They were confident in the Lord. Confident. Verse 17, if that is the case, what's that?

That, you know, that we're going to be thrown in the burning furnace. Or if that's the case, that's your decision. 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. Now, I want to, I won't make anybody mad, but the word will, he will deliver us based upon not only the possible definition of the word, the word that's used, but also what comes in the next verse.

It would be better translated, may. He may deliver us. That's what they, what they believe. We'll get to the next verse here in a minute. All right, so here's the idea.

[33 : 55] There was no doubt at all, not any doubt at all in their minds and in their heart that God is able to deliver. No doubt about that. There was no question about, no maybe about what God's able to do.

can do for his servants to deliver them from danger and whatever. That's, that's not the question. But they knew that God does not always intervene miraculously in his servants circumstances of life. He doesn't always do that, which, which is what we see in what they said in verse 18.

But that doesn't change anything. Doesn't change anything in their commitment with their confidence in the Lord and their commitment to him. So that leads us to the third thing.

They were committed to the Lord. Committed to the Lord, verse 18, but if not, and I, and I, and I, and I, you know, I so much appreciate the way this is, the way this is said, the way this is put, these two verses side by side.

[35 : 03] Are God's able to deliver us out of, out of your hand, out of the fiery furnace? Yes, he can do that. We, we, we have that confidence in the Lord. All right, so go ahead and throw us in there.

And God can deliver us. But if not, because there was that possibility, right?

I mean, if not, if there wasn't that possibility, if, if God always will deliver his people from persecution, from these dangers, from even the threat of death, then if he always will, then why doesn't he always?

He doesn't. I mean, think of the countless, thousands upon thousands of martyrs. And also, God stated blessing and promise to those who are martyred because of their faith.

And so they say, but 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.

[36 : 16] Then I put Jerome's quote in there. Jerome was the, kind of considered him one of the early church fathers, translated scripture into Latin.

I wouldn't, we wouldn't agree with all of his theology, but this is what he said. He said, it will not be a matter of God's inability, but rather of his sovereign will if they do perish.

So if they go into the fiery furnace and they die, that was his sovereign will. Doesn't change anything. They will not bow down, will not bow down to this false god.

All right, so here's the lesson I think for us today. Does God have all power? Yes. Certainly. Is God able to deliver believers from all problems and trials?

Is he able to do that? Absolutely. Does God deliver believers from all trials of blood? No, he doesn't. No, he doesn't.

[37 : 21] History even tells us that. And though there are those in our day, part of the prosperity religion preachers of the day, he would say, well, it's because you don't have enough faith.

So that's the case. I guess, you know, what an insult that is to all of the men and women who have suffered and died as martyrs for the faith, and especially those who are even named in Hebrews 11, in God's honor role of the faithful.

these prosperity religion guys today need to apologize to say that. It's not a matter of faith. It's what God sovereignly wills to do.

God does not always deliver believers from trials, and so the real question becomes, should believers trust God no matter what? Yes, no matter what happens. Like Job said, though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.

All right, so the Hebrews would not bow, the Hebrews would not bend, and then next time we'll see the Hebrews would not firm. Amen.